

Red Action

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FIGHTING TALK!

The demonstrative proof, of the impact of the ANTI FASCIST ACTION strategy for 1990/91 was the much hyped entrance into the arena of not one, but two major anti-racist anti-fascist organisations, the Anti-Racist Alliance, and the Anti-Nazi-League. In November 1990, at a public meeting in Whitechapel an Anti-Fascist-Action spokesperson announced that AFA was "setting it's own agenda." It was predicted then that "AFA would be the catalyst for real change. We must through our activities force people to ask themselves which side they are on. Over the last decade the issue of race attacks has effectively been ignored by both the media and the left. It is AFA's job to highlight the hidden epidemic...."

ANL & BNP FLEE!

On Saturday 15 February, the BNP had planned to hold a meeting in Rochdale to launch their election campaign in the town.

Manchester AFA learnt of this meeting only 5 days before the meeting was due to take place.

We immediately released this information to other anti-racist groups in the North West, and on the day itself Rochdale town centre was taken over by nearly 500 anti-fascists.

Manchester AFA along with other groups from AFA's Northern Network took over the Brunswick pub, where the BNP had intended to hold their meeting. The landlord of the Brunswick denied that he was sympathetic to the fascists, despite the fact that one of the bar staff was sporting a Celtic cross, and the juke box contained two full albums of Screwdriver material!

It became clear that many BNP members still expected the meeting to be held in the Brunswick as several attempted to gain entrance into the pub. However, as they neared the pub, they were approached by several SWP/ANL members who, under the watchful eyes of Greater Manchester Police, warned the Nazis not to enter the pub where AFA was waiting for them.



Edmonds, another BNP leader with first hand experience of militant anti-fascism.

After only two hours in the town, they declared that the day was a tremendous success, and that after a short rally, everyone could go home, safe in the knowledge that Rochdale was a "Nazi-Free Zone".

When AFA pointed out that there was a very strong likelihood of the fascists returning to the area within the next hour, they argued that there would be no point in confronting the fascists as it would undermine the day's achievements! The decision by them to withdraw at this crucial point in the day was criminally irresponsible. In their haste to leave, they even left behind a number of their own members!

Shortly after the departure of the SWP/ANL, the Nazis did indeed return to the town centre and attempted to attack a group of anti-fascists. Despite being out-numbered the anti-fascists counter-attacked. The hunters became the hunted!

One bonehead engaged in headlong retreat attempted to find refuge in a taxi office. The owner, an asian, promptly kicked the door shut in his face!

Later, the Brunswick pub was attacked when it was learnt that the Nazis were attempting to re-group there. Again the Nazis only managed to take second prize (with the pub taking third!). This must have shaken Rochdale BNP to the core. Not only was their meeting cancelled, but they were chased off the streets of their own town and attacked in their own pub.

While we are under no illusions about the temporary nature of this victory, it is a significant opening in the battle leading up to the general election.

No clearer political distinction could be drawn - not least by the fascists themselves - between those like the SWP/ANL, who proclaim a 'Nazi-Free Zone' as a political posture and the attitude of the militants of AFA, who accept that it is a part of their brief to turn the slogan into reality.

Therefore our first task is not to unite people, but to divide them not on racial lines between black and white or between left and right, but between Fascist and Anti-Fascist, militant and moderate, the passive and the active.... 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 subdivide again until only two visible political camps are left, one racist/fascist and the other anti-racist, anti-fascist... AFA's public challenge to the BNP/NF on the streets of Tower Hamlets, with the promise of violent confrontation first drew the attention of the local and national press to the question of race attacks. The Unity Carnival in the East End in September in 1991 attracted the support of ten thousand people. While some on the left anticipated "a blood bath," due to AFA security there was not a single arrest. The twelve month strategy culminated in a national march on Remembrance Day 1991, through the traditional Fascist heartland of Bethnal Green, approximately four thousand people took part. Like moths to the flame the entire left, who in the vast majority of cases were predicting only weeks previously "that the Fascists were not a problem" were forced into a transparently opportunistic review. Workers against Racism, long dormant immediately stepped up it's activity. Militant also jumped on the train as it was leaving the station launching the Youth against Racism and Fascism; crowding into the centre carriages already full to bursting, with the other contenders for the title of the moderate wing of the Anti-Fascist Anti-Racist movement. The impact of AFA's strategy on both left and right is (continued on back page)

BBC BAN RED ACTION



At the beginning of the year Red action was approached by a BBC journalist, Mary Carson to appear on the Radio 5 programme, 'ACROSS THE LINE' to go out in late February. The following is a transcript of the taped interview:

BBC: Could you explain how Red Action came about?

RA: Red Action was formed in the early eighties when a number of people were expelled from the Socialist Workers Party for what was called "squadism", or in other words organising counter gangs to confront the National Front on the streets. While there were clear political differences, there were also pronounced cultural differences. So Red Action

came about to accommodate working class people within the spectrum of the far left.

BBC: How do you implement your politics on the streets? Do you infiltrate fascist marches etc?

RA: Yes we have a clear policy of no platform for fascists. We don't see why, an organisation which would seek to deny free speech to others should be allowed free speech for themselves.

BBC: Is that not inconsistent with being an anti-fascist by sinking to their level of terrorism?

RA: No, we have never stepped back from physical (continued on back page)



After the rout, plans for Tyndall (standing behind well-dressed minder) to stand in Edinburgh have now been abandoned.

GLASGOW AFA HAMMER BNP!

Sunday, December 1 1991, saw members arriving for the the BNP's annual rally in Scotland routed by an Anti-Fascist counter demonstration.

With less than 24 hours notice and acting on information received by AFA, more than 150 people were mobilised. The anti-fascists demonstrated outside the Gallery Bar where BNP fuhrer John Tyndall, Scottish organiser Steve Cartwright, midland man John Peacock, and north west England organiser Ken Henderson were already holed up with about 20 BNP members and security awaiting the arrival of the rest of the Scottish contingent. They didn't get there!

In the end, Tyndall and his followers had to be evacuated through a tunnel which runs under the pub and the nearby central station. Quite fitting that they should scuttle off like rats down sewer!

As the anti-fascists got to the pub initially, Tyndall and his minders were still in the doorway. As they beat a retreat one well dressed BNP security man stuck his head back round the door only to have a panel beater's hammer smashed in his face.

Two boneheads in the pub, in a state of panic, attempted to escape, and were immediately set upon by the crowd. To add insult to injury, they were also arrested by the police who had by now arrived in large numbers and had blocked off the busy street. Seven anti-fascists were arrested.

As AFA and Militant members kept the BNP in the pub and the police busy, groups of anti-fascists chased BNP

members arriving for the meeting from the area.

As we walked back towards the counter-demo at the pub, a group of boneheads were intercepted as they were leaving the area. The panel beater's hammer was again in action! as they walked up an alleyway in uniform, sporting badges and swastika armbands, four of the skins were set upon. Christmas shoppers waited patiently at either end of the alley whilst the confrontation took place. As the fascists left the scene with blood dripping from nasty looking head wounds, one of them, screaming in terror, leapt like a cat from a 'dead' position over a 12 foot fence and into oncoming traffic!

John Tyndall, 57, said: "Our recruitment campaign in Scotland will go on. We will not give in. "Scotland is our best recruitment ground. "We have a better proportion of members in Scotland than anywhere else in the UK."

Other groups of fascists were invited to 'come ahead' but declined by heading as quickly as possible in the opposite direction. Those anti-fascists arrested will appear in court at the beginning of March.

For AFA, it was the end of a relatively good week of activity. We had provided stewards for the NUS tour, and we had provided stewards for the Scottish Anti-Racist demo on Saturday, 30 November.

The AFA speaker at the 2,000 strong rally was amongst the best received.

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TROTSKY'S VERDICT ON THE ANTI-NAZI LEAGUE

After years of denying that the fascists were a significant threat, the SWP has surprised everyone, especially its own members, by re-launching the ANL. Only a few months ago, the SWP paper was dismissing the fascists as "isolated fanatics", not worthy of the attention of the proletarian vanguard. The ANL Mark 2 presumably signals a re-think. The fascists are to be seen as a significant threat after all - as Red Action has long insisted. In a presumably not unrelated development, Militant have launched, - wait for it - 'Youth Against Racism and Fascism'. This too, along with ARA and the ANL stands for, "a unified campaign against racism and fascism". Militant speak of the necessity of "united action to confront racism - not in-fighting." So what could be more natural to form their own front organisation rather than join with the already proven non-sectarian, democratic and effective programme of Anti-Fascist Action?

There are two principal components that distinguish AFA's strategy against the fascists from that of other left groups. The first is the putting into practice of the slogan "No Platform for Fascists". The second is the insistence that the fascists represent a qualitatively different threat compared to the bourgeois parties and their state structures. Not all forms of capitalist reaction are identical in the danger they represent to the working class. One consistent thread uniting the theories of the principal players on the left, the SWP, Militant and the RCP (and their front organisation, Workers Against Racism), is their claim that socialists should concentrate their energies on fighting the racist 'system' and its Tory representatives. This is the argument that state-sponsored racism is the key threat to ethnic minorities and that the bourgeois state itself (particularly in the control of a Tory administration) is the instrument of fascist or semi-fascist racial policies. As Eddie Provost of the SWP claims: "What Red Action fails to comprehend is that the existence of fascists is endemic to the capitalist system itself."

It is tempting to say that an organisation such as the RCP, because it has no positive base in the working class, is unwilling or unable to relate even negatively to reactionary elements within the class that the fascists in Britain today certainly contain. The last thing these lifestyle Marxists want is to have any contact with working class people and their unsavoury habits. They therefore identify the uncongenial tactic of physical confrontation with losing sight of the fact that fascism is the product of capitalism etc. But as Trotsky points out, if this reasoning is sound, "This means we have to renounce the whole struggle, for all contemporary evils are 'products of the capitalist system'!" For example, it might just as well be argued that going on strike for a wage rise is to lose sight of the fact that the 'entire system' has to be abolished. It is a recipe (or an excuse) for inaction. How is the system ever to be attacked if the 'entire system' has to come under attack at

once? Trotsky observes that: "The fascists in different countries began with their revolvers and ended by destroying the whole 'system' of workers' organisations. How else to check the armed offensive of the enemy if not by armed defence in order, in our turn, to go over to the offensive?"

This analysis recalls the Stalinist position of the Thirties according to which fascism and bourgeois democracy are "twins" and consequently should be equally opposed. Like other ultra-left positions, it appears to represent the pitch of revolutionary commitment.

In practice it is a cop-out. As Trotsky said, "It is a policy invented to paralyse the working class". It is a method of screening reformist politics, abstract propaganda work (for example the ANL's new slogan 'Never Again') and the politics of 'protests' and 'demands' with revolutionary sounding rhetoric. The rhetoric is familiar to all of us. How many articles and leaflets have told us that the fascists must be "crushed", "smashed" or "destroyed" when everyone knows, the fascists best of all, that the organisations that deliver such ringing phrases are being chased off their paper sales, leaflettings, meetings and conferences every week! The slogan, "The Tories are the real enemy" means in effect, "Leave the fascists alone" (and hope they leave you alone)

Even worse than this, it means relying on the state to contain the fascists as did reformists in both Italy and Germany during the rise of Mussolini and Hitler. It means relying on police lines to protect you from fascist thugs when you chant, "police protect the fascists". It means calling the police to remove fascists when they disrupt your paper sale. It means, as at Bermondsey, relying on the riot police to batter a path for you from an estate that would otherwise tear your heads off, as you chant, "Who are the fascists? The police are the fascists!"

