

RED ACTION

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THE ARREST OF 376 FASCISTS AT THE BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION CONFRONTS THE LEFT WITH THIS CHOICE: WE ACCEPT THE DEATH OF THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENT BY INSTALMENT OR:

WE MARCH IN EDINBURGH CONNOLLY COMMEMORATION SATURDAY 5TH JUNE 1993

On Saturday the 30th of January the Troops Out Movement led the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration from Hyde Park to Kilburn. What distinguished this march from similar marches along the same route held in previous years was the arrest of almost 400 counter demonstrators, prior to the march even leaving the park. One of the march organisers told Republican News that the failure of the fascists to attack the demonstration "was a victory for all those struggling against racism and fascism in Britain." According to the chief steward, the "extremists suffered a humiliating defeat". This account carried without comment in all the Irish papers is a distortion not only of the facts but, in addition, an Orwellian distortion of language. By what criterion is victory or defeat now to be judged? The simple fact is that for the first time ever, the numbers marching behind the moderate banner of the movement for a British withdrawal were almost matched by those who rallied to the banner of the right wing 'extremists' who call for the military defeat of the IRA.

There are two principal reasons for this. One, the march itself is now smaller than at any time in its history. Secondly, in contrast the influence and confidence of the extra-parliamentary forces on the far right has grown appreciably over the previous twelve months. (The nearest political equivalent was the counter-demonstration against the IFM march in August when the BNP/NF, mobilisation numbered about 100) Though many on the Left, like the Troops Out organisers continue with the pretence that the opposite is the case are clearly fooling nobody but themselves.

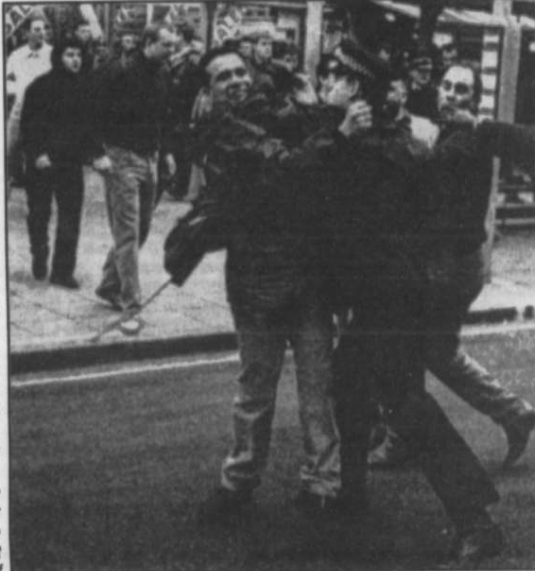
Is it really a victory for TOM to be forced to rely on police protection to march and rally in an Irish area like Kilburn? Would it also, be regarded as a victory for the Republican Movement to require RUC protection to march through West Belfast to rally in Anderstown? If, in addition, one of the principal speakers had congratulated the police for their co-operation

would he have been applauded? Is it not bad enough that after over 20 years of campaigning the Troops Out Movement, is now feeble enough to need police protection? Even worse is, rather than be forced to do so from simple expediency, it appears that the 'guarantee' of police protection is preferable to any real attempt to mobilise sufficient stewards from within both the Irish community and indeed anti fascist militants on the Left. After all this being an annual event the organisers have a year to do so. Is there now in fact a tacit agreement between the organisers and the police? Is this agreement based on the mutual understanding that the police will arrange adequate security regardless of cost on condition that the organisers arrange for no security?

A week before the march, The Irish World under a headline **EXTREMISTS PREPARE FOR BLOODY SATURDAY**, announced that the NF had distributed thousands of leaflets over the preceding three months. It also disclosed that "the fascist British National Party is planning to send squads of East End hard men into North London" and in addition "a number of organised soccer hooligan squads...are expected to take part in planned attacks on the march". Furthermore in what it called 'a sickening twist to the spiral of plotting' surrounding the event "that Left wing groups like Red action have been holding secret meetings over the past several days planning an ambush on travelling members of the National Front". (It may seem a little obvious, if such a secret ambush had been planned, it is unlikely that RA would announce it in advance!) Nevertheless, regardless of the source the information was (suspiciously) accurate and would have been confirmed by Anti-fascist Action or Searchlight, had they been contacted. No such contact was made, either formally or informally to AFA either in the months before the public disclosure of this information or even in the week after.

The responses of the TOM to these disclosures were typically bland, a spokesperson declared indifferently "They've [the NF] tried this type of thing before and they have never really been able to command the support. People aren't interested in their madcap politics". In AP/RN, Niall O'Connor (Chief Steward) suggests that rather than castigate TOM for complacency, criticism "could be more usefully directed at the major anti-fascist groups, in light of [their] failure to organise against the biggest fascist mobilisation in Britain in recent years". He then adds for good measure "It's a good thing we don't rely on them!" Indeed why rely on the likes of AFA when you can as Niall O'Connor seems to believe you can rely instead on the Met!

If the forces of the State can be trusted, then the question any anti-imperialist organisation that is by definition anti-State must ask themselves is this. Why can they be trusted? Is it because the TOM is perceived by the state, to have so much influence that it feels it must concede to its demand for police protection? Or is it regarded by the state as important to continue to grant it protection precisely because in its present form they recognise it to be perfectly harmless devoid of, and incapable of gaining any influence? While it is true that the police arrested 376, fascists/loyalists prior to the march, they were arrested not because they had already caused



Despite the arrest of hundreds prior to the march, fascists still managed to mount a number of attacks.

trouble (only five were charged) but in recognition that they had the potential to do so. Had the police not done so, then the demonstration would have come under concerted attack and may not have reached its destination. In 1979 with the support of the Liberal Party the march attracted about 10,000. The '93 estimate was less than a tenth of that number. That is stark reality. It is self-evident that the police are no friends of either republicanism or anti-fascism. That they choose to mount such a massive operation, means only that the interests of the organisers happened to coincide with the political agenda of the authorities. This year. Next year their attitude may well be different.

This has certainly been the experience of the James Connolly march in Edinburgh. In 1991 the 1200 strong demonstration, was confronted by a BNP/Loyalist contingent of about 300. There were twelve arrests, all fascists. The Edinburgh march had a high working class composition and was heavily stewarded including a contingent from 'Hibs casuals'. In other words in strong contrast to the Bloody Sunday march it did not need protecting from the police. Nobody from the march was injured or arrested, nevertheless it was the march rather than the counter demonstration that was banned by the police, on the grounds of public order in 1992. Obviously the unapologetic Republican nature of the event and the tangible workingclass support mobilised, in the end simply proved unpalatable. That the authorities' motive for

the ban was undeniably exposed as being for political rather than public order reasons should be recognised as a tribute to the commitment and courage of the organisers.

While the Troops Out Movement might with some justification point out, it now has neither adequate stewards nor popular support this in itself hardly constitutes a basis for back slapping and self congratulation! They may well claim their right to adequate protection next year, however the police are under no legal obligation to provide it. That the police

expanded considerable resources this year was as the chief steward acknowledged "down to them". Indeed should the decline continue, and support for the fascists increase the TOM would presumably be prepared to concede to the police the option, based on a rudimentary grasp of arithmetic, on just who they consider constitutes the greater threat to public order on the day. A provocative IRA march that can't defend itself, or a counter demonstration that they can't defend the march against? All logic, legal, financial, tactical and political for a ban on the commemoration of the Derry massacre would in such circumstances weigh heavily in favour of reaction. Over the last twenty-four years the Republican movement has paid a high price but in the process earned a deserved if sometimes grudging respect for its integrity. Primarily this is because as a revolutionary movement it accepts that truth and reality are companions to be embraced rather than adversaries to be vanquished.

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INSIDE

From
Connolly to
Corleone

No one likes
us...

Niggers With
Guns



Above: The Bridgeton Republican Flute Band who, along with others from the Scottish Bands Alliance, are determined to march in memory of James Connolly in Edinburgh on 5th June. The SBA are fully behind the political stand of this year's organisers, the Connolly Society, to challenge on the streets the position of both the council and the police who have repeatedly caved in, or used as a pretext, the threat of 'loyalist/fascist violence to impose on the commemoration what is, in effect, an indefinite ban.

★ LETTERS ★

FRAMED! (1)

Dear Red Action
This is a letter from Belgian comrades framed in the jail of Verviers.

Before we speak about our personal situation and about the situation of the other Belgian prisoners, it's better to explain briefly about the situation in our country so as this will be understandable for everyone.

1992 has been the year of increasing repression inside - and outside - the jails. Of course, this repression isn't new but this time it's really worse than before; worse because of some events that occurred last summer especially. It's not our intention to make an analysis about these events but rather more to look closely at the consequences of one of them - this one has been especially terrible.

During the summer in 1992, two young people aged about 25 savagely killed a young man and his girlfriend - after having raped her - and these two murderers also committed several aggressions in our country. One of those two criminals was on parole for a few months and the other one was on a "one day out of jail".



Alternative Libertaire

This hardening of public opinion is actually felt in all Belgian jails through an almost systematic denial of all requests for parole or for a "one day out". This obstruction of liberations provokes in prisoners' families and in the jail population some big deceptions and breaks all hope for an anticipated freedom.

The effect of such a situation is defined by an increasing "electricity in the air" of all the jails where many inmates have been sentenced to life, 10,15,20 years are framed. The situation is really bad lived by many (most of) prisoners: some of them get depressed or try to commit suicide or try to escape. It is in this special political context that we want to talk now about the last events that occurred with us.

During the month of December we decided to assert and define our political militancy in a new way. As revolutionaries, we

decided to stop according the little trust remaining in us to the diverse frames of the system ruling the Belgian jails. This new definition of our militancy has been, in the first instance, to elaborate an escape and, secondly, the willing of a total struggle against all the government's repressive institutions. We won't explain the details of our escape - that missed after more than a month of digging a hole with blood and sweat - but we'd like to give some precise details of our actual situation.

We're respectively framed since seven and a half years on 18 and since 12 years on 15 (!). This means that (theoretically) we could be paroled since many months - even many years in the second case. But in one case as well as in the second, nothings been given to us yet: neither a "one day out" nor a parole! All is always refused. We don't deny the facts why we're in jail as well as we don't deny the facts why we're framed but we strongly protest against the length of this one. Normally (but what's normal

here?) jail is done to be expiatory (we wonder how!) but here it's not "expiatory" anymore; it's becoming eliminative!

For our escape, we've been placed in a punishment cell and we're now in something like a maximum security unit, but we don't care. The struggle continues, everywhere, everytime and by all means necessary!

Send messages of support to:
Boris Dumont and Serge Mandelier
Prison de Verviers
81 Chaussée d'Heusy
4800 Verviers
Belgium

FRAMED! (2)

Dear Red Action,
In the early hours of Christmas Eve 1990, Patrick Quinn, aged 55, an Irish labourer based in London, was found battered to death in a cell in Hammersmith police station. The only other occupant of the cell was 44-year-old Malcolm Kennedy, a restaurateur from Stoke Newington, who had been arrested for drunkenness earlier in the evening. Kennedy's shoes, socks and trousers were spattered in blood, and his watch, scarf and bloodied foot prints were all discovered on or near the victim's body. Kennedy was charged with murder. At first glance, it appeared to be an open and shut case.

At the subsequent trial in September 1991, Mr Kennedy, a small, slightly built man, known by friends, relatives and employees alike as a man who hated violence, was alleged to have kicked Mr Quinn to death, crushing his heart and larynx, breaking 33 ribs and causing severe head injuries. The prosecution contended that Kennedy had launched a frenzied and brutal attack on

Quinn, without either participant making enough noise to alert nearby police officers. Kennedy had then presumably fallen promptly asleep again. No motive for the attack was established.

In his defence, Kennedy alleged that he had been woken from his drunken stupor by the sound of a police officer severely beating Quinn, who had also been arrested for drunkenness. When Kennedy tried to intervene, he was knocked unconscious. It is then alleged that the police embarked on a cover-up involving the planting of evidence to incriminate Kennedy. Nearly 40 police officers gave evidence at the trial with the result that Kennedy was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Following the trial, it became clear that forensic evidence presented as indisputable was in doubt and that a number of witnesses had been hidden from the defence. One interpretation of the forensic evidence concerning Kennedy's blood-spattered clothing suggests that blood had been deliberately flicked on Kennedy's trousers and

TRUE CONFESSIONS?

ROUGH JUSTICE

Dear Red Action,
I have recently read 'Open Polemic' numbers 5 and 6 in which you have written two articles both of which I found very worthwhile.

It is only within the past five to ten years I have seriously taken a look at Trotskyism, much of which I find attractive and vice-versa. I have always taken politics seriously. At the age of 14, I was first a member of the Scottish Co-operative Youth Movement and then the Young Communists League. My life has been dedicated to the emancipation of the working class, of which I am a member.