But fascism is not identical with bourgeois democracy. Nor is it just a case, as has already happened in France and is now happening here, that fascism provides the impetus and pretext to drive the bourgeois state to increasingly reactionary postures. It is, primarily, as Trotsky put it, a "battering ram", and "a razor in the hands of the class enemy", the bourgeoisie, when democracy falls in times of crisis:

"The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organisations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery." Trotsky explains:

"To struggle, it is necessary to conserve and strengthen the instrument and the means of struggle - organisations, the press, meetings, etc. Fascism threatens all of that directly and immediately."

Fascism does not have to be in the position of immediately advancing towards state power to effectively crush the political organisation of the working class. Even where, "it is still too weak for the

direct struggle for power, it is strong enough to attempt to beat down the working class organisations bit by bit, to temper its bands in its attacks, and to spread dismay and lack of confidence in their forces in the ranks of the workers."

The beginning of this process is precisely what we are witnessing in Britain today, and which is well under way in other parts of Europe. All those who oppose the physical struggle against fascism, as Trotsky rightly says, are its "unconscious helpers", since, "Nothing increases the insolence of the fascists so much as flabby pacifism on the part of the workers' organisations."

It is no secret that the 'revolutionary socialist' organisations mentioned in this article are fond of quoting the scriptural authority of the Bolsheviks. Indeed, as we have already seen, Trotsky has much to say on the subject of fighting fascism, yet it is not rated a mention in the polemics of the traditional left. Why this omission? In the immortal words of Sherlock Holmes, it is the case of the dog that did not bark in the night.

So what, according to Trotsky, writing as he was during the rise of European fascism in the Thirties, is the correct response of the working class to the emergence of the fascist threat? His arguments are not those of the SWP or Militant, but of Red Action! In the Thirties, Trotsky had many occasions to polemicise against the Stalinists who were then proposing precisely those arguments that Red Action encounters from the conservative left today.

Trotsky doesn't say that you must march against the racism of the bourgeois establishment. He doesn't say that you must lobby Trades councils, enlist 'key people' in the Trades Unions, or even organise in the colleges. He says,

"Proletarian combat detachments must exist and be educated, trained, and armed." Disarming the fascists with 'newspaper articles alone is impossible. Fighting squads

must be created." This approach is elaborated: "A strike is inconceivable without propaganda and without agitation. It is also inconceivable without pickets who...use persuasion, but when obliged, use force. The strike is the most elementary form of the class struggle which always combines, in varying proportions, "ideological methods with physical methods...He who thinks of renouncing physical struggle must renounce all struggle... [RA's emphasis]"

This will not be a popular thought amongst the white-collar cadres of the Militant or the SWP, but that cannot be helped. Physical confrontation is not an optional auxiliary to an educational work or an external aspect of revolutionary politics: "Physical struggle is only 'another means' of the political struggle. It is impermissible to oppose one to the other since it is impossible to check at will the political struggle when it transforms itself, by force of inner necessity, into a physical struggle."

Abstract propaganda work on the anti-fascist front amongst left organisations is a reality. In the inimitable words of the RCP in November's "Living Marxism": "The return to prominence of traditional themes about race - albeit in new forms - presents us with an important intellectual challenge." Sounds like the theorists of the BNP are in for a pretty hard time! "Workers News", the paper of the Workers International League, hammers home the same point: "If small groups of anti-fascists see their only role as a physical one they will repeat all the mistakes of the KPD (German Communist Party) but without even the forces it could command." Educational work doesn't need defending since no-one is attacking it. AFA has always stood for ideological and physical confrontation and has put this into practice. But despite the formal commitment of many left organisations to the policy of no platform for fascists, physical confrontation is not a reality. Many and legion are the arguments presented for not organising for the physical aspect of the struggle. They are familiar to Red Action. Trotsky too encountered, and answered, them all.

The pacifists on the left claim that "mass self defence" is the answer - without in Trotsky's formulation, 'combat organisations' or 'specialised cadres'. Thus 'Socialist Outlook' argues that only when, "we have a strong

movement against the fascists will we be in a position to take the fight to them." Militant claim that, "The fascists should be prevented from organising, meeting and demonstrating through the mobilisation of as many people as possible." That's fine, but what they don't ask is how it is that if you can't organise even a numerically weak movement, you can ever expect to arrive at a strong one. The argument for 'mass' defence - all or nothing - then becomes in practice an argument for no defence. Without determined action and leadership from the left, how are the 'masses' ever to be involved or organised? Trotsky correctly acknowledges that without the support of the masses a combat detachment is nothing. "But without organised combat detachments, the most heroic masses will be smashed bit by bit by the fascist gangs. It is nonsense to counterpose the militia to self-defence. The militia is an organisation of self-defence."

But wouldn't such organisation mean "provocation" of the fascists? As Trotsky says, this is an "absolutely reactionary" argument. "Liberalism has always said to the workers that by their class struggle they 'provoke' the reaction."

It is the philosophy, he points out, of Tolstoy and Gandhi but never of Marx and Lenin.

Why does this argument based on provocation, as if the fascists were so many wasp's nests sleeping peacefully until some idiot pokes them with a stick, find so much favour with 'revolutionary' organisations? Trotsky points directly to the real motivation: "It is nonsense to say that in itself the organisation of the militia leads to adventures, provokes the enemy, replaces the political struggle by physical struggle etc. In all these phrases there is nothing but political cowardice." He adds, and all the evidence backs him up to the hilt, where a policy of physical confrontation is properly implemented, "the recruitment of new fascist bands will become incomparably more difficult."

Next, the tactics of physical confrontation are said to be appropriate only to revolutionary situations.

Trotsky answers, "This profound argument means that the workers must permit themselves to be slaughtered until the situation becomes revolutionary...The alternative depends above all on whether the advanced workers will allow themselves to be attacked with impunity and defeated bit by bit or will reply to every blow by two of their own, arousing the courage of the oppressed and uniting them around their banner. A revolutionary situation does not fall from the skies. It takes form with the active participation of the revolutionary class and its party."

The proponents of 'mass defence' against the incursions of the fascists, then maintain that physical response by what Trotsky terms "combat detachments" (and what the SWP terms 'squadms') is harmful because it divides the detachments from the masses. He answers: "But why then are there independent armed detachments among the fascists who are not cut off from the reactionary masses but who arouse the courage and embolden those masses by their well-organised attacks?"

In the present circumstances there are few who would deny that the fascists are highly successful in creating a racist periphery amongst large sections of the working class precisely through the tactic of determined and aggressive action by relatively small numbers of individuals. It

works for them. Why is it supposed to be so counter-productive by the left when the evidence so clearly points to the contrary? Could it be the "political cowardice" that we saw Trotsky refer to above? How else is the working class to defend itself? Ideologically? Sadly this actually means, as Trotsky himself puts it, "In other words: they [the anti-fascists] can only hide themselves."

The long-term danger facing the working class in contemporary circumstances was also identified by Trotsky. He analyses the social basis of fascism in the following way (in this instance he has Italian fascism in mind):

"It is a plebeian movement in origin, directed and financed by big capitalist powers. It issued forth from the petty bourgeoisie, the slum proletariat, and even to an extent from the proletarian masses."

He recognises the petty bourgeoisie as the "genuine basis" of fascism. It is this class that, under conditions of crisis may be recruited by a strong and confident proletariat, but alternatively, in the absence of such a social force, "counter revolutionary despair embraces the petty bourgeois mass with such a force that it draws behind it many sections of the proletariat."

The situation is this: "The petty bourgeoisie could reconcile itself temporarily to the growing privations if it has the conviction that the proletariat is in a position to lead it onto a new road. But if the revolutionary party, in spite of a class struggle becoming incessantly more accentuated, proves incapable of uniting the working class about it, if it vacillates, becomes confused, contradicts itself, then the petty bourgeoisie looks upon the revolutionary workers as those responsible for its own misery."

And in this way, a mass basis for fascism is created - as has already happened in France and may happen elsewhere in Europe. With the present world recession being accepted even by the ideologists of the bourgeoisie itself as the worst since the Thirties and the original rise of fascism, it is possible that the conditions of severe social crisis are developing.

Is there anyone who would deny that the working classes within advanced capitalism are unorganised as an independent political force and are, on a mass scale, effectively politically disenfranchised? A vacuum exists amongst the most unstable elements of the working class which the fascists are willing and able to fill. An electoral base for fascism within sections of the petty bourgeoisie is then visible on the political horizon - the BNP's wet dream. Only determined and concerted action from the left, and it must be said, of a kind unprecedented in recent decades, can avert the danger of a mass base for fascist politics. They must be met with direct and coherent action now. The central argument is really very simple: so simple, Trotsky put it in the form of a fable and which provides a fitting conclusion: "A cattle dealer once drove some bulls to the slaughterhouse. A butcher arrived with his sharp knife. "Let us close ranks and kill the butcher with our horns" suggested one of the bulls. "But in what way is the butcher any worse than the dealer who drove us here?" replied the bulls [who had been reading Living Marxism]. "But we shall be able to attend to the dealer afterwards!" "Nothing doing" replied the bulls, firm in their principles. "You are trying, from the left, to shield our enemies - you are a social butcher yourself." And they refused to close ranks."



"Disarming the fascists with newspaper articles alone is impossible, fighting squads must be created." LEON TROTSKY 1879/1940

LETTERS

CLASS WAR - BY PROXY!

Dear Red Action

We were concerned to read your front page story on the AFA march in Bethnal Green in your last paper (number 61). Ordinarily we would not worry about it but we had to comment about the factual mistakes about Class War in the article.

The Class War Federation has always been active against racism and fascism (going back years before we became a federation)-as you well know members of both our organisations have stood many times together on the streets to attack the BNP and NF. At our recent National Conference in Bristol we renewed our commitment to campaigns to drive the fascists out of working class communities. Class War groups all over the country are affiliated to AFA and London Class War has taken part in many AFA activities.

Your report of the trouble on the march itself owes more to the TV reports than to what actually happened! The fight did not start because of the pensioner waving her white hanky around as you say, but was the result of some over-eager coppers trying to arrest two marchers for standing on a traffic bollard! Our section of the march attacked the cops and freed the people who they nicked. A small pitched battle followed, with the cops trapped against a wall taking casualties. The intervention of a TSG (wearing NATO riot helmets) led to a lot of pushing and shoving across the road with the marchers trying to rescue people from the cops.

In the middle of all this an AFA steward came up to me and asked why the march had stopped. I told him to look behind him and as he turned a

scrum of marchers and cops almost knocked him over! Far from the AFA stewards being aware of the trouble and "saving us", half of them didn't even know what was happening! We have nothing but contempt for the SWP-led contingent who cruised through the middle of the scrap telling everyone to get out of their way because we were spoiling "their" march.

The division of our class by racism and fascism must be attacked on all fronts, and we have always been active in every way we can. It's more important than ever, with the rise of racism across Europe and diversions appearing like the re-launched Anti-Nazi-League, that working class people unite to fight the real enemies.

For Class War NOT Race War,

Neil
for London Class War

REPLY :
Red Action stands by the analysis of the AFA march through Bethnal Green last November printed in issue 61. If the reason London Class War, have not affiliated to AFA is because as it was once explained to me, by a prominent member, "we are just a propaganda group and AFA is too confrontational", then clearly it would be more productive to restrict your press releases to the right wing media, who are perfectly willing to convey the impression that the titanic forces of anarchy are as fearsome as advertised; who find it convenient to have harmless people running around talking up a little anarchy with its frisson of revolutionary bravado as a counter weight to what is really happening in Society.

Joe Reilly

WORKING CLASS VALUES

Dear Red Action

Here's a collection of papers, news clippings that you and your RA comrades may or may not find interesting, (by the way on the subject of the group you recently expelled from AFA, the RIL, their US sister group, the RWL is currently in, shall we say, deep shit! The local NBC TV affiliate channel four recently exposed the fact that a local spokesman for NAMBLA ("National Men-Boy Love Association" i.e. a group of paedophiles) was convicted last summer (no frame-up) on a child molestation charge (given probation). That spokesman was Mick Palmer, of the RWL. A few days later (on Martin Luther King's birthday) NAMBLA had a rally in front of channel four protesting the "witch-hunt". (The main group supporting NAMBLAC was RWL. A NAMBLA attorney, Eileen Schriff, told the assembled press that she was for the abolition of all age of consent laws, that kids were able to say yes or no "from the time they were able to talk!" This sick woman is also a leader of the RWL. A group of working class counter-demonstrators (including the local leader of the anarcho-syndicalist IWW) protested against NAMBLA and then a group of 'skinhead' fascists showed up with signs like "death

to child molesters". Their leader told the media "We want a return to working class values that Communists, Jews and faggots have taken away-just look at them!" There was some shouting but no serious confrontation.

The fascists (uncertain what group) got some favourable publicity out of this. One local woman union leader (who is bi-sexual and very supportive of gay rights but who condemns NAMBLA) told me that the nazis' came off sounding much better than these RWL lefties even with their indefensible stance. Also the fascist spokesman scored some points with their rhetoric about "working class values", and on a very superficial (but alas, very American note) the fascists (and especially their spokesman) looked very physically fit and the women nazis were pretty and the men were conveniently handsome, whereas the NAMBLA and RWL for the most part looked like shit!). The Jew-baiting would particularly off-set the fascists' appeal (Anti-Semitism is not widespread in the US working class) but, sadly the red-baiting isn't unpopular,

Stan
San Francisco

SINN FEIN

Dear Red Action

On behalf of the Wolfe Tone Society, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your hard work and support for the Justice For Dessie Ellis Campaign.

It was decided that as Dessie's case has come to a successful conclusion, the campaign should become a basis for an Anti-Extradition committee. At the first AEC meeting on 10 December, I was asked to provide a full report and analysis of the Dessie Ellis Campaign in order to identify the many positive aspects of the campaign and also the areas in which we were not so productive and why they were not so.

The objective of this report is to formulate a comprehensive strategy for the Anti-Extradition committee, and to maximise its effectiveness. In order to produce as full a report as possible, I would appreciate any comments you wish to express about the Dessie Ellis Campaign,

from the viewpoint of your organisation. I will endeavour to include all viewpoints in the report. Best, Bua,

Sean Collins.

Wolfe Tone Society
(Working in support of Sinn Fein).



LEON TROTSKY

It's time for... RED ACTION!

Hi there Red Action

So where are you? Normally I buy your wonderful publication from the bookshop on Atlantic Road in sunny Brixton, but I've not seen it since the Sept/Oct issue 60. Hurry up and get 'em in lads, its really depressing reading the watered down, sickly shade of 'red' papers - minus the action that is.

Do you want some ideas? The first is that you produce RED ACTION monthly. This has to be a priority! In terms of content: perhaps you could go back to basics for ideological dumb-dumbs like myself and perhaps divide up your 'Theory And Practice' centre page into three or four pieces and explain stuff like - what are the mechanics of capitalism and imperialism and what is surplus value etc, etc.

I think maybe also you could become leading reporters of struggles that the left ignore and the mainstream distort. I'm thinking particularly of Peru and Euskadi, which only AP/RN seem to report on-but also the forgotten struggles of Latin Americans and black Americans...what is all that New Africa business??? While I'm on a role here (halha!) I think you should pile into the Left a bit more - not only those SWP gits but some of the lesser known bands like 'Red Rebel' - and what about the 'Spartacist League'? Are they CIA or not? They're all bloody Americans, middle class, well educated Americans, doing full time political work and with no visible source of income. While I'm at it, 'Searchlight'.....! What are they at? "Send your UB40"? Have these people never heard of the Special Branch - secret police or mail surveillance? Why don't they just say: "Send your UB40's to Scotland Yard, inform them you are an anti-fascist and probably don't like police too much!"

Well I've got to sign off now my anti-fascist friends. I must say though, that like myself, there are a lot of people who really respect you what you're about and what your doing. You've got the potential to build in the WORKING CLASS. Fuck the SWP and the rest, they're students, liberals, etc, being 'radicals' for 3 years in order to talk about it for the next 30. For them resistance is an option, for us it is simply taking care of business. What have the left to offer the youthful victims of Thatcher?

It's time for ACTION - and the action is RED!!

Dear Comrades

After being attracted to your paper, from seeing your stickers throughout the streets of Glasgow, I managed to get a copy.

Your attitude towards the BNP is correct, I agree totally with your viewpoint, that we must organise in our working class communities to combat fascism/racism. Certainly, the way to do this is by effective planning, building local anti-fascist groups, promoting a campaign that will achieve our aim of fighting fascism, hopefully for the last time.

In supporting your viewpoint on the Republican movement and the state sponsored zealots in the Workers Party (if that's still their name). I enjoyed your article on that respectable politician Ponsias De Rossa-the ultimate hypocrite.

One factor I can't understand is the obsession with the SWP. Surely there is enough instances of effective anti-fascist work taking place, that would be far more interesting and useful than a continual reference to another political organisation. Accepting that there are political differences, is it not more advantageous to minimise this, especially in terms of the limited space available in the paper.

The only gain I can see, is increasing hostility, attracting ex-SWP'ers into your group who will write hysterical letters of abuse; Where does that get us? It is also a diversion from the main task, especially to those being introduced to political activity.

The statement that the SWP are after "the same thing" as the police and journalists from The Sun. C'mon, things have got to be kept in perspective.

With the commitment to make sure that Bermondsey doesn't happen again, that's what the fight is all about and that's why Red Action has got to take on the role of building this base to fight the nazis.

I will continue to read Red Action and circulate it as widely as possible.

M. Brown
Glasgow

TROTSKY

HERO & ...

Dear Red Action

I was pleased to see the thought provoking article on "Trotsky-The False Prophet", in the last edition of the paper.

While I tend to agree with the general tenor of the article, that is to say that the events between 1918-1927 would not have been substantially different if Trotsky had managed to supplant or oust Stalin, it must also be pointed out that this was only one period of his life and in order to obtain a rounded picture of Trotsky the revolutionary, one needs to look at his life as a whole.

For example, his writings at the turn of the century, especially "Permanent Revolution", updated Marxism and allowed it to be applied to Russian society at a time when most Marxists thought revolution in Russia was decades if not centuries away.

Furthermore there was Trotsky the General, the man who created and led the Red Army to victory against all odds.

Finally, one needs to look at the last period of his life when eventually he began to expose Stalinism and it's consequence and pointed out the dangers of failing to oppose the rise of fascism.

Trotsky was no god or icon and it is to Red Action's credit that you, unlike so many other groups have pointed this out. It is this ability to analyse the mistakes of past and present revolutionary movements which will allow us to bring a redefined version of Marxism back to prominence, a version which has relevance to the 1990's.

P Small
London

...VILLIAN

Dear Red Action,

Here's a reply to the critique of Red Action recently published in 'Workers Power'.

While I agree with the writer's assertion that RA cannot reject Lenin's version of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' without rejecting Marx too, I feel closer to your position than to theirs. Perhaps you'll see the light eventually.

The "degenerated workers' state" concept, as held by SWP and similar groups, is necessary to defend Lenin, Trotsky and co from the

charge that they (unwittingly) created Stalinism. According to this, the decimation of the Russian proletariat in the civil war, the pressure of the Western Powers' intervention in support of the White Army and the failure of revolution to spread to the advanced industrialised nations, all contributed to the isolation of the Soviet Union and it's decline into "state capitalism" and bureaucratic dictatorship. They couldn't abandon the Revolution-it was a sad but inevitable process.

Even allowing for the claim that the Bolsheviks were forced by popular will into the un-marxist position of making a proletarian revolution in a backward country (although it was they, not the spontaneous mass of workers, soldiers and peasants, who decided to storm the Winter Palace), this is still a post-hoc justification. By the end of 1919 the German revolution was clearly dead, along with it's leaders, while Red Clydeside and the Rhondda didn't look any more promising. There was no hope left on the horizon for a real proletarian revolution of the kind predicted by Marx.

So the story goes, with practically no proletariat surviving in the whole of Russia (and none at all in Kronstadt, we're reliably informed); in charge of a medieval empire of millions of peasants and every other stage of social development, right back virtually to the Stone Age; the Bolsheviks decided to sit tight and consolidate their gains. They disemPOWERED the soviets, the trade unions, the co-operatives and repealed progressive family and sexual legislation, before moving on to destroy all their former allies. All this to preserve "the dictatorship of the proletariat"-that means by which this now extinct working class would "consolidate it's own rule" in "the transition to the abolition of all classes and to the classless society".

"Never mind", say the proletariat (because the Party is the voice of the proletariat), "carry on the revolution without us. We'll catch up later, when we've been re-invented!" Curious though. If the proletariat is the creation of capitalist power-relations, then there couldn't have been a proletariat after the Revolution was complete-only free workers. So how was it that their state degenerated as they regenerated? Marxism works in mysterious ways it's wonders to perform!

Yours Fraternally
R Skerman
Exeter

BROWN ENVELOPE!

Dear Red Action

Enclose £2.00 postal order for 125 Red Action stickers, as at present I'm in financial difficulties. When you send them, could you please send it in a plain brown envelope so my parents do not find out, thanks.

I. Pinner

Plaistow
London

Impressed!

Dear Red Action

I must say I'm very impressed by your paper. I've heard your name mentioned in Searchlight (yes I subscribe) and The Leninist (yes, that too) but

that was about it. I got your address from a friend after literally months trying to find it (he reads Open Polemic). I have read a lot of "lefty" papers over the last few years and most of them are dire (don't ask me which is the worst). The only one's that are any good in my opinion are "The Leninist" (by a long shot), Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! (although the RCG do sweet F.A. about fighting either), Direct Action, and now your's.

I'd like to read more, however before I put a definite pen to paper to give an opinion on your political views. Please find a cheque for £3.00 enclosed to your good selves to pay for a "Red Action" subscription, starting with issue 61. If you could send me "The making of Red Action", I'd be much obliged.
N. Currid
Walsall West Midlands

IN DEFENCE OF THE WORKING CLASS PARTY

It used to be extremely popular during the mid eighties for the new right, to assert that the working classes had disappeared. "We are all middle class now" they chirped. Home ownership, foreign holidays even dishwashers were evidence as proof. This new epoch they assured us would usher in an era of unprecedented prosperity and tranquility. With the emasculation and assimilation of the principle antagonists within the system of capital the class war was declared over. But as the Communist Manifesto pointed out, class divisions cannot be abolished until a class has formed which no longer has any particular class interest to assert against the ruling class. Putting it another way, the working class will exist as long as the system which brought it into existence itself survives.

However as some academics on both the right and left gleefully pointed out, Marx had also said "Society as a whole is more and more splitting into two great hostile camps, directly facing each other, Bourgeoisie and Proletariat." From the beginning of the twentieth century this was considered in some circles to be a fatal flaw in his work, in that far from disappearing as he predicted the middle classes were proliferate, even recruiting substantial sections directly from the proletariat. In the mid-eighties home owning, indeed sometimes share owning skilled workers, and even self-employed window cleaners were welcomed within the embrace of this expanding middle-class. This was considered to be the principle triumph of Thatcherism, the rolling back of Socialism, when in the previous decades even doctors generally the largest group of middle class professionals and as a result always a reliable source of reaction had evolved into salaried medics, working either for private or National Health Institutions instead of being free for service practitioners. They had reacted rationally to this semi-proletarianization by adopting proletarian forms of organisation, in other words they have become increasingly unionised. The proletarianization of the middle classes may still be far from complete or inevitable but to the new right this was further evidence of society moving in a specific direction.