Although the socialist cause has suffered great setbacks mainly via Stalinism and labour reformism, I have never wavered for an instant that my class will, eventually, emancipate itself.

One does not need to be a professor to grasp the fundamentals of Marxism. Engels enunciated them at Marx's burial service - the theory of surplus value and class struggle. Any additional understanding is only something

complementary. Please do not imagine that I have not studied Marx and most of the others who have claimed to be Marxists because it is a fascinating and compelling study. However, age and ill-health confines me to being an arm-chair Marxist: letters to the press, composing poetry, writing my autobiography, short articles and stories. Of course, I read other periodicals besides Red Action but what have I to tell you? Firstly, you are not only doing a good job but a worthwhile one. Your paper is not full of tit-bits but makes its main points in depth. I like your analysis of Trotsky - perhaps I went overboard on him after my long connection with the Communist Party, now dead (suicide). Stalinism was really indefensible - we just gave it the benefit of the doubt whilst getting on with the task of battling right-wing labourism in Fife.

Mr K's secret speech should have signalled the end of my allegiance, it did not. I was under the false belief that the Communist Party was the only

real alternative in Fife to the right-wing labourism. Trotskyism has not been a feature of the Fife labour movement - not even the SWP can get a branch going and Militant comes and goes. The Communist Party has split into the Democratic Left and Scottish Communist Party. The former, since dropping the communist tag, has a councillor; the other lot is struggling to maintain any sort of cohesive activity. They surface around Scotland United playing the usual game of tallism. Pathetic really, for there are a few dedicated men and women among them but loyalty to a party that was getting strangled by its own contradiction made them impotent.

And that is what Red Action is not - it is alive and kicking. If I were younger and my health better I'd be out there giving a helping hand.

Looking forward to your next issue.

John M.
Fife
Scotland

Dear Red Action,
I am a member of the SWP (recently joined) but have recently had my eyes opened to some of the flaws of a vanguard party. I would be very grateful if you could send me a copy of Red Action issue 60 (Sept/Oct 91) containing a Marxist analysis of the vanguard party.

How bad is the lack of democracy, shallowness of debate and know-all middle classes in the SWP? Is it true that the majority of its central committee are middle class careerists and that the few working class militants like myself within the party are to be found in the lower sections just left for recruiting purposes? During a revolution is power in the hands of the workers' councils and the people or in the hands of the party? I'm sorry about all these questions. You must think I'm stupid to have joined a party without knowing the answers to these questions. I joined the SWP because I'd lost faith in the Labour Party, Militant and the Democratic Left and I really didn't know what else was left. It seemed anti-statist and put up a few good arguments against militants to the left of vanguardism. (Those arguments now appear to be incorrect now that I've actually analysed them myself, although I still believe in the withering away of the dictatorship of the proletariat instead of the immediate abolition of the state)

Dear Red Action
I have been aware of Red Action but never come across any of your publications. Recently I got hold of an old copy of your paper with an article in it called "Trotsky: The False Prophet". I read this with some interest having had my doubts about the Trotskyist method for some time now.

For me, there are two great problems with Trotskyism as I see and experience it. Firstly, this idea of the degenerated workers state - I find it almost impossible to bring myself to defend this idea. It works lovely in the world of "theory" but doesn't exist in the real world. I couldn't go up to some bloke in the CIS or wherever and say, "Oh yeah, you

ought to be defending all this planned properly," after what Stalinism did to those countries. It's a theory that has no material basis and I thought that was what Marxism was all about.

I'm also beginning to think that this all throws back to the Leninist-style party with the whole centralist deal leading to suppression of democracy. Although your article touches on this, I'm still very confused.

Secondly, a major problem of Trotskyism (and of the left in general) is a complete misunderstanding of what the working class is actually about. For all its wittering about "being the vanguard" the left doesn't seem to appreciate how ordinary people live, what they care about, what

they think! (The degenerated workers state thing proves that! Tell that to the average bloke on the street and he'll tell you to stick it more than likely!) Your paper seems to cut through all that, which is a refreshing change.

I don't want to sound like some big theory bore, but I want to get this right. I've been in a total of three left groups now (Militant and SWP before this) and sussed them all. I don't want to get caught again. If you could send me some more stuff about yourselves and what you reckon to us, I'll be really grateful. Hope to hear from you soon.

Cheers
B D
Cardiff

My problem is that I've been too happy in the past to be liberated by people who know best instead of working things out for myself which I think all people are capable of. I've actually believed the contents of some books because they're well presented and have the words "revolutionary socialism" on the front. Now I don't trust anyone's opinion except my own. But I need all sides to an argument before I can make my own decision which is why I'm asking your opinion and the opinion of others. It seems to me that the only way to learn anything on the British left is by making mistakes. I'm interested in your opinion of other issues also. How do you think socialism can be achieved? Do you believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat? If not, why? And what do you believe in? (The dictatorship of the proletariat, to me, is society being run by fully democratic workers' councils with recallable delegates on an average worker's wage) What other views apart from anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism are to the left of vanguard socialism?

Yours fraternally,
MH
N. Devon

PS. I thought the article on Malcolm X was brilliant.

Dear Red Action,
Serious concern has been voiced from many quarters about a series of cases in Belfast which have become known as the Casement Park Trials. Groups like Amnesty International, the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers and Liberty (NCLL) have all produced reports critical of some aspects of the legal processes involved in the trials.

The background to all this lies in a sequence of events which occurred in March 1988. First, Mairead Farrell and two other Republicans were shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar. Second, the funeral for the Gibraltar Three was attacked by the Loyalist Michael Stone and three mourners were killed. Third, the funeral of Michael Brady, one of Stone's victims, was disrupted when a car containing two undercover soldiers drove into it at high speed. The soldiers brandished their service revolvers and a shot was discharged. Fearing a repeat of Stone's murderous attack, a group of mourners (all unarmed) rushed the car and disarmed its occupants, moving them to nearby Casement Park. At some point later the two soldiers were shot dead by the IRA.

As a result of these events, over 200 mourners and spectators have been arrested and questioned by the RUC with 41 being charged. To date, five men have received life sentences. None of those accused, even according to the prosecution, were directly involved in the shootings. Three of those serving life - Pat Kane, Michael Timmons and Sean Kelly, were not even at the scene of the soldiers' deaths. The convictions rest on an alarming interpretation of the legal doctrine, Common Purpose, only hitherto seen in apartheid South Africa. Normally in the case of murder, this doctrine applies to those who have formed a prior criminal plan which results in an unlawful killing, all the conspirators thereby being equally culpable.

Clearly in these cases, self-defence was the motivation of those who went to the car. The mourners were acting in the not unreasonable belief that they were under another loyalist attack. No one could have predicted that the occupants of the car would be killed. While none of the Casement Park accused have been charged with actually shooting the two soldiers, it is obvious that this is what they are being punished for. Common Purpose is therefore being used to criminalise those who attend Republican funerals.

Other disturbing features from these trials include the use of poor quality video film from an army helicopter (the Heli-Tele) as a primary means of identification. The exercising by Sean Kelly of his right to silence was cited by Mr Justice Carswell as a reason to help justify his conviction. All of these dubious legal practices are being played out in the Diplock Courts which function without juries and so have a special responsibility to interpret the law with great care. They seem instead to be playing ducks and drakes with due process to the great detriment of those who end up in prison as a consequence.

A Justice for the Casement Park Accused Campaign has been established to raise these and other issues. They can be contacted c/o Green Ink Bookshop, 8 Archway Mall, London N19 5RG. We must not allow a Birmingham Six part two to take place.
Yours Sincerely,
S.H

The 'appalling vista' for Malcolm Kennedy is the fact that British justice would very likely see him rot in jail for a crime they know he didn't commit, rather than open up that particular can of worms. Malcolm Kennedy is no longer the naive man he once was when he first entered Hammersmith station. In a recent statement he asks, "What next? A prison grant, perhaps a confession? What next indeed? Watch this space!"

B.D.
Manchester

Red Action are the most controversial group in Britain, hated and feared by the far right and among elements on the far left. Here's why.

NO ONE LIKES US... WE DON'T CARE!

Of late, Red Action has come in for unprecedented attacks in a host of publications which have spanned the entire political spectrum from the far-left to the far-right. While in public, at least, the Trotskyist movement has lamented recent splits within Anti-Fascist Action, in private the fascists have gloated. Internal documents that have come into our possession, confirm that within the far-right, Red Action's particular contribution to the anti fascist struggle is recognised by the fascists as being unique.

For different reasons, RA are also regarded as being unique by the left. However, though approaching the subject from necessarily different perspectives, both are agreed that RA are indeed to blame. According to the Right, RA are to blame for the existence of AFA. Whereas for the left it is RA's own existence rather than AFA's that is the focus of their concern.

TARGET the journal of pro-fascist action devotes its first cover to denouncing Red Action as THE GOON SQUAD and a "criminal organisation". The Revolutionary Internationalist League bemoan the fact that "AFA is dominated by the thuggish and anti-Leninist RED ACTION..." On the other hand the Free University Forum insist that Red Action are "LENINIST boot-boots". The League Sentinel journal of the League of St. George refers to Red action simply as "gangsters". While the Campaign against Fascism in Europe, which has recently gone domestic, detect "a strong atmosphere around Red Action of sexism, homophobia, and a complete insensitivity to black people"...etc.

AFA was re launched by RA in London in 1989 on the principle of physical and ideological confrontation. It is our refusal to deviate from the founding statement, or to allow others within AFA either affiliated groups or individuals to do so, that has caused much gnashing of teeth. Physical confrontation or, to put it in plain English, political violence and its uses is what lies at the heart of the matter. Our attitude towards confrontation, which is well documented, determines the attitude of all others towards us. Some are blunt enough to say so. According to a group that goes under the name of the Workers Internationalist League, AFA is dominated by the "sectarian and squaddist politics of Red Action and the Direct Action Movement. Red Action in particular has virtually reduced anti-fascism to a question of physical force pure and simple." Needless to say the WIL, firmly wedded to the cause of platonic anti fascism are not in AFA. However the quotation though small, is a near perfect illustration, of the attitude of contemporary Trotskyism towards militant anti-fascism.

Though the political message is no less repugnant the uncharacteristic honesty is almost refreshing. Regrettably few others seem

prepared to confront their own position on the subject without hypocrisy. The Anarchist Communist Federation for instance, insist, on the contrary that AFA's commitment to actual physical confrontation is precisely what makes them "appealing". Sadly, as a united front made up of Anarchists, Trotskyists, Red Action, Labour party supporters; AFA contains so many supporters of capitalism that it has never claimed to be a revolutionary organisation. It can only deal with symptoms of fascism whilst leaving the root cause - capitalism - untouched. Needless to say the ACF are not in AFA either. For the WIL, AFA, is too militant, but for their anarchist fellow travellers AFA is not militant enough!

The third accusation, levelled against RA, is that we are sectarian. This charge is levelled by Workers Power who were in AFA but who, having decamped, now speak of AFA in the past tense! Which merely confirms the long held suspicion that what made AFA unique in the anti-fascist arena was, for Workers Power, not its militant example but the simple fact that they were in it. Rumour has it that they are now sniffing around ARA. This would be, if true, entirely consistent. (WP like another organisation called The Leninist were slightly startled to find themselves making up the moderate wing in a militant organisation. So when the opportunity presented itself they jumped ship and joined the Anti-Nazi League, and were instantly transformed from being conservatives within a radical organisation into radicals within a conservative one! WP though, bound by their previous public



Taken from 'Target'

utterances on the ANL, may be looking to fulfill a similar function within AFA.)

The allegation constantly repeated by Workers Power since the London regional conference is that RA argued for the boycott of any initiative by any other group. Quite simply this is a lie. What RA argued against, was the WP proposal that AFA commit itself in principle to support EVERY initiative by EVERY other group! ("AFA will attempt to mobilise for every anti-fascist event

regardless of who organised it.") Nevertheless the arguments that (due principally to RA's influence) AFA is (a) Squaddist, (b) reformist, and (c) sectarian or a combination thereof, represent the approximate positions of the following organisations. Militant, SWP, RCP, Workers Press, Socialist Outlook, Socialist Organiser, London Class War and others even too miserable to mention. In other words this combination serves as a collective justification for all those groups standing outside the anti-fascist arena as well as those such as the ANL and ARA remaining passive within it.

Naturally it follows that, as their criticisms are so similar, the theoretical solutions are almost identical. In all cases, the formula is entirely abstract. Reality is expected to adapt to the 'plan', if not, so much the worse for reality! This begs the obvious question; why if our critics are all agreed on the need for a militant anti-fascist united front they don't all just get together and form one?!

There are two main reasons. The first being that none of the charges are true. The second is, that unlike all other campaigns in which the Left make themselves busy, anti-fascism as an issue is unique. Primarily, because 'the enemy' is real rather than imaginary, the problems are entirely practical rather than abstract. One other factor that conditions individual response is the knowledge that the price of failure may well be the cause of not only visible political embarrassment but instant personal regret.

Let's for the moment return to the central allegations. Number one: Red Action has reduced the question of anti-fascism to physical force pure and simple. It may seem a little obvious but anti-fascism is by definition a negative concept. It cannot set its own agenda except in response to the politics and strategies of the fascist opposition. How and where they conduct their offensive must necessarily govern any effective operation of defence.

The January issue of British Nationalist, outlines their 'immediate and long term objectives'. "A party like the BNP must first win power on the streets if it is to achieve power at the ballot box; it is essential for the BNP to possess strength in numbers if it is to avoid being pushed around by the...REDS." As a statement of intent, it is unequivocal. They should be congratulated. Power on the streets is the first step. Who then has reduced politics to a question of 'physical force pure and simple'? As the Italian communist Gramsci put it; "fascism is an ideology of national unity and an organisation modelled on the army in the field". Now that it's established who started it, so to speak, the question sharply posed is this: what

are we prepared to do about it? If possible, the popular argument represented by the ACF i.e., that militant anti-fascism only deals with the symptoms of capitalism is possibly even less literate. As previously stated, anti-fascism is a defensive struggle. A rear-guard action. A regrouping to recover lost ground following a temporary retreat. In ideal circumstances a united front of the entire left, (more realistically, the enforced unity of the worthwhile elements within it) under physical attack from an identifiable common enemy on the far-right. Certainly fascism is a symptom of capitalism, but so is communism, indeed so is the working class. A crisis in capitalism will beget fascism only when the actions and arguments against the system from the Left have failed to convince.

In 1923 the veteran German revolutionary Klara Zetkin, made precisely this point. "Fascism is in no sense the revenge of the bourgeoisie for the revolutionary advance. Considered historically and objectively, fascism presents itself much more as a punishment on the proletariat for not having ... acted vigorously or aggressively enough." In other words the Left is forced to fight physical battles, as a result of already having lost significant political battles. It is by capturing the constituency of the Left that fascism becomes a mass movement. This is a result of people losing faith not only in the reformist parties but in socialism itself. Fascism is a consequence, not a cause of the Left's political failure. Dove-like serenity in the face of fascist aggression merely compounds the previous failure.

The anti-fascist forces will contain revolutionaries within it, but it is not itself a revolutionary forum. The cry for 'unity' is not the battle cry of revolution but a plea for help. Agreement therefore is needed, but because it is a strategy of defence rather than offence an agreement restricted very much to the basics; how to strike, whom to strike, when to strike! Only a sect whose immaculate principles put it outside the anti-fascist struggle dare sneer at the militants within. Outside the anti-fascist movement is where Workers Power, now (who maintain that AFA is sectarian, as a consequence of Red Action) clearly also belong. Free at last of responsibility, their productive energies can be devoted to the drawing up of fantastic blueprints for UNITY whose principle attraction is, that they will never be implemented in practice.

The call for 'unity' is of course the last refuge of every sectarian. In October WP declared: "that London AFA is now an obstacle to the construction of the united front". On their way out they issued a "call to any member of London AFA to join us in the fight for real united action against the BNP". In favour of an imaginary united front these people of principle did their best to ruin the only existing one.

This remember in the month just after Waterloo. In the February edition of their paper the method behind the madness is at last revealed. WP point out that the largest party on the Left is the SWP that claims 7500 members up and down the country. Apparently, one of the most notorious examples of RA's sectarianism was when the SWP (all 7500 of them presumably), "tried to mobilise for the defence of a paper selling pitch in Brick Lane, and — Red Action abstained". (Incidentally, its probably worth pointing out that neither Red Action nor AFA were even invited). Still 'tried' being the operative word should have told them something.

Undaunted WP insist the only way forward is "a well planned patient and persistent campaign addressed to the SWP/ANL at all levels for joint committees and joint defence, coupled with a continuing policy of putting no platform into practice. This does not for a minute express the illusion that their leaders will freely agree."

An analogy with the situation between the Communists and the Social Democrats in the German Weimar Republic in 1933 is put forward as the basis for the proposition: "If the social democratic leaders refused, [the communist appeal for unity] they would display their unwillingness to fight and the communists would be a tremendous pole of attraction to those SPD workers who could see the threat the Nazis posed." It may only be coincidence but isn't this precisely the same failed strategy adopted by WP since 1974 in relation to the SWP that they now urge AFA to adopt in relation to the ANL? For 'communist' read Workers Power. For Social Democrat read SWP. Only then does the slightly squalid 'party building' rationale for this particular wet-dream become clear. In any case, the situation in Britain is different in any number of fundamental respects, chiefly that even the right wing Social Democratic Party had its own paramilitary units, was to the left of the SWP, had a membership of hundreds of thousands, and enjoyed the support of millions of genuine workers. By 1933 even the notorious reformist Karl Kautsky, was forced to admit, albeit belatedly that "Acts of violence, ... cannot be prevented by votes and editorials, or protest meetings". The SWP may have seven and a half thousand members but it still operates as a sect. It has few working-class members (due in part to a long standing orientation towards the financially and

politically smug) and no popular support in any working class communities. In addition the leadership of the SWP is only too aware that the average member has no appetite for street-fighting. Because the SWP are unable to deal with external physical threat, are equally reluctant to deal internally with the political incrimination of a revolutionary organisation, being unable to do so. In the unlikely at the leadership come to terms with this inadequacy, the political dividend for the anti-fascist movement would be, in future, to allow a limited collaboration to reducing in importance future disagreements within anti-fascist circles from the level of the theoretical to the level of the tactical.

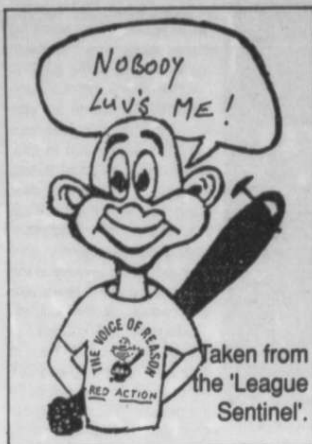
The left are not the working class, and consequently you orientate to one at the expense, invariably, of the other. In 1989 we turned to the

At the extreme end of the market are the *Pasionarias* of Anti-Fascist Action, who specialise in "Rent-to-Kill" anti-fascism. AFA is made up of the anarchist Direct Action Movement and Red Action, a "squaddist" by-product of the SWP's last anti-fascist binge, and is also linked to Gerry Gable's anti-fascist monitoring organ *Searchlight*. AFA is British 'anti-fascism' at its purest. Comprising confused refugees from the radical Left, who are unable to understand the nature of the Left's failure, they have decided that politics itself is to blame. AFA therefore concentrates on the uncomplicated business of pest irradiation and control.

The traditional view of Red Action from the Left - from the Trotskyist magazine 'Analysis'.

Left out of expediency. In London at least the Left appears to be wrung dry, and a turn to the class is a simple matter of necessity. In 1873 Engels offered a general view on the question of tactics and propaganda. "Our view, which we have found confirmed by long practice, is that the correct tactics in propaganda are not to entice away a few individuals and local groups here and there from ones opponents, but to work on the great mass, which is not yet taking part in the movement ... One must not allow oneself to be misled by the cry for 'unity'." Those who have this word most often on their lips are the ones who cause most of the discord, who have provoked all the splits, clamour for nothing so much for unity. [The RIL and now WP are in this category.] These unity fanatics are either narrow minded people who want to stir everything into one nondescript stew, which, at the moment it is left to settle, throws up the differences again but in much sharper contrast because they will all be in one pot, [i.e. joint RA/SWP squads?] - or else they are people who unconsciously, (like the Hackney Anti-Fascist Collective who complained bitterly that AFA was "not lesbian friendly". When asked, whether the proper criteria for membership should be support for militant anti-fascism or sexual preference, they offered no reply.) Or consciously (like CAFE who set up a rule or ruin operation within AFA and are still one of the great bawlers for unity) want to adulterate the movement.

The final comment from Engels on this matter is one everybody in Red Action would heartily endorse: "Nobody in our lifetime has given us more trouble and has caused more quarrels than the shouters for unity". In the long term perhaps AFA's greatest achievement so far is, that in



Taken from the 'League Sentinel'.

an attempt to be effective; to deliver on its founding statement, it has eschewed sectarianism, the party front and built from the bottom up. From Glasgow to Exeter, to be successful it has also been forced to operate outside the customary left-wing orbit. AFA has as a consequence broken the treasured Trotskyite stranglehold on left-wing initiative. Waterloo happened despite the Trotskyites, rather than because of them. Now as a mirror to their own inadequacy, and an actual alternative to them in one area of work it is rightly perceived by some to harbour a challenge to the status quo in

every other. So it is not only on the far-right that efforts are made to discredit AFARA as a symbol of resistance.

For instance, after the Battle of Waterloo, one deservedly obscure little sect, insisted that due to lack of organisation "only a few fascists were got at". AFA's leaders were further castigated for their "utter incompetence, stupidity, and criminal neglect for failing ... to defeat the police"!! In contrast the fascist's organisers, Blood and Honour, blamed "drugged up communists" for turning the event into "a battlefield", and acknowledged that in future "arrangements will be made to ensure all our supporters make it to the venue".

It is certainly true that the fascist publications devote far less space, though in no sense less vitriolic, to attacking AFARA, than our 'allies'. In private however it appears to be something of an obsession. The general tone adopted is both dismissive and reassuring, as the purpose of the reports is not

to inform but to boost morale. Like pre-war boys' weeklies the nationalist heroes have much the same kind of adventures month after month. Two themes constantly recur. AFA's imminent collapse and Red Action's cowardice.

After one particularly bloody battle in a fascist pub in South-East London which left, according to the police, six fascists with serious injuries, broken arms and the like. Blood and Honour reported it thus: "the only person that they [150 Reds with odds of six to one in their favour] managed to frighten was a woman in a wheelchair, who was turned out and beaten by the fleeing Communists. Seeing this the Nationalists organised an immediate collection and handed the woman nearly one hundred pounds." "AFA is in serious trouble" the BNP magazine Spearhead announced a month before Waterloo. For the most part the same article pointed out "AFA are all talk... puff out their puny chests and brag over what they fantasise about doing." Fantasy and of course insanity is long recognised as the natural haven for those unfortunates whom reality disappoints. Witness this "communique" from the paramilitary group C18 "we are the people, the Tory scum fear not you. You [Red Action] are the

stormtroopers of the Bosses being used to crush the white working class". (For anybody that might be interested C18 stands for Combat group Adolf Hitler. A and H being the first and eighth letters in the alphabet)

So elusive has RA proved over the years that, for propaganda purposes, a certain creativity is also important. For if sufficient incidents don't occur to satisfy demand then they must simply be invented. The League Sentinel reported recently that: "Red Action's street credibility has been thrown into serious doubt, having been twice chased from demos by Nationalists. Once from the Holocaust Revisionist meeting organised by David Irving and then the British National Party's AGM where Red Action thugs were seen fleeing as fast as their little legs could carry them, hotly pursued by members of the Nationalist Combat 18." Consequently, when something actually does occur that passes muster as victory, including some that do not, it instantly transforms into fascist fable.

The following is an account of such an incident carried in TARGET, the Right's answer to Searchlight. "On Saturday the 8th of August, the day of the annual Troops Out march in North London... about 12 members of Red Action were having

a drink when they suffered a full-scale attack by persons unknown... no arrests were made and the next day the pub [The Enkel Arms] strongly resembled a derelict building". An abbreviated but generally straight forward account. The version in Redwatch under a sub-title WE HIT THE JACKPOT was a little more lurid with the numbers being substantially boosted... "outside the pub was a RED ACTION firm numbering about thirty... C18 together with a group of patriots from Chelsea set out to confront Red Action who after years of bragging and carrying out sneak attacks on old men like Richard Edmonds had a chance to face us mob to mob; instead they fled into the pub and covered inside waiting for the police to come and protect them. Just like at The Weavers pub a few months before, Red Action proved to have no bottle." (No bottle? As I recall lack of bottle(s) was not a problem on either occasion. Indeed their ready availability meant that the BNP were reluctant to try to turn their undoubted numerical advantage 100+ at The Weavers into anything more tangible than a few gurns and the odd remark.)

In the League Sentinel under a headline, RED ACTION ROUTED, they announced "that several members of Red Action were badly injured in an attack

on a London pub recently... it was a complete rout... one of their so called hard men was desperately trying to get under a table.... etc." (If the truth be told they made a mess of it. With odds of four to one Red Action would have expected to do a little bit better than break a couple of pub windows). Nevertheless the far-right have now as was demonstrated by the 376 arrests prior to the Bloody Sunday demonstration, a formidable potential. In contrast the Left having failed the litmus test first on the issue of Ireland and now as well on anti-fascism has clearly announced, that it is not, and does not expect to be regarded as a serious movement.