Thatcherism which was referred to as the 'ideology of counter-revolution', emerged not as a consequence of the working class becoming more middle class, but as a response to ruling class alarm as increasing sections of the middle class being swallowed up by the working class. Her reason for being was to retard



FREDERICK ENGELS

and reverse the natural course of bourgeois society

More specifically when Marx talked of the middle classes sinking into the proletariat it was not a prediction, but an analysis drawn from the tendency of the middle classes of the day, small industrialists, merchants, artisans, peasants "to decline because their small capital does not suffice for the carrying out of large scale industry and succumb in competition with the larger Capitalist partly because their skills are rendered worthless by new methods of production, thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population."



What Marx emphatically did not say as his detractors right and left allege, was that all intermediate classes would disappear, indeed he pointed out on more than one occasion that the course of society suggested the exact opposite. In a rebuke against a right-winger Malthus he had this to say. "His highest hope which he himself calls more or less utopian-is that the middle classes may grow and that the proletariat (the working proletariat) may form a relatively smaller and smaller part of the total population even though it grows absolutely. This is in fact the course of Bourgeois Society." In the fourth volume of Capital, he again challenged a right wing economist Ricardo for forgetting that "the classes and sub classes that do not live directly from labour increase and live better than before and the number of unproductive workers increases as well." The actual course of Capitalist Society is then according to Marx, that the mass of the middle or intermediate class grows and the relative proportion of the proletariat to the total population decreases.

The primary reason that the new right, cheered on the apparent ascent of manual workers into the new middle class while quietly despairing at the sinking of prominent sections of the middle classes into the proletariat was their acceptance of another related myth of their own invention i.e. that the revolution was to be made by only the proletariat, that in itself forms an overwhelming majority of society. So by their reckoning the prospect of revolution had been rendered redundant and with it the ideas of class struggle and Communism, all now reassuringly obsolete; or so they hoped.

A variation on this theme was also propagated by the now defunct Communist Party journal 'Marxism Today'. Their theory of post-fordism which they believed they invented in 1983 was put over more concisely by a certain Stuart

Chase fifty years earlier. "The automatic process, continually displaces the manual worker... What becomes of the class struggle theory? Where the toiling masses without a plant... When the development proceeds to a certain point which we may or may not have reached, the whole Marxist thesis stands in need of substantial revision."

While the tendency under Capitalism is for direct manual labour to disappear as the determining principle of production and the labourer is reduced to a subordinate though still indispensable aspect, being recast in the role of caretaker or regulator to the production process itself, if as Marx pointed out as early as 1847 "the whole class of wage workers were to be abolished owing to machinery how dreadful that would be for capital which without wage labour classes to be capital!" Increasing automation does dispense with direct mass labour, and reduces the expenditure of energy to a minimum. This will rebound to the advantage of emancipated labour, indeed is the condition for its emancipation. In the meantime it increases the control of those subordinate but still indispensable workers remaining who literally have the levers

that his thinking is middle class in some sense, but he is also less restrained by the norms of middle class respectability. So just because he's acquired a middle class lifestyle doesn't alter in the slightest, the fact that as a wage slave he will continue to be exploited. On top of that if he wants to retain what he has acquired he will still have to fight, with his class and not against it.

The Communist Manifesto states that the Socialist Movement is the movement of the immense majority, it does not mean that everybody must first be a certified proletarian, but the movement would include those other sections of society, which it would have to seek as allies namely those other sections of society, when in similar circumstances would be drawn to it and behind it. The working class are the only revolutionary class, for though other classes may at times be alienated from the system, as a result of bankruptcies, repossessions; the political movements formed by these groups, invariably seek solutions within the system rather than try and form an alternative to it. As Marx pointed out:

"A revolutionary class must come forward from the outset, not as a class for itself

AT A NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN 1988, AFTER TAKING A LONG HARD LOOK AT THE FAR LEFT, GENERALLY THE MEMBERSHIP CONCLUDED, FOR MANY OF THE REASONS OUTLINED THAT NOT ONE SINGLE ORGANISATION ON THE LEFT COULD BE CONSIDERED TO BE AUTHENTICALLY REVOLUTIONARY

of power in their hands. No other class has this choice. Though Marx did acknowledge that the intermediate classes would grow, he also insisted that this middle class would forfeit its significance as an independent economic social strata would fade, lose its cohesiveness, shape and identity and in times of crisis be increasingly forced towards one or other of the two polar and antagonistic classes in society. Some would shade into the working class proper, while at the opposite end another fragment, living off a retainer skimmed from revenue "increases the security of the upper ten thousand."

As always the lines of class demarcation are constantly changing, and are continually being withdrawn.

The working class of today is not now and never was a homogenous whole but is populated by different strata: "new minted proletarians," who were yesterday's middle classes, are today workers but are still middle class in consciousness bringing over with them as they do the associated aspirations, illusions and bigotries of that class which inevitably leaves them more vulnerable to manipulation in crisis, than the more experienced worker. Equally a skilled worker may own his own home, send his children to college and aspire to leave his class, is still due to his objective position more alienated "from the ruling ideas of the ruling classes which define the respectable limits by which any opposition expresses its disapproval. If the same workers on a picket line has to be restrained from bashing a scab, it does not necessarily contradict the fact

exclusively counterposing working class interests to universal social concerns, instead it makes its appearances as the whole mass of society confronting one ruling class."

So unlike all other classes it is only the working class proper in pursuit of its own interests that can and must confront the system to achieve its aims.

With the demarcation lines blurring at either end and the proletariat exclusively cast as the one in which the revolutionary interests of society are concentrated the conclusion drawn by many on the left is that for the revolutionary party to be truly representative it must aspire to accommodate all elements within society that expresses a desire for change.

A view not shared by Marx and Engels whose position of class composition within a revolutionary party was unequivocal linking it as they did to the principle of self-emancipation. For them the former was the pre-condition for the latter. In 1872, this bias was institutionalised within the International Working Mens Association by adopting guidelines written by Marx for establishing a maximum percentage for non workers.

Politically educated intellectuals, who had broken with their own class were welcome, but invariably these were exceptional cases. Of course there was no rule of thumb for distinguishing them from the bourgeois intellectual, except through the independent scrutiny of each and every

The real and existing danger which Marx and Engels, saw as the main problem to the end, was the fight against the student bourgeois ideologists and reform minded individuals who in the absence of a suitable party, are attracted to the workers movement by the consistent demonstration of integrity, vitality and courage. However in doing so, they do not cut themselves loose from their own class, but have the effect of cutting the workers party free from its antiquated class struggle foundations and then proceed to remodel it into the type of middle class reformist party they previously wanted but lacked.

The Rotten Spirit

In the last decade of the century the revolutionary workers organisations like the Social Democratic Party of Germany of which Marx and Engels were members has long ceased to exist. The radical workers deserted to the left, after the political breakdown of 1914, while the majority stayed loyal "to the Democratic Socialist Party of reform." In 1959, it made formal, what it had long ago become, and announced that it would in future be a 'peoples party' whose ultimate was to do no more than manage a mixed economy.

In 1879 a similar move was temporary side-lined by the explosive denunciation of Marx and Engels. "In the opinion of these gentlemen, then, the Social Democratic Party should not be a one-sided workers party but an all-sided party of all men imbued with the true love of humanity. It must prove this by laying aside coarse proletarian passions and placing itself under the guideline of educated philanthropic bourgeois... in order to cultivate good taste" and "learn good form..." then too "numerous adherents from the circles of the educated and propertied classes will make their appearance."

The de-facto domination of the party Reichstag group by middle class careerists and opportunists was precisely what Marx and especially Engels after Marx's death continued to attack as the immediate manifestation of "the rotten spirit" that permeated the party leadership and created the need for a split.

Today the organisation is once again, according to Dr. Peter Altavater of Bremen university not only one-sided but lopsided, in the sense that it no longer even represents the views of reformist workers:

"The SPD is no longer the party of the workers... The Christian Democrats is the party of the bosses. The Greens are for intellectuals. So where do we turn?"

The Socialist Party in France recently acknowledged that it's natural electorate is no longer the "proletariat," (dismissed as the new poor and the lost children of the suburbs), but "middle management public sector office and skilled workers."

Closer to home the Financial Times noted smugly that nearly 80% of new Red Rose Labour candidates "are lecturers, teachers, lawyers, journalists, trade union officials and researchers."

As in Germany, as in France, as in Britain, where the reformist left is moving steadily to the centre, in the process abandoning it's former constituency. The resulting vacuum having been conceded in advance by the capitulation of the revolutionary left, inevitably means that the most disenfranchised, the most alienated, will be forced to turn to and find comfort in the arguments of the radical right.

In Britain, de-industrialisation and the resulting economic atrocity may conspire with the

illusory self-interest of the dispossessed to feed the march of a rejuvenated European fascist movement. Such a movement with a social base in the bottom 30% of society will not be checked but emboldened by the vocal expressions of moral indignation typified by the flabby pacifism of the likes of S.O.S Racisme ('Hands off my friend') - the politics of the Anti Nasty League, 'We're not into the politics of the punch-up'.

In normal circumstances any revolutionary party standing to the left of the reformist party could only profit from such a loss of confidence and collapse in morale, only if they themselves had taken care to inoculate themselves against the corrupting strain. Unfortunately in Britain as elsewhere among the groups professing to be revolutionary workers the blight is if anything even more pronounced.

"While the far left refers to the working class in sociological terms as if only industrial workers counted, in practice the Marxist organisations have succeeded much more by their activities amongst students, feminists and peace campaigners and the like... Most of the would be vanguards are shamefaced that they have recruited more teachers and social workers than miners and steel workers." (John Callaghan, The far left in Britain.)

The involvement of industrial workers, in any revolutionary organisation is of self evident 'can do' importance. It should be noted that the majority of white collar, and commercial employees are increasingly working class and as a result increasingly unionised. It is also probable that most lower professionals - teachers, nurses, draughtsmen, lab technicians etc are now part of the working class as well.

However there is a problem with many of these "new minted proletarians" as Alex Callinicos a leading intellectual in the Socialist Workers Party admits. "Teachers for instance tend to perceive themselves as superior to manual and routine clerical workers, they regard themselves as middle class and as a result assume they have different interests from their fellow workers." Likewise nurses though unionised regard themselves as "caring professionals" and often refuse to strike. This rift between reality and their perceptions drastically curtails their effectiveness as crack divisions in the class struggle.

While sections of this strata may assume they have different interests, the SWP finds it expedient to re-assure us that they do not. Consequently whenever any sections of the working class take industrial action, it will automatically be in accord with the interests of all, even when fratricidal in effect and intent.

The November issue of Socialist Worker in Ireland, carried a graphic illustration of this particular fallacy. "It is not only about pay that workers can unite. DHSS staff walked out in protest at sectarian threats on numerous occasions. Usually the paramilitaries are forced to lift the threat by the people who have been affected by the strike. Most recently DHSS officers in mid Ulster went on strike last month after an IRA assault on a fraud officer in Pomeroy."

The incident to which they refer we are reliably informed, was where, a dolt snoper in the process of skulking around some Nationalist ghetto was apprehended by the IRA. He was given a good kicking, and his car machine gunned.

Any cross section of the unemployed from the Shankill to the Falls, from Peckham to

Meadow Well, would probably just as quickly endorse such an action as the SWP were to endorse the retaliatory strike; in defence of a paid mercenary, whose reason for existence is to make already difficult lives intolerable; indeed few tears would be shed in some quarters, if they had shot him instead of his car! (Notwithstanding any contrary opinion they might express with equal vehemence against his IRA associates.) On the other hand the Nationalist working class areas, punished by the deprivation of their benefits for the duration might rightly regard the strike as yet another form of coercion by state flunkies to undermine their support for the armed struggle.