In political terms it might appear Red Action is almost totally isolated. The attacks from the Right are clearly a tribute to our effect on them. The denunciations from the Left increasingly shrill, as the struggle sharpens, have no effect on us, and are for the same reason equally welcome. Nobody likes us...? We don't care!

STOP PRESS

It has come to our attention that the Blood and Honour band, English Rose, have a track on their latest album called simply "Smash Red Action". Perhaps they should release it as a single!

THE 43 GROUP



The 43 Group by Morris Beckman

"The post-war fascists were an intelligent, disciplined organisation led by a charismatic leader supported by a structure of capable lieutenants. Most were excellent orators. They knew exactly what they were doing. Their initial stage was to build up their stormtroopers, the street thugs, to protect their meetings and intimidate opposition.

It was these street thugs that we made our target. In 1947-8 they were picking up new members. Our relentless non-stop attacks where we deliberately out-violenced them, is what really beat them."

Anti-fascists will find this book very interesting because it covers a period - 1945-1950 - which rarely features in present day anti-fascist literature.

The idea that fascism was destroyed at the end of the Second World War is well and truly buried. The fascists were holding public meetings in London even before the war was over, in fact as early as 1944.

Men and women who had spent the last few years in the British armed forces, supposedly fighting the 'fascist threat', returned home to see the fascists active on the streets, unchallenged. "Going from a cinema showing newsreel of piles of Jewish men, women

and children being bulldozed into limepits in the concentration camps, and then passing an outdoor fascist meeting or seeing swastikas whitewashed on Jewish homes and synagogues affected these ex-servicemen with emotion ranging from choleric anger to a cold hard desire to kill the perpetrators."

The inactivity of the Board of Deputies of British Jews led to a great deal of anger and frustration in the Jewish community and, finally, after four young Jewish ex-servicemen smashed up a fascist meeting on Hampstead Heath in February 1946, a meeting was called a few weeks later which, "agreed to set up an organisation to fight the fascists. This organisation will be apolitical - anyone who wants to fight fascism and anti-semitism, regardless of their political views will be welcome." The meeting also agreed, "to lobby parliament to illegalise racial incitement and make it an offence punishable by imprisonment." There were 43 people present - hence the name of the group.

From March 1946 to April 1950, the 43 Group commandos waged a merciless war against the fascists, attacking up to 15 meetings a week. The original 43 were soon joined by many more, the Group achieving a membership of nearly 1,000 by 1948.

Tightly organised commandos (squad) attended virtually every fascist meeting with the sole intention of stopping them. They were largely successful. The only time they were ever 'run' was when a hired gang of Maltese hoods ambushed them in Romford, attacking them with razor blades embedded in potatoes. Fascist paper sellers regularly had their papers 'confiscated' and fascist bookshops, of which there were quite a number, were raided and their contents burnt.

Their intelligence network was just as important and just as effective, infiltrating virtually all the fascist groups. Even one of Moseley's personal bodyguards was a member of the 43 Group!

After the war, the various re-emerging fascist groups realised the importance of not being openly associated with the recently defeated fascist powers, so the word 'fascist' rarely appeared and Jews became 'aliens'. To counter this, the Group published a magazine called 'On Guard' which exposed the real nature of groups like the British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women and the British People's Party.

The Group's position on Zionism is interesting and is similar to Anti-Fascist Action's. Both AFA and the 43 Group are/were single issue organisations and political differences on other issues should not be allowed to smash the unity and effectiveness of the organisation. The fascists were using the situation in Palestine to whip up anti-Semitism as the Zionists clashed with the British army of occupation in that country, often resulting in the deaths of British soldiers. The 43 Group said, "Palestine is Palestine, and Hackney is Hackney." They quite rightly accepted that there are other forums for these debates.

The main criticism Red Action would have of the 43 Group would be their political strategy. We now have laws forbidding the incitement of racial hatred which they thought would solve the problem, but fascism is still very much on the agenda today. Without a class analysis they never got to the root of the problem.

This book is a good historical record of the activities of the 43 Group and the numerous anecdotes mean it never becomes a dull academic affair. For example, two 43 Group members went to liberate some files from Jeffrey Hamm's office. Hamm was one of Sir Oswald Moseley's right-hand men and

had an ex-SS bodyguard. The German opened the door, but blocked it with his body. The two commandos snapped to attention, gave the fascist salute, rapped out two 'Hail Moseleys' and said they had an important message for Jeffrey. Then, shoving the bemused German aside, they shot up the stairs. They found Hamm in his office on the fourth floor. Jack snatched League files and books, and ran back downstairs. Martin, meanwhile, took care of Hamm - it was no contest. He left Hamm dazed and bleeding on the floor then started down the stairs.

"On the second landing, Martin stopped. The German was waiting for him, crouched in combat position and clutching a length of rubberised lead piping. He stared at Martin and raised his arm into a striking position. Martin yelled out as loudly as he could, 'You fucking stupid idiot! Why didn't you stop that Jew bastard who ran down the stairs? Now get out of my way and let's get after him!'

"This outburst so confused the German that he momentarily lowered the cosh. That was enough for Martin. He jumped

the last six stairs straight onto the landing and, without breaking his stride, bounded straight into the German and caught him with two all-in-wrestling forearm blows, the first to his solar plexus and the next to his chin. Martin

later said these should have put the German down, but he was strong. He just staggered back against the wall. Martin then linked his hands and brought them up full strength under the German's chin - even then the German stayed on his feet. But, disorientated, he dropped the cosh. Martin picked it up and later dropped it down a street grating. He raced down the remainder of the stairs to find Jack at the bottom holding the street door open. 'What bloody kept you?' he complained. 'Did Jeffrey make you a cup of tea?' Martin's reply was unprintable."

While the book does mention other anti-fascist activities by the trade unions and the Communist Party, it doesn't comment on the different tactics used or compare the results. Red Action totally supports physical confrontation against the fascists but also stresses the importance of having a wider political agenda to prevent clashes between fascists and anti-fascists turning into gang warfare which is detached from the rest of the population. It is vital to explain why these clashes are important politically and win the

backing of wider progressive forces to prevent the militants becoming isolated. Being isolated makes it easier to get picked off, either by the state or the fascists. However, the experience of the 43 Group clearly explains how effective physical confrontation has to be carefully planned. Even when you can mobilise thousands of people to support confrontational activities, you still need tightly organised groups to take the initiative and direct the course of events. This is not elitist or anti-democratic, but winning the battle for the streets is not the same as winning a vote in a meeting. This book about physical confrontation against the fascists couldn't have come at a better time as the debate about effective anti-fascist tactics becomes more and more important. The groups who believe 'No Platform' means standing behind a barrier waving a placard would do well to read this book. But more importantly it is encouragement to genuine militants that we are part of an on-going tradition and that this tradition has proved successful.



Fascists meeting in East London's Ridley Road, 1948

Beyond the Pale

Red Action Dublin • PO Box 3355, Dublin 7, Eire



LABOUR PAINS

While never expecting any radical policies from a party with absolutely no radical tradition even cynics were surprised to see the speed at which the Labour Party emerged itself in the perks of political opportunism. In true Irish political gombenheim, as the country was losing thousands of jobs the priority of some of the top people in the Labour Party, including its leader, Dick Spring, were ensuring that family members were set up in nice cosy jobs. Even in its heyday of political fixing, Fianna Fail would never have been so blatant.

Labour's lack of political sincerity was obvious early on in government when they refused to recind the 12 cuts in social welfare made by the outgoing Minister for Social Welfare, Charlie McCreavey. At a time when the recommendations of the Commission on Social Welfare have still not been implemented six years on, these cuts hit the most vulnerable once again. While in opposition, Labour were only too willing to attack McCreavey's cuts but have quietly dropped the issue now that they are in government.

During the election campaign, the Labour Party argued against privatisation as an economic way forward. Now, in government, Labour have agreed to sell-off the state's remaining shares in the Irish sugar company, Greencore. The sell-off of some of Aer Lingus state-owned assets

seems to be a distinct possibility. In a country which has the highest unemployment in Europe, at 21 per cent, to follow an economic policy which is guaranteed to result in even more job losses is cynical at best and criminal at worst.

With housing waiting lists and homelessness a national disgrace in Ireland, the Labour Party, in the "Programme for Partnership in Government" negotiated with Fianna Fail, aim to build 3,500 new houses in the 26 Counties. The fact that there are approximately 10,000 people on the waiting list in Dublin alone puts this ridiculous figure of 3,500 into perspective. The knock-on effect, in terms of employment, of the government attempting to build a realistic number of houses to seriously tackle the problem of housing would at least indicate that the Labour Party were serious in their efforts to create more jobs. The much publicised "Employment Creation" Budget turned out to be a non-event. During the very week of the Budget over 1,000 jobs were lost in the 26 Counties.

As with all previous budgets those on higher incomes stood to gain most. To cap it all, another one per cent levy on basic incomes, to supposedly finance job creation, was introduced across the board affecting everybody above an income of £9,000 a year. Once again, working people are being penalised for the government's and the employers' inability or unwillingness to cre-

ate more jobs.

Another issue for which Labour Party practice is the opposite of Labour Party policy is Section 31. Darling of the Irish left, Michael D Higgins, with his admirable support for far away liberation struggles such as that in Nicaragua, El Salvador, South Africa etc, has, in his role as Minister For Communications, responsibility for Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act. Section 31 denies Sinn Fein, a legal political party with elected representatives, access to the airwaves. Higgins had previously been a vocal opponent of the censorship of Section 31 but in his present position with the power to repeal Section 31 he has neglected to do so. Even the left of the Labour Party has shown itself to be as untrustworthy and opportunist as the likes of Spring, Quinn, Desmond etc.

The fact that the majority of the 'revolutionary' left in Ireland called for a vote for Labour exposes these 'revolutionaries' for the directionless sham that they are. These people are equally as guilty of creating the illusion that Labour can in some way solve the problems of the country. With the media in Ireland launching vicious and relentless attacks on Labour for their 'indiscretions', public opinion is rapidly turning against Spring and Co. All this just further adds to the worldwide disillusionment with the left.



Has Labour forgotten the question?

(above photo: Ruairi Quinn)

"Sell your own soul if you want, you won't sell mine."

The above words were recently spoken by Bernadette McAliskey, civil rights activist and former MP, when she outlined her and thousands of northern nationalists' abhorrence at the possibility of the Dublin government abandoning them through the deletion of Articles 2 & 3. She rightly summed up the feeling of many people that the Dublin government sees the aspirations of northern nationalists as something to be used as a bargaining chip in an attempt to appease unionist politicians.

The deletion of Articles 2 & 3 will, in the government's view, absolve them of any responsibility for the plight of the nationalist community. The deletion will literally render northern nationalists stateless. It will increase the hardship they face. It will not, as the southern establishment claim, end the war in the North. The IRA does not recognise the constitution so any alteration is irrelevant to them. The IRA have never used Articles 2 & 3 as a justification for the armed struggle. In fact, this appeasement to loyalists will further alienate the nationalists. The only remaining claim will be Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act which states the British government's right to govern northern Ireland. Nationalists will not allow themselves to be abandoned by a Dublin government which constantly ignores the roots of the conflict - the lack of justice and equality in northern Ireland.

Red Action do not share the narrow nationalist views of other groups defending Articles 2 & 3. We do not believe in petty flag-waving around and sectarian jingoism. We believe in a 32 County socialist republic and all that this entails - not a country that replaces British capitalism

with Irish capitalism. The only way to improve conditions for all people is to change the system that breeds inequality. A system that favours the rich while ignoring the poor is not acceptable either north or south. Nationalist and unionist workers have both suffered under capitalist misrule. Working class unionists have been used as pawns in an attempt by their bosses to retain their powerful status. Parasites like Paisley and Molyneux don't care about ordinary unionists. Power and what they can gain from it is their sole motive. Equally so, on the nationalist side where Hulme swans around Europe playing the statesman (and making a good living at it) while ordinary nationalists face the daily threat of loyalist gunmen, British raiding parties and RUC harassment.

Northern Ireland is a sectarian state. Loyalism and the mentality it has bred must be broken. The bosses on both sides live off the backs of the people. At a time when Dublin is considering abandoning the nationalists, the Confederation of British Industry and the Confederation of Irish Industry are talking about closer links. The plight of the working class is irrelevant to these bosses' organisations. War or no war, they survive and prosper. This fight should be a class struggle, not a sectarian or territorial one. Articles 2&3 are a legitimate aspiration. They are a step in the right direction. Contrary to the reasoning behind the acquiescence of the southern neo-unionist establishment, to the abandonment of Articles 2&3 more northern nationalists will rely on the IRA to achieve their aspirations.

NOTICE
Due to the apathy of the trade union leadership in Ireland, Red Action invites all progressive groups and individuals to organise a commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the 1913 Lockout. If interested contact PO Box 3355, Dublin 7.

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The Bottom Line... The Bottom Line...

reality of women's lives in Ireland. Sinn Féin is committed to addressing the issue of abortion in Ireland not by denying women choice but by campaigning for:
• Comprehensive sex education;
• Free availability of medical/non-medical contraception;
• Provision of national state funded childcare services;
• Adequate financial and emotional support for single parents.
P.....L.....R.....
Cumann Throalach

Once again this years Sinn Fein Ard Fheis was a boring rehash of old policies and speeches about SF's right to a place at the 'mythical' peace talks. Unfortunately things reached rock bottom during the debate on a 'women's rights to choose'. The controversial intervention of Gerry Adams was deciding factor coupled with the bizarre speech from the male skibereen delegate who made veiled references to people "saving trees and not babies" and who seemed bewildered that women could get "emotional" over this subject. Worse still was the failure of prominent women activists within SF to even convince their own Cumannns (branches) to support the motions. In their frenzy to deny women their rights they even rejected this motion (see panel). All this from a party that promises us a New Ireland, and SF wonder why they're not gaining support. Sad!

Dick Spring, the new minister for foreign affairs is apparently the best man for this sensitive job according to his brother Arthur. Arthur once told and election rally that "Dick has worked like a nigger for North Kerry". With a recommendation like that who could argue?!

WE MARCH IN EDINBURGH

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

This attitude as we are all aware is far short of being universal. In Britain the anti-imperialist movement is in deep crisis, without unity or direction and under dual threat from the fascists/loyalists on

the one hand, and when necessary the state on the other. Where there is sufficient working class support not to need the police, as in Edinburgh, they are banned. Demanding police protection, as was done in London does nothing more than illustrate a lack of sufficient support.

What is to be done? In the long term, a genuine anti-imperialist movement will have to be built. In the short term the political elements already in existence need first to survive if such a

renaissance is ever to materialise. The TOM claim that the BNP/NF/UDA, mobilisation was "a dismal" failure. It is unlikely that they will see it like that indeed heartened by the turn out they may well re double their efforts next year. In any case their next target will undoubtedly be the James Connolly Commemeration March in Edinburgh in June.

Out of simple self-respect there is now an obligation on the entire Left, to at least match the commitment of the right. In London the police were forced to

arrest 400 fascists to keep the Troops Out Movement on the street.. In Edinburgh we should be prepared to force them to arrest similar numbers as the price of keeping the Connolly Commemoration off the street. This is a national march that now more than ever needs a national mobilisation. This is not a mobilisation that can be limited to republicans or socialists or anti-fascists, it is in the light of recent events, also a demonstration for freedom of speech and the right of assembly. In Edinburgh we will need individuals from every

party and no party. Unlike London in January, the forces of the right will be united in pursuit of a common agenda in Edinburgh in June.

It will not be easy but this is a fight we can win. Moreover it is a fight we must fight. The question now posed to all who call themselves revolutionaries, anti fascists and republicans is this. Are we prepared to match the determination of a united opposition? If we do then we beat the ban and we march in Edinburgh.

The parties of the conservative left all identify with the Leninist model of organisation, primarily based on Bolshevik theory and practice as it developed after the 1917 revolution. There would be nothing remarkable in this if the same parties did not at the same time claim to be Marxist.

Yet the theory and practice of the working class organisation developed by Marx contradicts that of the Leninists. It is a case of either/or, not both. Occasionally consciousness of this fact rises to the level of deliberate intent within the apologists of the Leninist parties themselves. As Alex Callinicos of the SWP declares: "It was left to Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Russia to develop a different conception of the workers' party, one closer to the spirit, if not the letter, of Marx's thought... Lenin urged that such a party should combine a firm commitment to revolutionary principles, excluding all those who did not accept these principles in word and deed, with constant and active involvement in the life and struggles of the working class." The SWP should be commended for at least acknowledging that their organisation is constructed according to principles other than those outlined by Marx himself. Most Leninist organisations simply refuse to address the point.

This interesting commentary acknowledges first, that Lenin's conception of the party was "different" from that of Marx and Engels'. True, Callinicos, realising that everything Marx and Engels wrote and practiced in relation to party organisation (the "letter") contradicts Leninist principles, invents a metaphysical category, (the "spirit") in which Marxist practice is somehow 'realised' in the Leninist conception of the party. This Leninist party excluded all those who do not accept [revolutionary] principles. Marx's single minded stress on class composition and the form of open recruitment that it implies, is ignored, to be replaced by a self-confessedly exclusive ideology. The forms of working class organisation that Marx and Engels fought all their lives to develop, "in word and deed", are overthrown in favour of their precise opposite. It is only adding insult to injury to then say that this is being done in the name of the "spirit" of their philosophy. However disguised, this project remains nothing more than the rebuttal of what Marx and Engels did write, by what they did not.

While there is no systematically developed theory of the party and its role in the revolutionary transformation of society in Marx's writings, in the same sense that there is a systematic theory of capitalism. The fundamental principles of a Marxist theory of working class political organisation do exist in outline however, in the same sense as there is a Marxist 'theory' of the state. His writings on the subject are fragmented, but cumulatively provide an unequivocal guide to the character of the political movement of the working class. In addition, there is the evidence of Marx's own political practice: specifically, the exist-

ence of the International Working Men's Association.

THE PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS

Marx was consistent in his demand that the organisation of the working class had to be independent of any internal class alliances or collaboration: "collective appropriation can only proceed from a revolutionary action of the class of producers - the proletariat - organised in an independent political party."

This crucial independence is founded on the proposition that: "the working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes."

As Engels summarised the matter near the end of his life, "For the proletariat to be strong enough to win on the decisive day it must - and Marx and I have advocated this ever since 1847 - form a separate party distinct from all others and opposed to them, a conscious class party."

The class composition of the proletariat party is therefore clearly and consistently prescribed as the first condition of its existence, and this was explicitly the case with the International:

"When the International was formed we [Marx and Engels] expressly formulated the battle-cry: The emancipation of the working classes must be achieved by the working classes themselves."

This was precisely why Marx saw the International as an advance on any previous mass workers' organisation, since:

"What was new in the International was that it was established by the working men themselves and for themselves".

In considering the contemporary class struggle in America, for example, Engels stressed:

"The first step of importance for every country newly entering into the [labour] movement is always the constitution of the workers as an independent political party, no matter how, so long as it is a distinct workers' party... that is the main thing." "No matter how" says Engels - the specific issue is subordinate to the organisation of workers around it. The political movement of the masses must be "their own movement - in which they are driven by their own mistakes and learn from their experience." When Engels considered possible collaboration with "radical bourgeois" parties, Engels conceded that he was not "unconditionally" opposed to them, but insisted that in any such alliance, "the proletarian character of the Party is not jeopardised thereby. For me this is the absolute limit." (RA's emphasis)

FORM OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Of course, it remains true that for the class to act as a class and not merely as a formless group of individuals, it needs to be organised politically, as a "party". Marx's conception of political organisation itself, however, rests upon the notion of a general class movement rather than an exclusive party organisation in the Leninist sense.

As he defines the matter: "every movement in which the working class as a class confronts the ruling classes and tries to constrain them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt by strikes etc., in a particular factory or even in a particular trade to compel individual capitalists to reduce the working day, is a purely economic movement. On the other hand the movement to force through an

eight hour etc. law is a political movement, that is to say, a class movement, with the object of enforcing its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general, socially coercive force."

The political "movement" of the proletariat is defined through the "general" struggle for class based objectives, not through the activity of an ideologically founded group of "professional revolutionaries".

Marx concedes that such movements require a "certain degree of previous organisation" but are equally, "a means of developing this organisation." A revolutionary group that formed around a programme rather than a specific struggle, would therefore fall outside the real movement of the working class. Every so often you hear of a small number of lefties getting together to

hammer out a programme for a 'new' vanguard for the class. Nothing ever comes of it. On the contrary, a real working class organisation develops around and through a specific class fight. For example, it is well known that Red Action developed around the issue of fighting fascism: its politics developed in the midst of this fight. This practical, class based activity, was "the means of developing the organisation."

These forms of organisation therefore both directly arise out of the 'spontaneous' struggles of the class and develop only in association with them. It is in this broad and formally indeterminate sense that party organisation flows from the social cohesion of the class in specific struggles. Some measure, "a certain degree", of political organisation is nevertheless essential:

"The constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate end - the abolition of classes" For Marx, the term 'party' has none of the Leninist connotations it carries today: the working class party was composed simply of 'centres of organisation'.

NO AUTHORITY OVER THE CLASS

That Marx does not conceive of the working class 'party' as anything resembling the disciplined party of 'professional revolutionaries' as it came to be understood in the context of Leninism, becomes plain as soon as we examine the constitutional basis of Marx's principal achievement in the realm of practical political activity - the International Working Men's Association. The branches of the First International were to serve, says Marx, as mere "centres for the militant organisation of the working class".

Marx saw the function of the working class organisation - the "centre" - as a facilitating one; not one involving the imposition of authority. The centralism of Leninist models of 'democratic centralism' is unequivocally rejected. The leading purpose of the Working Men's International Association - was simply,

"to afford a central medium of communication and co-operation between working men's societies".

To this end, "the Members of the International Association shall use their utmost efforts to combine the disconnected working men's societies of their respective countries into national bodies, represented by central national organs."

The "centre" merely puts "disconnected" proletarian organisations into connection. It doesn't then rule over them. This form of unity is necessary since,

"even under the most favourable political conditions all serious success of the proletariat depends upon an organisation that unites and concentrates its forces".

Capital exists as a "concentrat-

ed social force" ranged against the workers as individuals. Even though in a majority, the workers remain relatively helpless against capital unless they themselves become a "concentrated social force" through a conscious and exclusively class based form of political organisation. The workers possess, "one element of success - numbers; but numbers only weigh in the balance, if united by combination and led by knowledge."

Yet it is clear that Marx did not envisage the centralisation of political and ideological authority in the workers' organisations. The necessary centralisation was rather of an executive and co-ordinating kind, adjusted to the promotion of working class unity in specific areas of action. In a letter to Engels in which he describes the inaugural meeting of the International, he outlines how,

"It was decided to set up a 'Working Men's International Association', the General Council of which should have its seat in London and should act as an 'intermediary' between the workers' societies in Germany, Italy, France and England."

The role of a centre as an "intermediary", in order "to link the various working men's movements and combine them", is very different from that of an authority over them. The inspiration of the International was a form of international trades union solidarity; Marx did not 'invent' the function; he was not even a founding member. "The Association has not been hatched by a sect or a theory. It is the spontaneous growth of the proletarian movement..."

Marx goes on to record his alarm at the prospect of the one function superseding the other. He expresses his alarm at a provisional 'declaration of principles' drawn up by a sub-committee which,

"aimed in fact at something that was utterly impossible, a sort of central government of the European working classes." (RA's emphasis) His rejection of the idea of the creation of a political authority over the working class - a 'government' - could hardly be more emphatic. Yet this project, of a 'government' over the class, is the very essence of the Leninist conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat as it developed in

the wake of the October revolution.

In the aftermath of the Paris Commune, Marx told a reporter from the 'World' newspaper that the bourgeois conception of the International as a centralised organisation was entirely false:

"This would imply a centralised form of government for the International, whereas the real form is designedly that which gives the greatest play to local energy and independence. In fact, the International is not properly a government for the working class at all. It is a bond of union rather than a controlling force." (RA's emphasis)

In the same interview, Marx derided the notion that the International operated as a conspiratorial and authoritarian agency:

"to talk of secret instructions

'centre' of any kind. He writes: "The General Council feels proud of the prominent part the Paris branches of the International have taken in the glorious revolution of Paris [the Commune]. Not, as the imbeciles fancy, as if the Paris, or any other branch of the International, received its orders from a centre."

The struggles of the Bolshevik party leadership to constitute itself as just such a centre during the revolutionary year 1917, is highly instructive. The notion of a centralised 'directorate', a centre of party authority, is considered by Marx, may it be noted well, to be "imbecilic". Even in the context of a workers' revolution, Marx indignantly rejects the idea that the members of the International are subject to the political authority of a 'centre'.

MARX AND THE THE SPIRIT &

SWP rally salute the Central Committee.



Marx's anticipation of 'Central Committee' or Bolshevik party, and later

It is noteworthy that when the French government tried to throw the responsibility for a series of strikes on the machinations of the International, Marx responded:

"It was not the International that threw the workmen into the strikes, but, on the contrary, it was the strikes that threw the workmen into the International."

He outlines the real process: "The flower of the working class in all civilised countries belonging to the International, and being imbued with its ideas, they are sure everywhere in the working class movements to take the lead."

Such elements "are sure to take the lead" because of their consciously independent class situation: not because they are instructed by the party centre. In Marx's view, spontaneous and organised class initiatives direct the revolutionary movement; not a centralised party of professional revolutionaries.