The parable demonstrates two things. One being that antagonisms and real conflict of interests do exist within the working class, and second that the SWP represents only the interests and aspirations of a particular white collar layer.

Aristocracy

A study of white collar employees of Sheffield Council in the late seventies showed that although 54% of union members were in low status jobs 70% of shop stewards were in medium or high status jobs. Consequently the most active white collar workers are often those with the greatest hopes of advancement. Secondly the senior grade stewards who were more self assured and had greater communicative skills, and as a result dominated union meetings, displayed a similar wish and ability to monopolise stewards meetings. The upper grade stewards were observed to disproportionately exert a moderating influence in handling grievances. The higher status stewards in terms of their professional politics were predominantly to the left, while the lower status stewards were predominantly to the right!

While working class, it is a distinctive upper layer that certainly obscures the traditional understanding of the boundaries between classes, which also easily hurdles the accepted criteria set down to distinguish the labour aristocracy of previous generations.

"First, the level and regularity of a workers earnings; second, his prospects of social security; third his conditions of work, including the way he was treated by foremen and masters; fourth, his relations with the social strata above and below him; fifth, his general conditions of living; lastly, his prospects of future advancement and those of his children."

A useful analogy might be to imagine this stratum, as reflecting the view of passengers at about midpoint on adjoining escalators, one going up the other going down. On the escalator going up you have white collar workers who may wish and have the opportunity to rise out of their class through promotion. On the descent are the "new minted proletarians," representing what were formerly lower middle class professionals, social workers, teachers, civil servants etc slowly sinking into the proletariat proper, fighting a tooth and nail holding operation against gravity. However in their attempt to preserve their relative advantage and prestige, they are forced to react collectively. A stratum in social transit, who in resisting this conversion into the proletariat, are forced to accept the inevitable by adopting the tactics of their future rather than the forms of protest more appropriate to the past.

By and large they are cocooned from the harsher realities of the system "better paid, better treated and

generally regarded as more respectable and politically moderate than the mass of the proletariat."

While the middle and upper grades enjoy pay, conditions and opportunities superior to routine white collar workers, sharing the same union there is an even greater gap between them and manual workers with whom they share the same employer. Of the white collar shop stewards that represent the lower grades, the majority are representative of intermediate and upper grades.

If as the study suggests (and there is a wealth of empirical data to support it) the higher status stewards were people who had been radicalised at college, then many of those most active inside the unions are the same individuals most likely to be politically active outside the union, within the Labour Party, or more likely organisations to its left such as the SWP and Militant. What is particularly striking, is that while in terms of their professed politics they are on the left on their far left, they

WHILE IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT THE POLITICS OF AN ORGANISATION DETERMINE THE QUALITY OF ITS RECRUITS IT MUST BE REMEMBERED THAT THE MEMBERSHIP ALONE DETERMINE THE QUALITY OF ITS POLITICS.

are the embodiment of this stratum which is most remote, estranged from the condition of those in manual trades, the core of the genuine proletariat! Particularly since the industrialisation of the office the routine white collar worker would have developed a greater empathy, and could certainly comprehend the alienation experienced by manual workers.

Nonetheless a hod carrier, who operates in an industry without security or proper representation, which nonchalantly accommodates on average 150 deaths a year, would on a day to day basis have absolutely nothing in common with the experiences and perceptions of say a social worker. Moreover the building worker, might be resentfully aware that even if the latter were not blissfully ignorant of his conditions she would probably blame him for it!

In the same way that any advantage secured by the upper stratum, would have no bearing on his own existence except to make the existing cleavage between more pronounced. If the direct day to day interests of specific working groups and those of the real interests of the class as a whole widens and eventually petrifies from what source solidarity?

"This not only means that the proletariat no longer confronts the bourgeois in united hostility. The danger also arises that the very groups who are in a position to exercise a reactionary influence on the class as a whole, whose accession to a petty bourgeois standard of living in the party or trade union and sometimes municipal offices gives them despite or

rather because of their increasingly bourgeois outlook, a lack of mature proletarian class consciousness - a superiority of formal education and experience in administration over the proletariat, in other words whose influence in proletarian organisations tends them to obscure the class consciousness of all workers and leads them to a tacit alliance with the bourgeoisie."

When in 1922 the Hungarian Revolutionary George Lukacs identified the complex and traits to be associated with ascendancy of the new Labour aristocracy within the left. It was at a time when Communist organisations everywhere were overwhelmingly made up of manual workers. Nevertheless he was awake to the danger its prattling ingrate represented if unchecked. What Lukacs brings home, is that while fundamental antagonisms are the source of conflict within society differences within the working class, lays bare the motive for class collaboration from within the revolutionary party.

Seventy years of revolutionary parties representative of the manual working class no longer exist. The far left in Britain and probably Europe are both the products of the new Labour aristocracy and its promoter in the sense that the organisations they sponsor provides them with a voice and a political identity.

A typical recruit to the SWP and to a lesser extent Militant (Militant whose principle base of support is in the CPSA and who hype a more down market image though still more car coat than flight jacket, also have the insurance of an in built compensation with the use of the "NALGO handshake" which allows the more "sophisticated" elements to be over represented on the various committees designed as a filter for opinions, in a two way street, between the leadership and the membership) would come from an upper working or lower middle class background has been radicalised and recruited at college. Equipped then with both politics and qualifications perhaps even over qualified, he or she pursues a leisurely career within local government, civil service, teaching, social work etc.

Higher education is by no means a pre-condition prior to recruitment, though there is evidence of a predilection among some to vomit out, the odd malcontent who bereft of qualifications is possibly unable to share the instincts and perspectives of the majority.

When the far left in Britain talks nowadays of 'turning to the Labour movement' it is an exclusive reference to the unions such as NALGO, CPSA, NUT where their influence is

condensed. Within these unions the interests of the upper stratum are paramount, while the lower grades benefit from the trickle down effect. Initially when the new Labour aristocracy was identified as a silent germ within the organised bodies of the revolutionary class Lenin issued a foolproof prescription to neutralise them. "Communists must direct to recruitment among those who are least organised and educated who are the most oppressed and least amenable to organisations."

Few could deny to-day, that throughout Europe the least educated and most oppressed are without an independent voice and without an independent organisation, the authentic proletariat, is mute and as a consequence politically impotent.

Together with the middle class Labour loonies, Militant and the SWP provide a profile for the entire left that is semi-detached from the working class, and though the latter two claim a membership of some ten thousand are completely devoid of any visible influence within the blue collar unions, and so bereft of genuine working class instincts within their own membership. Faced with any political dilemma, their interests and instincts fuse within the facts to produce a version of events, that correlates with their own life experiences and is in tune with their reality. Given that set of circumstances they can do nothing but, point out and bring to the fore their own particular sectional interests, which always and everywhere misrepresents the interests of the working class as a whole.

It is only within this frame of reference that their brand of politics can be properly understood. The apparent negation of the principle reason for their existence is actually the secret of their relative stability (Militant have just split). It is when they most accurately reflect the political aspirations of the upper strata that their policies find most resonance among their own membership. It is precisely when they are being completely reformist and opportunistic and as a consequence the least principled and the least convincing that they can rely on their membership viewing the situation from the same vantage point of impaired vision to respond with plausible cohesion if not downright enthusiasm.

In sociological terms the constant friction between their professed ideology and their self-interest might be explained away by them as individuals being unable to escape the pressure from society even though they may express formal opposition to it, but in political terms its no different than a son who has murdered his parents pleading for understanding and sympathy because he has just become an orphan!

A PRACTICAL STEP

At a national conference in 1988, after taking a long hard look at the far left, generally, the membership concluded, for many of the reasons outlined that not one single organisation on the left could be considered to be authentically revolutionary.

Because of their student orientation and subsequent class composition, they clearly were not revolutionary workers but also because of their politics they could not be regarded as genuinely revolutionary regardless of occupation, profile or class origin. They were neither genuine workers who happened to be revolutionaries, nor genuine revolutionaries who happened to be from a class or sub-group other than the proletariat.

Immediately from that conference Red Action found itself in the unenviable position of having no natural ideological allies, of being reborn fundamentally different, no longer existing as a working class option within the safe haven of the far left. But now in effect coerced and from a tiny base, to begin at once the work of sculpting its insurrectionary successor, or go under.

Unsurprisingly class composition came to be regarded as a vital piece in the jigsaw. At a conference in 1991 the following proposal was passed "That the National Council would preclude from recognising entitlement to delegate representation on regional or national councils any branch exclusively composed of students for the same reason no branch would be accepted in which two thirds of the membership did not consist of wage labourers manual or clerical." (This included the "unemployed who constitute condition of Capitalist production not merely a consequence of capital conditions.")

During the debate a number of reservations were expressed i.e. that all students were not necessarily middle class and it might discriminate against students of working class origin; that the politics of any organisation determine the quality of recruits rather than constitutional barriers... and that in any case the robust implementation of RA's policy on Ireland and Anti-Fascism, would on their own prove a sufficient distinctive to any opportunist elements...

Students while students in an economic sense, are neither middle nor working class, but for the duration occupy an economic position within society that identifies them as a sub-group with a set of interests common and exclusive to themselves which may or may not, depending on objective factors correspond with the interests of the working class, not unnaturally students only ever align themselves to progressive causes on a mass when it is seen to interact with their own immediate self interest.

While statistics demonstrate that the vast majority continue to come from privileged backgrounds (in 1984, 70 percent of new university students came from the "professional managerial" background with only 1.1% from an unskilled manual background) and students themselves by their nature privileged is in itself not sufficient reason to recommend them for exclusion. For the exceptional cases who would play renegade on their own class and as a result forfeit a

middle class career, generous accommodation has been made. Nor is it the intention to exclude students generally, or indeed anyone else who might be of use.

For instance even Prince Charles could join but we would bank at the family setting up a Buckingham Palace branch!

Rather the passing of the proposal should be seen as a safeguard against them as 'privileged section' while representing RA excluding others (i.e. working class elements) by accident or design through an instinctive orientation in their political work towards that with which they are familiar and so recruiting exclusively from the politically talented within the tiny cloister of the formally educated. At the end of the day it is a question of balance like pepper in soup within our own organisation and also to redress the critical imbalance within the left generally. While the figure of two-thirds can be regarded as arbitrary its only purpose is to guarantee an in built working class majority within the organisation as a whole without falling in to the trap of exclusionism.

While it is certainly true that the politics of an organisation determines the quality of its recruits it must be remembered that the membership alone determine the quality of its politics.

If for instance there was an explosion of student militancy as in 1968 with the ranks of the organisation bloated tenfold by a sudden influx, which inevitably altered the class ratio, then it is safe to assume that at some future date the politics and their implementation would as well. It is not a case of putting the radicalised workers in quarantine at times of social upheaval; keeping them and their ideas pure and apart from other dissatisfied elements within society. On the contrary in it is the primary function of any revolutionary organisation to harness this energy, by being equipped to assimilate and digest the declassed and opportunistic elements always drawn towards it in a time of crisis. Being aware all the while, that their equally honest desire for change is prompted by totally different motives. Any revolutionary group which has not installed or had seen fit to dispense with the apparatus to uphold the sovereignty of the working class with its own organisation, would clearly have little to offer the progressive elements by way of revolutionary leadership amidst the confusion of civil war.

Consequently there can be no precise amalgamation, no synthesis of interests within the revolutionary organisation, there are junior partners whose particular interests must always remain subordinate to the "ultimate aim" of the working class movement as a whole.

It is in the short term a political principle, that provides a practice guideline to the various branches and regions that properly focus the working class orientation of their activity.