DEMOCRACY FROM BELOW

Political authority was consequently conceived by Marx as flowing from the bottom up rather than from the top down; as a direct consequence: "It is in accordance with the principle of the International to leave

to each section the responsibility for its own programme."

In a letter to the Lassallean socialist Schweitzer, Marx observes that, "Without going into details, I would only remark that the centralist organisation, no matter how valuable it may be for secret societies and sectarian movements, contradicts the essence of trade unions...where the worker is subject to bureaucratic discipline from his infancy and believes in officialdom and higher authority, it is above all a question of teaching him to walk by himself." (Marx's emphasis)

Although it is plain that Marx has trade unions uppermost in mind here, it is also the case that they represent for him, the independent organisation of the class, precisely as he prescribes for the working class political

ence? Is its authority not purely of a moral nature, and does it not submit its decisions to the judgement of the federations, which are entrusted with their implementation?"

The power of initiative in relation to executive functions, to make policy, were summarised in the provisional rules of the International, drawn up by Marx himself, and were instituted so that: "When immediate practical steps should be needed...the action of the associated societies be simultaneous and uniform. Whenever it seems opportune, the General Council shall take the initiative of proposals to be laid before the different national or local societies."

The restriction to "immediate practical steps", and the delegation of the power to 'initiate' proposals, which were then to be

archy and authoritarianism, "above all". The other side of the coin is that the independent organisation of the workers must be open and accessible. This was made plain in a practical form in Marx's stipulation that: "anybody who pays one shilling for a card can become a member of the Association." The International was not constituted as a federation of political groups. The basic unit of the Association was the individual worker.

While operating under the conditions of capitalism, the organisation of the working class will not be able to operate as a ready made form of communist society; it will, where it encounters the repressive force of the state, be obliged to maintain certain forms of secrecy; if it is of any revolutionary value at all, some

The emphasis on integration with the actually existing struggles of the class is unequivocal: "It is the business of the International Working Men's Association to combine and generalise the spontaneous movements of the working classes, but not to dictate or impose any doctrinary system whatever. The Congress should therefore...limit itself to the enunciation of a few general principles." [Emphasis in the original].

So far from the politically exclusive vanguard dictating from the top downwards, Marx insists that those of the "working men's party" should work within the existing, spontaneous struggles of the class - the 'programme' itself therefore develops from the bottom up.

The assertion of the primacy of

organisation's application to join the International, Marx added, "It is not for us to analyse whether or not it is a genuine expression of the proletarian movement. All we need to know is that it contains nothing counter to the general tendency of our Association..." To hammer home the point, Marx stressed, "it is part of our principles to leave each section free to formulate its own theoretical programme." [RA's emphasis].

CLASS MOVEMENT VS SECTARIANISM

In this way, the activities of the International are determined by and adapted to the existing movements, interests and culture of the class; its aims therefore, "should be comprehensive, so as to include every form of working class activity." This 'open' approach to political organisation - even under conditions of illegality - was exemplified in every stage of Marx's career as a political activist. The Communist

Corresponding Committee he established in Brussels, was designed to unite different tendencies within a broad movement of democratic communism. As Marx was to write many years later, in 1877, "When Engels and I first joined the secret communist society, we made it a condition that everything tending to encourage superstitious belief in authority was to be removed from the Rules."

The Leninist conception of the authoritarian Central Committee as the laboratory in which 'scientific socialists' cook up 'scientific' formulas for the passive consumption of the workers could hardly be more alien to Marx's own practice.

The organisation and methods of the International were, on the contrary, be directly opposed to both the letter and the spirit of Leninist sectarianism:

"In comparison with the fantastic and mutually antagonistic organisations of the sects, the International is the real and militant organisation of the proletarian class in every country...Thus the rules of the International speak only of workers' societies, all seeking the same object and all accepting the same programme - a programme limited to outlining the major features of the proletarian movement, and leaving the details of theory to be worked out as inspired by the demands of the practical struggle, and as a growing out of the exchange of ideas among the sections, with an equal hearing given to all socialist views in their journals and congresses."

There is nothing here of the exclusivity or ideological rigour of the Bolshevik party. Just the opposite.

In stark contrast to the Leninist left of today, Marx takes the conception of open political activity, of internal democracy and socialist pluralism, interpreted in terms of common practical objectives, to an extreme. There is no indication that Marx believed that the forms of pluralist democracy should ever be suspended. This point is aptly illustrated in the brief history of the Commune itself. Although wholly marginal during the revolution of March 18 itself, the conspiratorial Blanquist faction sought to convert the 'primitive' democracy of the Commune into a dictatorial committee of

'public safety' - naturally with themselves in the place of dictator. Democratic forms they argued, had to be suspended for the duration of the civil war. Eventually, as the situation of the Commune deteriorated, a majority of Commune members voted for the dictatorship of a Committee of Public Safety, by 45 to 23. One of the members of the Majority called for "full powers which may even be used against members of the Commune."

There is no need to elaborate how well these developments fit in with the theories of the Leninist parties today. The Minority issued a Declaration denouncing the Committee and its new powers:

"It will have the essential effect of creating a dictatorial power that will in no way contribute to the strength of the Commune...the creation of a dictatorship by the Commune would be a veritable usurpation of the sovereign rights of the people."

Who were the individuals who constituted the democratic Minority? All the members of the International belonged to the democratic Minority. Moreover, those few individuals elected to the Commune who had a clear connection with Marx himself, were also, all members of the democratic Minority. In the very centre of the heat generated by a revolutionary situation as it erupted into civil war, all those closest to Marx and the International unwaveringly stood for the democratic dictatorship of the Commune, and against the Committee's dictatorship over the Commune.

Naturally, neither Marx nor Engels imagined that the First International could be resurrected in exactly its "first historical form". In particular, it is clear Marx felt, in the conditions of the 1860's, certain programmatic adaptations had to be made to the constitutional prejudices of the existing Trades Union movement. Further experience showed that the anti-democratic manoeuvres of the anarchists led by Bakunin had to be guarded against, together with the activities of agents provocateurs whose "overwhelming zeal took the form of setting up new sections of unparalleled radicalism".

The First International then, provides an unsurpassed guide to the practical direction of Marxist political principles. As the International developed, the General Council was given the power to refuse admittance of any new branch, but only subject to the confirmation of the next Congress. Similarly, the General Council could decide in the case of a conflict between two branches, but only until the following Congress, "which would decide definitively". These powers existed in the context of an unconditionally democratic structure. The General Council was, "from the first", nothing more than the Association's "executive arm". The regulations of the International expressly stipulated that "The General Council is bound to execute the Congress resolutions", and this was its "prime duty" (emphasis in original).

There is therefore, not a shred of evidence to suggest that Marx or Engels believed that the working class composition, the open democratic structure, or the orientation towards immediate, practical struggles of the class could ever be superseded. Just as the closed vanguard form of the conservative Leninist parties belongs to the past, so the First International remains the model for the socialist organisation of the future.

F. GORDON

WORKING CLASS & THE LETTER



of the quasi-religious sanctification of the word of 'what Lenin said' as it appears in the later clones, is uncannily accurate.

"party". Again referring to Schweitzer, Marx insists that: "His artificial and sectarian organisation is wholly opposed to the historic and spontaneous organisation of the working class."

As is by now apparent, Marx saw the "historic and spontaneous" organisation of the class precisely in the broad class alliance of the International.

The nature of the 'centralisation' envisaged by Marx in the context of working class organisation is further illuminated by his explanation of the powers of the General Council (of which he was secretary) taken in the face of fierce repression by continental governments:

"The Hague Congress [of the International] saw the appropriateness and necessity of extending the powers of the General Council and centralising all actions for the coming struggle, because these actions would be helpless in isolation." But this unity of action, together with the necessary machinery for its co-ordination was a very different matter from the exertion of authority.

Precisely in reply to Bakuninist accusations of "authoritarianism", Marx countered, "Does the General Council have a bureaucracy or an armed police force to compel obedi-

laid before the branches of the International, are obviously intended to facilitate, not to limit, its democratic operation.

Marx then contrasts the 'centralisation' of the International with that of bourgeois governments who would be powerless "without an army, without police and without courts". The histories of the Politburo and the Cheka demonstrate conclusively how far the Bolshevik conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat was from that of Marx himself. While both Marx and Engels famously insisted on the necessity of force in relation to bourgeois attempts to overthrow the political power, once established, of the working class, this force was at once sanctioned and constituted by the majority of society itself - in the form of the proletariat. It did not depend on an army or a police force - or a Cheka - standing over society in the form of an arm of the state.

Centralisation of the hierarchical and authoritarian kind, is reserved for "secret societies" and "sects". The forms and methods of centralist organisation are counterposed to those appropriate to the independent political organisation of the working class. The class organisation, it is clear, must organise in a form that is opposed to hier-

archical and authoritarianism, "above all". The other side of the coin is that the independent organisation of the workers must be open and accessible. This was made plain in a practical form in Marx's stipulation that: "anybody who pays one shilling for a card can become a member of the Association." The International was not constituted as a federation of political groups. The basic unit of the Association was the individual worker.

While operating under the conditions of capitalism, the organisation of the working class will not be able to operate as a ready made form of communist society; it will, where it encounters the repressive force of the state, be obliged to maintain certain forms of secrecy; if it is of any revolutionary value at all, some

NO PROGRAMME

The unifying principle of the International was the combination of working class activists in common practical objectives. The International had a number of immediate aims common to all belonging to the "working men's party" as Marx termed it. Initially, these were: the reduction of the working day; the elimination of the exploitation of child labour; the amassing of statistical materials relating to the condition of the working class; and the promotion of co-operative ventures and the politicisation of the Trade Union movement. Propaganda, support for strikes, and the formation of defence committees for workers arrested by the police, were prominent in the International's activities. Naturally, in the course of one hundred years, particular priorities may have shifted; yet the emphasis on immediate aims and practical activism remains.

The criterion of membership of the International was consequently participation in the class struggle and not conformity to particular ideologies or dogmas. In Marx's own words, "The International does not put forth any particular creed." As he wrote to a correspondent in relation to the programme for the London delegates at the International's first Congress, "I deliberately restricted it to those points which allow of immediate agreement and concerted action by the workers, and give direct nourishment and impetus to the requirements of the class struggle and the organisation of the workers into a class."

common action by the class, and the secondary development of the programme, is repeated in a slightly different context:

"The community of action called into being by the International Working Men's Association, the exchange of ideas by means of the different organs of the sections in all countries, and finally, the direct discussions at the General Congresses will by degrees create for the general workers' movement a common theoretical programme too."

Most notable in this and other such passages is Marx's conviction that the role of the party is a subordinate, almost informal one; of facilitating the unity and consciousness of the class as opposed to the Leninist conception of leadership by the party which historically culminates in the authority of the party. Through the open and democratic interchange of ideas amongst different groups of workers involved in a "community of action", a definite body of theory and programmatic substance emerges. The programme conspicuously is not handed down from the party centre.

The conception of the political programme as the vehicle of the collective ego of the party, designed to be imposed on the class, is therefore unambiguously repudiated. Marx accordingly did not at any stage propose that the International should adopt a centrally devised and imposed Marxist (or any other) programme. The International was explicitly not in the business of 'dictating' to the class on either programmatic matters or the subject of organisational form:

"The Association does not dictate the form of political movements; it only requires a pledge as to their end. It is a network of affiliated societies spreading all over the world of labour...The International does not presume to dictate in [these matters] and hardly to advise."

Again, the entire tendency of this "network of affiliation", is counterposed to the discipline and authority enforced by the Leninist party monopoly. Article 1 of the Association's rules stated that it was to admit, "all working men's societies aiming at the same end, viz. the protection, advancement and complete emancipation of the working class."

In respect of any proletarian

One consistent feature of the right-wing press is a column written by an old fogey who spouts otherwise unprintable reactionary opinions in a semi-satirical vein. Though unlikely to cross the paths of many Red Action readers, these sociopathic buffoon figures include Auberger Waugh, 'Peter Simple' of the Telegraph, the old 'Beachcomber' of the Express and new recruit, self-styled 'young' fogey A N Wilson in the Evening Standard.

The function that these columns serve is slightly perverse - to express the bigotries, prejudice and hatred native to the bourgeois and petty bourgeois mind, that when expressed in cold print are so inane, seedy or blatantly fascist, that they have to be defused or disowned in some way. Hence the satirical tone: outwardly, these columns are for 'amusement'.

One of Wilson's recent columns was of particular interest. Under the witty headline, 'Is there a role for the prole?' he complains (they always complain):

"Ours is the first age in history in which the plebs, or the proletariat, or whatever polite word you conjure up for them, have no function in life."

He reasons:

"Nearly every function which used to be performed by proles can now be done much more efficiently by a machine. Apart from a few rudimentary cleaning jobs, there is almost no function in today's world for the urban prole."

The working class, except for a few rural pheasant beaters, cap duffers and the sprinkling of urban oiks needed to clean the houses of toffs like A N Wilson, is socially redundant.

Mr Wilson regrets that,

"In a decent world, the obvious 'eugenic' solution - to sew up the wombs of Sun readers' wives - cannot be contemplated. We, the bourgeoisie, are too gentle and kind to admit that there is a whole category of being ruining our country and who we would be so much better off without."

This is where the 'humour' comes in, for although Wilson and his type poke fun at lefties who accuse them of being fascists, he knows as well as anyone else that the logical and historical solution to his complaints is a 'eugenic' one as he says, albeit 'in fun' - the forcible sterilisations and extermination camps of the Nazis.

He and his middle class audience cannot comfortably admit to themselves that they are on the same level as Borman, Mengele and the chaps - yet at the same time, cannot let go of the fantasy of a purified capitalist society and the logic it entails. Their reactionary poison therefore expresses itself in the peculiar form of a class snobbery that amuses itself with the deeply disturbed fantasy of stitching up Sun reader's wives.

Of course, in his lucid moments, Mr Wilson knows that his presumably rather agreeable house was built by 'urban proles' and not by a Mitsubishi house building robot, and that the millions who drudge their lives away in factories are there to make the profits out of which Mr Wilson is paid, and not simply because the boss likes to see someone busy about the place. But he wishes with all his soul that this were not the case - he cannot help fantasising that everyone could be middle class. He is reverting to the very essence of the age old dream of the

the age old dream of the bourgeoisie - capitalist production without the working class.



NO ROLE FOR THE PROLE!

bourgeoisie - capitalist production without the working class.

Glimpses of reality feed into this beatific vision; the middle classes on whose behalf Wilson lets out his bile, are well aware of the fact that they live in a country where millions of working people are reliant on state benefits and are without any realistic prospect of work. This annoys the bourgeoisie mind intensely. They are also dimly aware that these large 'armies' of the unemployed or underemployed are somehow permanent features of these societies. Recognising that full employment is not compatible with the social order, it seems to them that some form of 'elimination' is the answer.

Mr Wilson says so straight out for his 'function' - like the royal jester in medieval courts - is to say out loud what it is impossible for others to speak. It is then but a step to imagine that what is true for a part of the working class might be true of the whole. Instead of a part of the working population being a 'surplus' population, the entire working class is imagined to be surplus to the requirements of the modern capitalist economy (except cleaners - the middle classes love their cleaners). But precisely how is the bizarre bourgeois fantasy that the working class is 'redundant', an excrescence on the healthy body politic, or Wilson's phrase, that there are 'no roles for proles', connected with reality?

Marx sets out the answer to this and related questions in his monumental analysis of capitalist development, Das Capital. He concludes that, *"The working population produces both the accumulation of capital and the means by which it is itself made relatively superfluous; and it does this to an extent which is always increasing."*

Marx does immediately warn us that: *"This is a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production; and in fact every particular historical mode of production has its own special laws of production, which are historically valid within that particular sphere. An abstract law of population exists only for plants and animals, and even*

then only in the absence of any historical intervention by man."

Marx identifies two forms of unemployment: *"the more striking form of the extrusion of workers already employed, or the less evident, but not less real, form of a greater difficulty in absorbing the additional working population through its customary outlets."*

The Tories for example, have recently made some play of the idea that the number of jobs has remained steady (implying that the rate of employment has really remained stable!), but that there are just too many new people coming onto the job market and that therefore unemployment is somehow the fault of the birth-rate. Nature, not society, is to blame. Presumably the solution is for potential parents to assess the state of the job market in eighteen years time and exercise restraint (or have it exercised for them). This is part of the logic that Wilson adopts in advocating the 'eugenic' solution that he is of course, almost too nice to mention.

It is easy to refute this idea. The absolute level of population during the Thirties for instance, was considerably lower than it is now; but the same high levels of unemployment existed - and despite, contrary to Wilson's argument, there being a far lower level of mechanisation. Therefore it cannot be the number of people in a country (or the level of mechanisation alone) that determines whether people can find jobs or not. Similarly, while there has been no increase in the absolute level of population in this country over the past two or three years, the number of unemployed has rocketed. If, as racists argue, immigration were responsible for unemployment, then the number of extra immigrants over the same period would correspond to the number of unemployed. But in the Thirties, the level of immigration was negligible and the level of unemployment was sky high, while in recent years, unemployment has shot up, but the level of immigration has fallen dramatically. So immigration cannot be the cause of unemployment.

Marx argues that because

human beings produce the means of their own subsistence in a specific mode of production (for example, slavery, feudalism or capitalism), it is the nature of a given society, not nature itself, that fixes the appropriate level of population. For example, under capitalist conditions, there may be plenty of food, but if the worker has no employment, he will have no money to buy it. Therefore: *"it is the means of employment and not of subsistence which put the worker in the category of surplus population"*

Consequently, the existence of a 'surplus' population above a certain level is a social not a natural fact.

Marx argued that the laws specific to capitalist development as enforced by the existence of competition between different capitalists, meant that the level of labour productivity, i.e. the quantity of goods produced by a given quantity of labour, must always increase. Within capitalism, the principal way in which productivity was increased, in addition to the intensification of labour or the extension of the working day, was by the introduction of machinery.

Marx concluded that not only would the mass of the means of production, plant, machinery, buildings, etc. increase as production increased, but that in relative terms, the amount of labour employed would decrease. More machines meant fewer workers. *"partly by placing at the capitalist's disposal a new strata of the working class previously inaccessible to him [Marx means women and children] partly by setting free the workers it supplants, machinery produces a surplus working population which is compelled to submit to the dictates of capital."*

Moreover, he argued that the increased use of machinery would occur not merely in step with increases in production, but at a much quicker rate. Thus if the production of cars increased from 10 to 100 this would imply a greater than tenfold increase in the mass of machinery, etc. involved, but a less than tenfold increase in the number of workers employed. When the production of cars is increased from 100 to 1,000, the rate at which

the mass of machinery replaces human labour accelerates still further.

Because the scale of production is larger, more wage labour than before may be employed in total, but steadily less in relation to the quantity of production. Marx concludes:

"In fact it is capitalist production itself that constantly produces, and produces in direct relation with its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant working population."

Mechanisation and automation therefore create a permanent tendency for large sections of the working population to be made redundant in the production process. Other factors determine whether or not they can then be re-employed in other branches of production. Marx gives reasons for supposing that under capitalist conditions, a large proportion of the working population will almost always be without work.

Marx immediately emphasises that this 'redundant working population' is 'surplus' only in the sense that it is *"a population which is superfluous to capital's average requirements for its own valorization"*. 'Valorization' is the name Marx gives to making a profit: he is saying that due to the internal mechanics of capitalist production itself, a proportion of the available working population cannot be employed by the capitalist class to make a profit. But since capitalists only employ anyone if they can make a profit from their labour, then in a capitalist society this means that this proportion of the working population becomes 'unemployable'.

Marx was writing 130 years ago: his 'prophecy', i.e. his analysis of how capitalism had been obliged to develop in the past and would therefore tend to develop in the future, has been vindicated past all argument. The strength of his analysis might be put in perspective by imagining a contemporary writer attempting to identify the determining economic and social tendencies of societies in 130 years from now - in say, 2120! The same observed tendencies, in the terms in which they filter through to common middle class bigotry, results in the opinion expressed by profes-

sional buffoons such as Wilson, that there are no longer 'roles for proles'. The historical tendency of labour in particular branches of production to be replaced by machinery, is given wings and is transformed into the fantasy that the working class is 'redundant'.

Marx's analysis goes beyond this point however, and reveals not only how the 'surplus population', the unemployed, are produced within the capitalist economy, but also how the unemployed perform an indispensable function within that economy. Middle class prejudice likes to pretend that those unable to find work are simply a drag, a burden on the rest of society - 'scroungers'. Marx makes the unpopular point that this is not the case: on the contrary, the army of the unemployed is essential for the fullest development of production under capitalist conditions. Marx argues that if large sections of the working population were not unemployed, i.e. able to serve as potential workers, the levels of capitalist production would actually fall! Paradoxically, in the typical capitalist economy, the existence of large numbers of non-working potential workers acts as a stimulus to production.

In an important passage Marx writes:

"But if a surplus population of workers is a necessary product of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population also becomes, conversely, the lever of capitalist accumulation, indeed it becomes a condition for the existence of the capitalist mode of production."

So far from being a hindrance to capitalist production, Marx claims that capitalism would disintegrate were it not for the existence of significant numbers of the unemployed. The surplus population,

"forms a disposable industrial reserve army, which belongs to capital just as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. Independently of the limits of the actual increase of population, it creates a mass of human material always ready for exploitation by capital in the interests of capital's own changing valorization [profit making] requirements."

The real key is in Marx's phrase referring to the 'mass of human material always ready for exploitation'. Capitalist production, says Marx is 'cyclical'. In contrast to the stable levels of production of previous societies,

"The mass of social wealth, overflowing with the advance of accumulation and capable of being transformed into additional capital, thrusts itself frantically into old branches of production, whose market suddenly expands, or into newly formed branches, such as railways etc. or the computer industry today] which now becomes necessary as a result of the further development of the old branches."

But where these conditions obtain,

"in all such cases, there must be the possibility of suddenly throwing great masses of men into the decisive areas without doing any damage to the scale of production in other spheres. The surplus population supplies these masses. The path characteristically described by modern industry...of periods of average activity, production at high pressure, crisis and stagnation, depends on the constant formation, the greater and lesser absorption, and the reformation of the industrial reserve army or surplus population."

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dispatches from a war zone



from Connolly to Corleone

On 18 August this year, Jimmy Brown, the so-called "ideologue" of the IPLO's "political wing" was gunned down by a leading member of his own organisation. On 27 August, another IPLO member, Hugh McKibben, who had been a member of an IPLO guard of honour at Brown's funeral, was shot and killed on a minibus full of GAA supporters. Once again, the shooting was claimed by the Belfast Brigade of the IPLO.

These two deaths were the culmination of months of punishment shootings, "expulsions" and other methods of internal "discipline" within the ranks of the multi-faceted IPLO. Although spokespersons for the IPLO denied a feud situation within its ranks and blamed Brown's death on "a drugs gang who had stolen IPLO weapons and colluded with loyalists", the people of Belfast were aware that the five psychopathic-led factions who had united in an attempt to destroy the Republican Socialist Movement in 1987 were, as many had predicted, turning on one another in their psychotic search for wealth and power.

The IPLO, since its inception, has been a haven for gangsters, hoodlums, muggers, pocket-lining armed robbers, handbag-snatchers and even rapists. These elements rushed to enlist in this new "organisation" when it was learned that their past crimes would not only be forgiven but that in future they could carry out the same crimes at the point of a loaded gun and with the IPLO's blessing and protection. Woe betide anyone who stood in their way. (The perfect example of this was when four drunken members of the IPLO were expelled from a Belfast nightclub for abusive language and violent and aggressive behaviour towards other customers. They returned to the club half and hour later and after forcing their way into the foyer they gunned down the Catholic manager.)

Although to outsiders everything appeared to be in harmony within the IPLO's ranks, things were far from rosy. There was much in-fighting and jostling for power within the IPLO. Many a door was kicked in, many a member was beaten with hurl, baseball bat and iron bar and many a member was pistol-whipped and even shot as a result of the power struggle. The ordinary person on the Falls Road commented many times on such and such who lived beside them who was driving a new car or motorbike and sporting designer clothes when prior to joining the IPLO they had nothing and were always borrowing.

There were bets taken by punters in bars as to how much of a percentage from an armed robbery and IPLO member had to give to his "organisation". Even when money from armed robbery and extortion was handed over to the "finance officer" there was no guarantee of where it was going. The Belfast Brigade OC who took over when Martin 'Rook' O'Prey was shot by his loyalist drug-pushing allies, was purported to have absconded with a sum of money in excess of £5,000.

Such was the amount of beatings, bickering and shootings handed out over misappropriated funds that Jimmy Brown had to step in to try and cool the situation. Brown, rather than see his baby, his dream, his own organisation, disintegrate, acted like a modern-day Al Capone and split Belfast among the emerging warlords. Each would be responsible for the armed robberies, extortion, drink and cigarette hijacks in their own areas.

Two years ago a gang of drunken IPLO members in Divis flats physically and sexually assaulted, tortured and raped a young woman for a number of hours. Local people who heard the young woman's screams were too frightened to help her when they recognised her torturers. The outcry which followed led to a march of the Falls Road by women's groups calling for the disbandment of the IPLO. The IPLO responded by, supposedly, punishing a few of the eight members responsible (let the lads get drunk, slap a few about a bit, and graze a couple them, and call it knee-capping).