Where you sow you reap without the consistent agitation among the most alienated, without this constant bias, without institutionalising this prejudice in favour of the core constituency, no genuine revolutionary organisation can ever be built.



"Few could deny today, that throughout Europe the least educated and most oppressed are without an independent voice and, without an independent organisation, the authentic proletariat, is mute and as a consequence politically impotent."

The disintegration of the Soviet state has given the conservative left in this country the biggest jolt it has ever received. Whether or not this jolt is enough to force such parties to reconsider their role in relation to the working class remains to be seen. The signs, despite the fracture of Militant into warring factions, are not auspicious.

Unregenerate Stalinists aside, the attempts to apply bandages to the corpse of a dead ideology focus upon Trotsky's theory of the Soviet Union as a "degenerate workers' state".

The issues involved here, though regrettably mired in some fairly repulsive lefty logic chopping, are very important. For any analysis, whether dressed in Marxist terminology or not, that claims to 'prove' that the totalitarian monstrosities of the Eastern Bloc were workers' states, or that they represented forms of society that were 'transitional' to socialism, must be rejected outright. And if organisations such as Militant persist in maintaining their analysis then whatever else they may be, they are not organisations of and for the working class, and they are not Marxist. Such issues should no longer be left in the party closet open only to rabid theoreticians. All working class people have the right to know exactly what these organisations are really about.

Trotsky's analysis of the Stalinist state is most fully developed in 'The Revolution Betrayed', published in 1937. In essence it amounts to a repudiation of his earlier career within the Bolshevik party, as demonstrated in the last edition of Red Action, no. 61. Trotsky, however, refuses to acknowledge it as such. Specifically, he refuses to come to terms with the fundamental shortcomings of his political practice while a leading member of the Bolshevik party during its bureaucratic phase - which in the end leads him to a disastrously formalistic characterisation of the Stalinist state. This 'formalism' emerges in practice as nothing less than an apology for Stalinism.

A striking contradiction emerges within Trotsky's analysis: he fully acknowledges the totalitarian nature of the Stalinist state and the severe levels of exploitation of the working class it achieved. Yet he refuses to concede that this amounts to their political or economic expropriation. Since the economy of the Soviet Union is in a formal sense in the control of the working class, he argues, it follows that it is a form of workers' state. His argument is an anti-working class monstrosity from beginning to end.

He admits first, that from 1924, the Bolshevik regime was "compelled to retreat step by step by the rural petty bourgeoisie", resulting in the "complete suppression of party and Soviet democracy". This political expropriation of the working class is accompanied by increasing economic exploitation. As Stalin intensified pressure upon the proletariat, "the Soviet Union not only caught up to, but far surpassed the capitalist countries" in relation to the level of exploitation. He writes that the Stakhanov campaign [labour intensification coupled with piecework] by "introducing sharp antagonisms into the proletariat...presented at times the picture of a small civil war." To raise productivity, "the new state resorted to the old methods of pressure upon the muscles and nerves of the worker. There grew up a corps of slave drivers. The management of industry became super-bureaucratic. The workers lost all influence whatever upon the management of the factory. With piecework payment, hard conditions of

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Trotsky(ism) explored, exposed, denounced!

material existence, lack of free movement, with terrible police repression penetrating the life of every factory, it is hard indeed for the worker to feel himself a 'free workman'."

It is not merely a question of generalised hardship amongst the working class, but of the resurrection of exploitation enforced by one class upon another. The relation of the bureaucracy to the small peasantry Trotsky continues, resembled "the old landlord - peasant contracts". Class differentiation became emphasised to a degree hardly known even under Tsarism: "From the point of view of property in the means of production...the differences between the head of a firm and a day labourer...seem not to exist at all. Nevertheless, the former occupy lordly apartments, enjoy several summer homes in various parts of the country, have the best automobiles at their disposal...The latter live in wooden barracks often without partitions, lead a half-hungry existence and go barefoot." Yet at the end of this decisive and penetrating analysis, Trotsky again declares that the proletariat is the "dominant class" in Soviet society!!

Trotsky's conclusion, which he never surrenders, that the USSR remains a workers' state, bewilderingly coexists with the recognition that: "It would be difficult to imagine a contrast more striking than that which exists between the schema of the workers' state according to Marx, Engels and Lenin, and the actual state now headed by Stalin." For as Marx wrote in the Communist Manifesto: "the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class." This clearly refers to the political rule of the class as the first step in the constitution of a workers' state.

Trotsky on the other hand, prefers to stress Lenin's amendment of this scheme, according to which, under communism, "the bourgeois state will survive without the bourgeoisie". This appears to imply that the Stalinist state is a bourgeois state run by an undemocratic, though not bourgeois, 'bureaucratic caste' - in any case certainly not by the workers themselves. But Trotsky argues that it is managed by this bureaucracy under such conditions and in such a way as to transform it into a workers state (though a 'degenerate' or 'deformed' one). He elaborates this absurdity by explaining that, "the workers' state was compelled to create a 'bourgeois' type of instrument - that is, the same old policeman, although in a new uniform."

This, as readers of Marx's 'Civil War in France' will recall, is precisely what Marx warned must not be allowed to happen if the transition to socialist forms of society is to be made.

The workers' state, Trotsky continues, has thus "acquired a totalitarian-bureaucratic character", even to the extent that Stalinism and fascism are "symmetrical phenomena" showing "a deadly similarity". By now it plainly appears that the term 'workers' state', clung to so tenaciously by

Trotsky, is a dogmatic abstraction without any visible means of theoretical support.

Trotsky's proposed defence is that although the Soviet Union is a totalitarian state, ruthlessly controlled by a bureaucratic 'caste', it must be defended as a progressive workers' state in relation to the capitalist states based on a property owning bourgeoisie. This is apparently on the grounds that the members of the Soviet bureaucracy as individuals have no formal claim or legal title to the means of production it controls. "The nationalisation of the land and the means of industrial production...constitute the basis of the Soviet social structure...Through these relations...the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined."

Refining this defence, Trotsky elaborates; The bureaucracy has not yet created social supports for its dominion in the form of special types of property. It is compelled to defend state property as the source of its power and income. In this aspect of its activity it still remains a weapon of proletarian dictatorship."

"MARXIST GROUPS WHICH RETAIN THE 'WORKERS STATE' THEORY CAN NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED AS ORGANISATIONS OF AND FOR THE WORKING CLASS"

To this, one only has to object that "social supports" of bureaucratic control may not exist in the formal or legalistic senses Trotsky requires, but do exist in reality. These are well known: the elimination of workers' democracy or democracy of any kind, the distribution of consumer goods in favour of the bureaucracy, the bureaucracy's absolute control of the means of production, the elimination of political factions and debate - and those most notorious forms of social support, the political police and the concentration camp.

This focus upon the nationalisation of the means of production (the Militant programme for revolution) becomes stranger still, since Trotsky recognises that although, "the means of production belong to the state...the state, so to speak, 'belongs' to the bureaucracy." So the bureaucracy owns the means of production after all! Property relations persist in the Soviet Union, but in the form of the collective property of the bureaucracy in place of the individual property rights of the bourgeoisie. So where does this leave the 'workers' state'?

The pressure of common sense threatens to overturn the dogmatism of his analysis at a number of other points. Trotsky himself provides a good illustration of the sort of objection to the 'degenerate workers' state' line that would occur to a miner at the coal face or a worker on an assembly line: "If a ship is declared collective property, but the passengers continue to be divided into first, second and third class passengers, differences in the conditions of life will have infinitely more importance than the juridical

change in proprietorship."

Still more concretely, Trotsky cannot help but acknowledge that, "The transfer of the factories to the state changed that situation of the worker only juridically. In reality, he is compelled to live in want and work a definite number of hours for a definite wage." It should be added, precisely as under capitalism. Also, precisely as under capitalism, the ruling class appropriates a proportion of the surplus product of the labour of the exploited class as a component of their own income; "The differences in income are determined in other words, not only by differences in individual productivity, but also by a masked appropriation of the product of the labour of others." In other words, "The privileged minority... is living at the expense of the deprived majority." So what's new?

Even today, Trotskyists continue to deny that the bureaucracy, since it is not based on bourgeois property, is a class; they follow Trotsky in his preference for the term 'strata' or 'caste'. They then say that as the state must be the instrument of a class, and

...but by political measures taken by the dictatorship."

So it appears that after all, the economic basis of the Soviet regime (nationalisation) does not ensure that it is a workers' state. The fact that the bureaucracy is a strata and not a class is now, apparently, irrelevant. There is another factor and it is decisive. Trotsky assures us that the bureaucracy, though neither proletarian in composition nor under any form of direct political control by the proletariat, nonetheless preserves a proletarian political programme. How for a Marxist, is this possible? Trotsky says it is because the bureaucracy, "continues to preserve state property to the extent that it fears the proletariat."

So Trotsky asks us to believe that although having been politically expropriated by the bureaucracy, having been totally divorced from the control of the means of production and to some extent from the free disposal of its own labour power, and lacking for all but the most basic consumption goods, and with all dissent being dealt with by the concentration camp and the firing squad, it is only "fear of the workers" that inhibits the bureaucracy from the formal restitution of bourgeois capitalist property!

This is comparable to claiming that when a person is robbed of all his goods at the point of a gun, the robber's fear of the victim prevents him from taking the receipt! Even more absurd is the subsequent claim that the victim's possession of the receipts, the 'legal expression' of the property relations, 'proves' he still owns the goods stolen from him! This is precisely what Trotsky argues when he says that the nationalisation of the means of production guarantees the position of the proletariat as the dominant class in a workers' state.

The correct retort to this absurdity is to point out that nationalised or state property is not some kind of proletarian foothold within an otherwise totalitarian, exploitative society. It is actually the appropriate juridical form of property relations within a class dictatorship of the bureaucracy - in the same way as individual bourgeois property is the form appropriate to the very different historical and superstructural conditions of classical capitalism.

Trotsky's arguments for the reality of a workers' state in the political form of Stalinism are therefore, totally without substance. However, in terms of political practice, the core of Trotsky's analysis shifts, and can be seen to revolve around the simple claim that the Stalinist regime, even at the height of its atrocities against the working class, remained "progressive". And what does "progressive" mean in this context?

"The progressive role of the Soviet bureaucracy coincides with the period devoted to introducing into the Soviet Union the most important elements of capitalist technique."

The central pillar of the Trotskyite position it now emerges, is the premise that the Stalinist state, with what Trotsky terms "all its contradictoriness", is

progressive in the crucial sense of being a material advance upon the economic and social organisation of bourgeois states. As Serge claims, it could hardly be disputed, least of all by socialists, that: "all that was done in the USSR would have been done much better by a Soviet democracy..."

Or if the current Trotskyite left really believes that a period of totalitarian party dictatorship is an essential precondition of the transition to socialism or of socialist construction itself, (one not foreseen by Marx) it should make this plain to the working class it claims to represent.

It is obvious that the failure of the centralised command economy to develop the forces of production (contrary to Trotsky's forecast) has been the principal factor in the precipitous collapse of the Stalinist regimes. The history of the past 50 years provides the most conclusive disproof possible of Trotsky's analysis. For Marxists this is the key; for the level of the productive forces determines the level of the social relations that correspond to it.

Hoisting future Trotskyists high on their own petard, he urges that, "While the economic life of capitalist countries no longer teaches us anything except different forms of stagnation and decay, the nationalised and planned economy of the USSR is the greatest school for all humanity aspiring to a better future." Tell that to the Russian miners on strike for soap!

But is there the slightest scrap of empirical evidence for the proposal that the Soviet state was in 'transition' to a socialist society? Were the shops full of food? Were the conditions of the workers in their workplaces steadily improving? Was the length of the working week steadily declining? Were housing conditions the envy of workers in the West? Was there a consistent extension of workers' democracy? Was there an increasing proportion of workers in the state apparatus? Were the members of the Politburo recallable worker delegates? Was the KGB withering away? Had censorship been abolished? Have a laugh.

The verdict of Victor Serge on Trotskyism and its legacy, delivered in 1939 as Europe once again prepared for war, can hardly be bettered. It is worth quoting at length:

"I came to the conclusion that our Opposition had simultaneously contained two opposing lines of significance. For the great majority of its members it had meant resistance to totalitarianism in the name of the democratic ideals expressed at the beginning of the revolution; for a number of our Old Bolshevik leaders it meant, on the contrary, the defence of doctrinal orthodoxy which...was authoritarian through and through. If, in his exile from the USSR, [Trotsky] had made himself the ideologist of a renewed Socialism, critical in outlook and fearing diversity less than dogmatism, perhaps he would have attained a new greatness...But...he saw his role as that of one carrying into the world at large a movement which was not only Russian but extinct in Russia itself, killed twice over, both by the bullets of its executioners and by changes in human mentality."

Fifty years later the left is still awaiting the "renewed socialism" of which Serge speaks. 'Marxist' groups which retain the 'workers' state' theory can no longer be considered as organisations of and for the working class. The dustbin of history is once again open for business, beckoning invitingly towards the gurus of the old Trotskyite orthodoxy.

BLOODBATH!

Six hundred people led by five Republican flute bands marched through the centre of Glasgow to commemorate the massacre of fourteen Derry men by the British Paratroop Regiment, twenty years ago. This was the first republican demonstration to be allowed into the city centre since the hunger strike of ten years ago. It also followed a council ban on a Hunger Strike Commemoration last September (see last issue RA).

About a thousand police were on duty with warnings to expect serious trouble from the three hundred BNP/Loyalist counter demonstrators. There were twenty three arrests for public order offences, all from the other side. Interestingly enough, the fascists also included a number of Chelsea boneheads.

Presumably the size of the counter demonstration was aided by the fact that the march was held on the day of a Rangers home game which made it easier for the opposition to organise their forces. The march organisers, the Labour committee on Ireland, declared it a success. It has to be stated, however, that without the participation of the Republican Bands Alliance, the LCI would have been hard pushed to find two people to carry their banner, let alone attend the march!

Their agenda for Irish marches is not a republican one. They refused to have the march advertised in the pro-republican Celtic fanzine, "Tiochfaidh Ar La", leaflets produced for the Hunger Strike march (free of charge by RA) were said to be "too controversial" because they contained Republican symbolism and were printed on Tricolour paper! No flyposting was permitted and Celtic fans were leafleted with a bland and uninspiring leaflet on an away game the week before the march. No meetings in local areas took place prior to the march.

In other words, the LCI-led committee, despite their attempts to relegate "republicanism" to the sidelines, made no serious attempt to build their own "non-republican" Bloody Sunday Commemoration. Without the support of republicans, the attendance at the march could have been counted on one hand! Despite the best efforts of the trendy left, the march was, quite rightly, a republican affair.

We believe that the march was significant in that it took place at all. However, RA members believe that republicanism has far greater potential in Glasgow. The march could have been built for in areas where there is a natural reservoir of support for our side. The Gorbals, Royston and other districts could have been leafleted and posteried in

the run up to the march. Public meetings could also have been held in these areas. A consistent campaign amongst football supporters could also have maximised the turnout.

It is obvious from the march that the left, as represented by groups like the LCI, have no members, no support, no pulling power and no policies that can seriously force a British withdrawal from Ireland.

This was clearly demonstrated the night before the march at the LCI public meeting where their case was put by Glasgow Central Labour MP, Mike Watson. He argued for the troops to be withdrawn and replaced with a UN peacekeeping force! Whilst Watson deserves respect as probably the only Glasgow Labour MP who will put his head above the parapet when it comes to Ireland, his remarks show the complete impotence of Labour, right and left, on this issue. Speaker after speaker, from the floor, attacked Labour's record and poured scorn on the idea that the UN would be any more neutral in the conflict than the Brits.

The nonsense of the UN solution was best summed up by the last two speakers from the floor, one from Red Action and the other from the Bands Alliance. The Red Action speaker said:

"The word buffer has been used with regard to the role of the UN peacekeeping force. By stating that the UN would act as a 'buffer' between the two communities, you imply that a 'buffer' already exists to keep them apart. Presumably, the existing 'buffer' is the British Army. Therefore why bother to argue for the replacement of one occupying force with another. It's absurd. Anyway what kind of UN peacekeeping force do you mean? What about the one

which has failed even before it has gone into Yugoslavia. What about the UN peacekeepers in Cyprus? Or the UN peacekeeping force that was so successful in the Lebanon? Maybe we should send in the Syrians who seem to be 'keeping the peace' in Beirut! Or what about the peacekeepers of the UN who were led into the Gulf War by America. It wouldn't work.

Instead of pinning our hopes on a vote for the Labour Party at the general election, even an LCI type Labour Party, the cause of Ireland would be best served by backing materially the people who vote for Sinn Fein and the representatives of the forces of liberation.

A member of the Band's Alliance: "I'd like to ask how you are going to sell a replacement of one army with another army to the people of Derry, South Tyrone, South Armagh and West Belfast. All Irish areas, nationalist areas, which are already illegally occupied by the Brits? How can they expect the UN to be any more 'neutral' than the troops that are there now? Any UN force will be responsible to its political masters at home and will be governed by the ruling political parties of their homeland. I dread to think that there could be French troops on Irish soil who could be answering to a fascist like Le Pen or Itallians, German and other troops answering to their right wing political masters!"

The question for all of us who wish to see the development of a healthy republican movement in Scotland is why we are being guided politically by people like the LCI who, by their actions, make it clear that they do not share our aims and they most certainly do not share the aims of the movement in Ireland.

They are typical careerists who will use the issue of Ireland to establish their "street credibility" before moving upwards in Labour's bureaucracy. We should not allow them to politically police our movement.



A thousand police were on duty to keep BNP/Loyalists and Republicans/Socialists apart.

Dispatches from a warzone



This month has seen one of the most blatant British cover-ups in the history of occupied Ireland, though due to the censorship of Nationalist representatives the state controlled media have turned a blind eye and ear to it.

On 3rd February Brian Nelson was sentenced to ten years imprisonment by Lord Justice Kelly at Belfast crown court. Now to the uninitiated this may seem like a pretty harsh sentence but when one realises that he pleaded guilty to over twenty charges which included attempted murder and conspiracy then the question must be asked, why such a light sentence? The case takes on an even more sinister aspect when one hears that the prosecution took it upon themselves to drop two murder charges and thirteen other serious offences. In doing so crown lawyer Brian Kerr QC told Justice Kelly that his decision to drop the charges, "was reached after a painstaking and scrupulous

assessment of possible evidential difficulties with the prosecution".

One would have thought that at this time Nelson's job would have been done. He knew who the loyalist hit-men were and he knew who their contacts were in the RUC, UDR and British army. Wasn't the whole idea of the discredited and whitewashed Steven's enquiry to put an end to loyalist paramilitary/security force collusion? Well then, surely Brian Nelson had all the information needed to put this to an end, but then this is Ireland and under British rule things aren't so simple here.

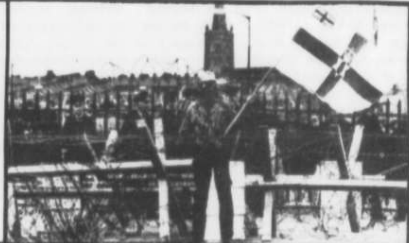
Whatever the reason for keeping Nelson "in the field" during the Steven's enquiry backfired badly on military

were to take place. Where was the SAS ambush in these situations? He let it be known he was involved in or responsible for at least seventeen murders of which military intelligence had previous knowledge. It did the trick. His case was discussed at Cabinet level-probably resulting in the subsequent deal through which he pleaded guilty to lesser charges while murder charges were dropped.

As a result of this deal a military colonel gave evidence that made Nelson out to be a hero. Rather than murder seventeen people, and commission many more, he saved over two hundred lives, lives which were put at risk by security force leaks. The colonel went on to testify that Nelson was a brave man who to cover his own life occasionally stepped over the legal line but was a valued agent.

Question: When solicitor Pat Finucane was murdered by

May 1974, members of the security forces stand behind a masked and uniformed loyalist paramilitary, during the loyalist General Strike to bring down the 'power-sharing' assembly. In 1992, as the case of Brian Nelson has highlighted, the relationship between these two party's is as close as ever.



intelligence. Instead of letting Nelson's evidence be used to end this enquiry they let him run on with the inevitable result that when all the scapegoats were thrown to the wolves Nelson was among them, despite having handed at least one suitcase, and perhaps more, full of documents passed on by security forces. Incidentally, no members of the RUC were ever charged by the Stevens enquiry. Those charged were almost all UDR men who were known to have UDA/UVF links.

This may have given the illusion of a fair and unbiased case, but to anyone who knows Kerr and Kelly, who have jailed many Nationalists on trumped up charges, not to mention that Nelson admitted his part in the murders and other offences, another question begs asking, why all the chicanery and deviousness in getting Nelson off these charges? To answer both the above questions one must know exactly who Brian Nelson is and what sort of a hold he has over the Brit authorities.

Nelson, a former soldier in the Black Watch regiment was living in Germany when approached by the British military intelligence to return to the six counties and infiltrate the UDA for them. To boost his standing within that organisation his army handlers leaked information on known and suspected Republicans to him which were handed to loyalist murder squads, because of this "high level" information Nelson became what loyalist sources describe as, "intelligence co-ordinator." The same source revealed that while holding

So, Nelson was inside and looking at life imprisonment, which he undoubtedly deserved while his military handlers were out, no doubt trying to coerce someone else to take Nelson's place, life goes on after all. Then came the rumblings from Crumlin Road Goal, that Nelson was talking. Nelson was beginning to barter for his freedom. He let it be known to military intelligence that if he went down so did they. Little tit-bits of information began leaking out. Nelson admitted his part in the murders of Gerard Slane and Terence McDavid but what now emerged was that he had told military intelligence prior to these murders that they

the UFF, set up by Brian Nelson, the legal profession as a whole condemned his murder as an outrage. Why didn't they dig deeper into the Nelson case for the sake of their murdered colleague, instead of letting a deal be struck?

Question: While the British and the Brit controlled media brag of their investigative journalism (one Irish paper in a banner headline proclaimed ROW AS GAY PROVO KILLER COMES OUT OF GLOSET, (math thu mo chara), why didn't they want to know how corrupt the British system up to Cabinet level are?

Question: Will Brian Nelson serve a full five years? Or will he, like army instructor Cameron Hasty, who passed information on Terence McDavid to Nelson and who is back in the army as an instructor, serve only eighteen months?

Question: How can the Nationalist people ever accept the British legal or judicial system as fair, unbiased or correct while their system is so blatantly corrupt, biased, sectarian, racist etc etc.

M. Collins Belfast

'The Spirit of Freedom' Reviewed by a former P.O.W. on Red Action's behalf.

When I received a copy of 'The Spirit of Freedom' I thought to myself "Here we go, another attempt by a British left wing group to earn a few bob off the Irish struggle." I expected it to be yet another one of those pamphlets full of IRA/INLA propaganda photos and full of the usual 'Tiochfaid ar la, beir bua and onward to victory rhetoric, another one of those thrown together pamphlets which looks good but says absolutely nothing.

On reading the introduction to a book or pamphlet the reader can usually tell whether it is worthwhile reading on or casting it aside. On reading Attack International's introduction to 'The Spirit Of

Freedom' I knew automatically that this was not the ordinary run-of-the-mill propaganda piece on Ireland and it's struggle. Most people in Britain believe that the Irish struggle began in 1971 with the shooting of Gunner Robert Curtis, the first British soldier to be shot dead by the IRA. 'The Spirit Of Freedom' right from the outset dispels this myth by giving the reader a brief history of Ireland going back to 1170 when an army of Norman mercenaries under the leadership of the Earl of Pembroke invaded Ireland.

From start to finish it dispels many myths and lies concocted by the British state showing Ireland's struggle as a religious war fought by a divided nation with the British there as 'peace keepers.' It gives the real reasons why Britain cannot afford to lose it's six

county Statelet. In the words of Sir John Biggs-Davidson the late Tory MP "If we lose in Belfast, we may have to fight in Brixton and Birmingham."

Although directed at educating the less politically aware in Britain I would thoroughly recommend it to those who believe they already know all there is to know about Ireland. While in Long Kesh a group of prisoners having read the same book would meet to discuss, criticise or praise that work. I believe that, were it allowed into Irish prisons, 'The Spirit Of Freedom' would quickly circulate the wings and be the cause of much discussion and debate. I know I will be recommending it to other ex-prisoners with whom I'm still in contact.

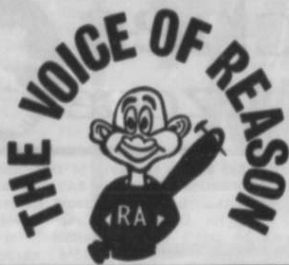
In the appendix-Bringing the war home, Attack International says that everyone remembers

Eniskillen, but who remembers Gerald Flynn, a three year old child run over by a British Army landrover in June 1988. A myriad of 'atrocities' can be levelled by both sides, the British state and the Irish people, in this struggle. Regardless of what the Brit propagandists say no-one here gloats over Eniskillen, Teabane or the likes, but incidents like this are inevitable while Britain maintains her strangle hold on the Irish people. One way of breaking this strangle hold is for the British people to demand that British troops be withdrawn from Ireland and the Irish be given back their right to self determination. To this end I as an ex POW and member of the Irish working class commend Attack International for attempting to raise the awareness of the people in Britain.



'THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM' is available from Red Action via the BM box no. priced £1 plus 25p p&p.

REVIEW



'the madmen of red action'

Red Action, have never been reticent about making public our views on the inadequacies of the far left, nor slow to ridicule the drooling groin clutching fantasies of figures and organisations on the far right. While the opinions of the former are well documented, though our readers might be interested in what the latter have to say about us.

The February/March edition of 'British Nationalist' in an article on the 'alleged' divisions in the anti-fascist movement took time out to refer to Red Action in a way that can only be described as gratuitously offensive.

"It would appear that the various groups now lined up against the BNP hate each other as passionately as they hate us. In a recent issue of the occasional newspaper of a tiny red grouplet called 'Red Action' (which has links with AFA) there was a vehement attack on the Socialist Workers Party (the main force behind ANAL), Class War, the Revolutionary Communist Party, Militant, the National Black Caucus, the Society of Black Lawyers, the Workers Party, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the Leninist newspaper, the Labour Committee on Ireland and indeed Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky themselves. The antipathies that exist between these various communist organisations make relations between different nationalist groups look positively cordial. Indeed the only organisation that Red Action seems to respect is the British National Party, for what it said about us was a veritable compliment. What I personally found the most hurtful was the fact that they introduced us as A tiny red grouplet. Surely THE tiny red etc would have been more appropriate.

Any way you get hardened to those kinds of remarks after a while. The NF, for reasons of morale still deny our existence and consistently accredit some of the finest operations to the Labour Party (bastards). Bulldog, their paper of the YNF, on one occasion referred to our august organisation as "Pink Action." Naturally people were upset, about a week later the lead singer of Screwdriver was returning to his house accompanied by a male friend with a carry-out, suddenly a car pulled up and four rather large gentlemen got out and without a word knocked him over a wall and started hitting him over the head with a traffic sign. Completely hysterical he screamed out "Who are you? Who are you?" "Pink Action" came the humorous reply.

That of course is what they feel they HAVE to say in public though here is a little snippet of what they say about us when talking confidentially among themselves. Issue no 15 of the League Sentinel internal newsletter (subscription only) of the League of St George, which functions as a bridge between the Monday Club and the BNP is positively littered with references "to a tiny grouplet." 'Thugs,' 'violent,' 'vicious' are the descriptive references which predominate.

"Strange rumours are circulating in left-wing circles regarding a supposed split between the Socialist Workers Party, and Anti Fascist Action over some 'actions' taken by AFA's 'goon squad', Red Action. It is alleged that Red Action have been behind a series of violent attacks on prominent Nationalists including electoral candidates, and even some elderly members of the public, attending the book symposium at Kensington library recently.

Now the word is, that as the SWP are fairly high profile in their political activity, holding regular paper-sales, they have become the victims of several 'outraged young nationalists'. Several members of the SWP have responded by saying, "it wasn't us, it was them" and then naming some of the Red Action terrorists. Following all this violence, it would now seem that some of the AFA's senior members also feel at risk, and are actively taking steps to either go into retirement, or at least distance themselves, they hope, from the "madmen" of Red Action.... WATCH THIS SPACE.

Of course to be politically correct and indeed accurate it should say the "madpersons" of Red Action. Heartening though isn't it.

...stop press...stop press...stop press...

ANTIFASCIST'S FREED

On March 2nd, the case against four anti-fascists who had been on bail for the last eighteen months on charges of violent disorder and affray, collapsed on the opening day of the trial.

The four along with three fascists including leading members Richard Edmonds and Tony 'Tarmac' Lecomber, had been arrested after a joint BNP/NF attack on an AFA leafletting session at Brick Lane (on the fascists regular pitch) had been easily repulsed. Those making the arrests were from the Territorial Support Group, a latter-day version of the SPG who are similarly aggressive, hyped-up etc, and have been deployed against AFA increasingly at recent events. All seven were bound over to keep the peace for eighteen months.

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FIGHTING TALK

(continued from front page)

a testimony to the accuracy of the original analysis. It was not a fluke. What many people often forget is that militants in any field are often only former moderates-with experience.

While Anti-Fascist-Action no longer has a franchise, this development is to be welcomed, for by absolving us of total responsibility we can now concentrate on the underlying problems previously identified by us that everyone else will prefer to ignore.

With some of the main organisations literally fighting each other for the centre ground, running duplicate campaigns, AFA can lay an undisputed claim, without fear of challenge, to represent the militant wing of the anti-fascist anti-racist movement, which only came into being as a consequence of the success of AFA's initiatives.

Our function as militants is still the same, to produce a pivotal strategy around which all else revolves. We do not cherish the shallow unity of safety in numbers be the alliance or league formed on a multi-cultural or cross class basis, indeed the challenge for AFA is to expose to their own

supporters and to the thousands drawn towards them the cramped and inhibited agenda inherent in appealing to sentiment rather than class interest.

On February 22nd the Anti-Racist-Alliance led a three thousand strong march on the BNP bookshop in Welling. The lack of resolve of the marchers and the organisers was demonstrated when the mere sighting of thirty BNP supporters outside a pub by advance stewards caused the march to be held back for almost half an hour until, the BNP were dispersed by police.

In a follow up the ANL launched a postcard campaign "aimed at flooding John Major with demands for the bookshop to be closed immediately."

Whatever problems AFA may face in the future of least concern to our supporters should be the possibility that as working class militants we will ever be eclipsed or supplanted by the rank amateurs or posturing dilettantes controlling the competition. On the contrary should the situation deteriorate as expected, similar public mobilisations of such tangible impotence, will on the one hand invigorate the reactionaries, but on the other function as recruiting sergeant's for ourselves.

BBC BAN RED ACTION

(continued from front page)

confrontation because to do so means to step back from political confrontation.

Experience has shown us that the greater the freedom there's allowed, the worse their subsequent behaviour. For instance recently the Anti-Nazi League was reformed and at the press conference a spokesman said that they were, "not into the politics of the punch-up". They organised a mass leaflet of Tower Hamlets where the BNP are strong and within ten minutes of moving on to the streets in ten years they were ambushed by the BNP which left a dozen people injured and three hospitalised.

One is still in hospital with serious head injuries. This is what happens when naive people who are ill-equipped for the cut and thrust of politics at the rougher end of the market enter the arena.

BBC: What other kind of work do you do to counter the fascists?

RA: Within the last year the organisation of which we are part, Anti-Fascist Action, has distributed some 80,000 leaflets in Tower Hamlets. In the local elections last year in one particular ward, the BNP got 25% of the white vote. They are also standing two candidates there in the general election. On Remembrance Day 1991, we organised a 4,000 march through Bethnal Green in solidarity with victims of racists attacks. There were only five arrests and the BNP decided to play truant on the day.

BBC: Do local Asians support you?

RA: The Asians are often presented as passive and victim-like but they have been forced to defend themselves against the race attackers by operating on a similar basis to ourselves.

BBC: Has Red Action grown since the formation of the ANL?

RA: Well, Red Action is growing steadily if not spectacularly. For a period in the late eighties to resolve some internal contradictions, we were forced to look inward, but now we're about ready to turn outward again. However, we do expect that with the ANL and Anti-Racist

Alliance entering the arena as the moderate wings of the anti-fascist movement that AFA as a single issue organisation will gain support because their politics do not work.

BBC: You also have firm policies on Ireland.

RA: We provide...we have a position of offering unequivocal support to the IRA.

BBC: Why?

RA: We believe that the British are an occupying army, and its in the interests of the working class over there and over here that the troops should get out. We also understand that because this would fragment the state that the British will resist it to the last.

BBC: Is it not inconsistent to support anti-fascism in Britain and also to support a group which would seek to hold the country to ransom, that killed eight workers, Protestant working men in Teebane last week?

RA: If you are saying that the IRA are fascist, we do not share this view. In fact over here, Republicans, and those who share progressive ideas identify with the troops out of Ireland. It is the fascists who support the Unionist cause and in Scotland individuals are known to share dual membership between the BNP and the UVF. It is a war...

BBC: But the British government have declared time and time again that it is not a war, they have refused to declare war on the IRA, war is different...

RA: Yes, but when they do declare war, like in Iraq, they put a rocket through an air vent of a civilian shelter incinerating hundreds of civilians inside which left the floor of the shelter awash with

R.A. merchandise



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INTERVIEW INTERRUPTED

At this point the plug was pulled. A minute or two later the interviewer returned.

BBC: Joe, are you still there, I thought we'd lost you for a moment! Do you have many members in Ireland?

RA: Recently, a branch has emerged in Dublin.

BBC: Most socialists would not support your views.

RA: Well, a broad spectrum of the left supported the ANC in South Africa who were engaged in armed struggle - unlike them we believe that our politics should reflect a consistency closer to home where we can have some influence. Red Action operates at the sharpest point where

the class is divided, while the rest of the left, are drawn towards the false unity of the lowest common denominator.

INTERVIEW INTERRUPTED

BBC: We will have to deal with this more comprehensively...we haven't got time now.

RA: I was told that the interview was from 12.15 to 1.45.

BBC: Yes I know, but I was late. I'll ring you this afternoon and we'll arrange it.

INTERVIEW TERMINATED

The interview was never resumed. There has been no subsequent contact. Although government censorship laws are meant to apply only to proscribed organisations, it appears that the ban has been extended to include Red Action!

JOIN RED ACTION



Red Action is an organisation founded by working class people to work for the furthering of the cause of Socialism. Membership is open to all who accept our political principles and pay a weekly subscription. Every member has an equal vote on all Red Action policy and decisions.

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

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