The attempt by Brown to appease the bickering warlords worked for a while, it gave the illusion once more of harmony to the onlooker. In fact, it worked too well. Since its inception, the IPLO have been responsible for the execution of one member of the security forces, a policeman shot on the Ormeau Road in 1987, and a failed blast-bomb attack on a manned sangar at Queen Street Police Station, and carried out by a member who had spent the previous four hours in the City Centre bar drinking heavily. Since these two attacks, the IPLO had not carried out anything which could be considered to be a military or legitimate attack, all their actions since bore more resemblance to the Italian/American mafia than to an Irish Republican Liberation Movement.

Jimmy Brown had always been a devious character who made sure that no matter what muck was thrown none of it stuck to Jimmy Brown. At the end of the IPLO attack on the RSM when Gerard Steenson, chief warlord and leader of the IPLO factions, was executed by the INLA, Brown, knowing his time was running out, arranged peace talks through two Catholic priests.

It has long been known and is well established and documented fact that the IPLO in their drug-running racket have

and Brown, pushing his luck a bit, asked Seawright to speak to the UDA/UFF about getting his name off their list as well.

Brown then, in his wisdom, aware of what the ordinary working class person was saying, understood that unless he made a radical move and got his members to hit a 'legitimate' target, his movement's mask of 'republican socialism' would slip entirely. He dispatched an IPLO hit-squad to kill George Seawright. If you believed in the devil it was better to make a deal with him than the IPLO!!

In 1991, someone leaked a story to an Irish Sunday paper stating that the IRA, who at this time were waging a war on drugs dealers and pushers, had an intelligence unit investigating IPLO/UVF/UFF collusion in a major six-county drugs ring. Within a week of the story being leaked the IPLO shot dead a "loyalist paramilitary" on Belfast Tates Avenue. The man shot dead was as described by the IPLO a loyalist activist but what the IPLO failed to point out was that the same man was a link-man between the UFF and the IPLO. Forensic evidence of the murder shows that the security reinforced door was opened from inside (he knew those who called??).

The IRA intelligence unit, along with local drugs users tell us that a delivery of marijuana, hash, grass, had been delivered to the flat a week prior to the shooting and that at least one member of the gang who shot this man dead had been to the flat four or five times since the delivery.

Was it the fact that the IPLO fearing of proof of their links to loyalism and drug dealing that made them shoot dead one of their onerous allies? Or was it that this man held back the biggest part of the consignment for either his own organisation or his own profit? Or was it just the fact that a certain paper let them know they (the IPLO) were under investigation by the IRA? Whatever the reason, they entered an ally's house and broke the pact yet again. (Later inquiries from IRA and INLA intelligence units found that not only did they shoot an ally but they lifted an unspecified amount of money about five thousand pounds worth of drugs). Not a bad night really, silence someone who might incriminate you, money and drugs to boot.

Due to a few members (founder members) of the IPLO looking for membership of and being accepted by the IRA (there are rumours to the fact that Brown himself applied to join Sinn Fein after the rape at Divis Flats when ex-gunmen from the IPLO tried to leave en masse!) Brown decided once again to get the IPLO's "war of liberation" into gear. What resulted was a blatant and inexplicable attack on the protestant religion. The shooting dead of a teenager working in a video shop was followed by the murder of an old age pensioner in a North Belfast bar. In the early days of their existence, the IPLO were heard to tell the youth of Ardoyne that they were the CRF (Catholic Reaction Force) responsible for such sectarian attacks as the attack on a gospel meeting in the Armagh parish of Darkley. They deliberately targeted the youth of Ardoyne (a nationalist enclave surrounded by strong loyalist areas) in the hope that such an area, attacked time after time by loyalist murder gangs would be so bent on revenge that the youth would rush to join their "organisation". Such was their modum operandi in an area terrorised by loyalists they preached sectarianism; in an area where the IRA had crime under control they preached "criminal" socialism and in an area where the INLA were preaching socialism and workers' power, they preached anti-social behaviour and personal gain.

Brigadier Frank Kitson, one time GOC for the British occupation forces has written many books on counter-insurgency. His main plan (as used by America, Israel etc) was to use a native group within the war zone to give the impression that the liberation struggle being waged as either a civil war or that a group of communist-backed "terrorists" were terrorising the indigenous people. The IPLO, without any prompting from the British army or RUC (unlike the Peace People, FAIT etc who are and always were British sponsored) became such a group.

From their inception they were recognised by all sides in the Irish conflict for what they are, a counter-revolutionary organisation. All factions of the IPLO have members within their ranks who were either expelled or not accepted by the INLA or IRA as suspected informers.

The fact that these warlords and their cohorts have Brit/RUC immunity to carry out their crimes dates back to 1987 and is irrefutable. The fact that they were able, during their attempt to annihilate the IRSP/INLA, to drive through, without being stopped or on some occasions having been stopped, to carry on and mount armed attacks on leading members of the R.S.M. one such attack took

place within ten yards of a heavily fortified Brit/RUC base and directly in view of a manned sangar, even so the two gunmen Gerard Steenson and Rook O'Prey were able and confident enough to stay in the house for five minutes having fired upwards of ten rounds from the weapons they carried, left the house in a car registered to an IPLO member without the Brits/RUC having fired a shot or even seeing the car registration number.

When the last Belfast brigade OC decided to retire (five grand the richer). Brown gave this well sought after position to a lad not long out of Long Kesh (an ex-provo who had been dismissed from the IRA because of his instability and disinclination to take orders and general unreliability. Brown was rubbing his hands with glee, his organisation had suffered quite a few defections to the provos of leading IPLO figure since the Divis Flats rape, now he had an ex-provo, albeit an expelled one, as his Belfast commander. The unpredictability of his new commander, which led to him being thrown out of the IRA, was to be fatal to Jimmy Brown.

After months of in-fighting and bickering over the sales of drugs money. Each faction was flexing its muscles stealing weaponry from each other, beating up rival members and even mounting attacks on each others headquarters. The Belfast Brigade IPLO visited a city centre bar in Belfast used by a rival IPLO faction to push their drugs. They held the staff captive and hi-jacked a drinks delivery to the bar. Things were coming to a head. Members of the various IPLO groupings started running about in gangs and many of them were even carrying firearms for their own protection.

Brown, who had moved his base to Dublin, returning to Belfast occasionally to collect the proceeds from armed robberies extortion, protection rackets and drug-pushing, was asked by the other factions to come North and tell the new Belfast Brigade commander to toe the line or things would get out of hand. At a meeting on the 17th of August there was a heated argument between Brown and his commander. Brown was not used to having his authority challenged. Brown always got things his way. The commander on the other hand had to protect his new found power. Threats were issued by both men and they were not the best of friends when they parted.

The following day Brown and a colleague were returning from a mediation meeting with the provos in the Clonard area when they spotted the Belfast Brigade leaders at the bottom of Clonard Street. Brown, as brash as ever, pulled over and screeched to a halt beside him to issue some more threats. The commander, who had armed himself after the argument the day before, believed that Brown and his colleague were either going to abduct or shoot him. He produced his weapon and despite Brown's pleas not to shoot he was hit a number of times in the head and died instantly.

In the denials and rumours of a feud situation which followed, an IPLO spokesperson claimed that the same 'drugs gang' responsible for Brown's death had also colluded with the UVF in their shooting of Rook O'Prey. It was alleged that an associate of the commander had unlocked O'Prey's back door to allow entry to the UVF gunmen. In the days following Brown's shooting, there were a few attempts by all sides to shoot rival members. When Hugh McKibben was shot on 27 August, allegedly by the commander himself, it was obvious to the onlooker who was getting the upper hand. The commander and members of his Belfast Brigade faction were in hiding, venturing out only to mount an attack on his rival factions and then disappearing again. So frustrated were his rivals at not being able to hit any of the faction directly they resorted to a tactic first used by the IPLO during its 1987 attack on the RSM. If you can't hit an individual, hit a relative or friend of that individual. So a murder squad was dispatched to shoot Michael Macklin, an unconnected victim, who they claim drove the getaway car after the McKibben shooting. This was a blatant lie but they were clutching at straws.

The attacks on these factions by the commander's faction was costing the IPLO dearly. As well as the fact that many of their men were in hiding in fear of their lives, the Belfast Brigade faction were visiting known haunts of their rivals and warning people to steer clear of and stop buying drugs from their rivals. It was obvious that there were very few funds in the IPLO coffers. Three local social clubs and a Falls Road pub were robbed by IPLO members, whether for the "organisation" or to line their own pockets is open to speculation. One thing was certain to the IPLO, the commander had to be removed by any means necessary.

As I have said earlier in this article, it is a well known fact that all factions of the IPLO have been infiltrated by all sections of the 'security' forces. The 'security' forces know the background of the ex-provo running the Belfast Brigade IPLO and would clearly love to get him in a shoot-to-kill position. Many believe that the commander was meant to be shot dead by RUC/Brits on a previous occasion but that due to his personal security procedures they failed in their attempt to murder him. The commander and a colleague had received information on a meeting of IPLO members in North Belfast, so armed with a Czech Skorpion machine-pistol they set out to attack this meeting. Rather than blunder into what was a carefully set RUC/Brit trap, they parked the car, leaving the weapon behind and set off on foot to eye up the situation. The result was that both men were arrested a few streets from the car and its contents. Had they driven into the street where they were arrested there is no doubt that both would have been shot dead.

With the commander off the street, the IPLO were free to resume their criminal activities but before doing so they had to once more justify their existence by attacking a 'legitimate' target. The target they chose was a gay bar in Belfast City Centre. In the words of the person who set the device which gutted the bar, "I have a bomb for your queer bar." Obviously, a highly political Republican soldier!

Just as a footnote to loyalist/IPLO collusion, it emerged at Belfast Crown Court this week that six men found in possession of drugs in a flat in a predominantly loyalist area last week were all members of the IPLO believed by the RUC to have been involved in the internal IPLO feud.

EPILOGUE

On Saturday 31 October 1992, the IRA launched a massive operation involving over 100 volunteers against drug pushers in the West Belfast area. During the operation, a leading member of the IPLO was executed. Others, members of both factions, were also targeted and wounded. In a statement, the IRA explained: "The involvement of so many IPLO members in drug dealing meant that it was inevitable that resolute action by the IRA against drug pushers would, as a by-product, call into question the continued existence of the IPLO itself. At midnight on 2 November 1992, both factions of the IPLO disbanded.

Michael Collins
Belfast.



Together with Huey Newton, Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party in October 1966 as a conscious attempt to put the political philosophy of Malcolm X into practice:

"Standing on our constitutional and democratic human rights, we made Malcolm X's philosophical polemics, the 'ballot or the bullet' and 'by any means necessary', come alive."

Later, while in prison on various charges, Bobby Seale dictated his account of events in the form that became the book, "Seize the Time".

The Black Panther movement grew out of a rejection of the politics of cultural nationalism.

"I remember one time, there were some black nationalists, cultural nationalists, on the campus who used to project all this cultural nationalism. They were so engrossed in all this cultural nationalism, they just hated white people simply for the colour of their skin."

According to Seale, *"Huey saw that more co-operative, socialistic type things were necessary for black people to use, to oppose the system"*

Seale himself had been associated with a group of cultural nationalists, *"the so-called West Coast underground RAM (Revolutionary Action Movement)." Realising that the RAM were not about 'action' at all, Seale broke with them and took up with Huey Newton, a local hood who had been impressed with the writings of Frantz Fanon and Mao Tse Tung. Together they broke with another cultural nationalist group, the SSAC (Soul Students Advisory Council).*

"Malcolm X talked about organisation and doing things...The cultural nationalists, on the other hand, wanted to sit down and articulate bullshit...This is the difference, the line of demarcation in fact, between the revolutionaries and those who are living in the confines of the ivory walls, the ivory towers of the college."

Rejecting the cultural nationalists meant rejecting their social base, the college educated black student.

"Huey understood the meaning of what Fanon was saying about organising the lumpen proletariat first, because Fanon explicitly pointed out that if you didn't organise the lumpen proletariat and give a base for organising the brother who's pimping, the brother who's hustling, the unemployed, the downtrodden, the brother who's robbing banks, who's not politically conscious...the power structure would organise these cats against you."

James Forman, a leading activist in the civil rights organisation, SNCC (Students Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee), commented:

"The emphasis on recruiting street brothers, young people from the 'ghettos', rather than college students, gave it a large base and eliminated some of the class tensions which we [SNCC] had experienced."

Huey and Bobby started from scratch. They wrote a ten point programme,

"A programme that relates to the people. A programme the people can understand. A programme the people can read and see, which expresses their desires and needs at the same time."

The idea was to connect directly with the immediate concerns of working class black people in the neighbourhood:

"This is what the shit boils down to - to what the people

want and not what some intellectual personality wants or some cultural nationalists, like LeRoi Jones, want, or some jive-ass underground RAM motherfucker wants, or what some jive motherfucker in some college studying bullshit says, talking esoteric shit about the basic social-economic structure...so that no black man even understands."

Organisation within a social layer that the conventional left barely contacted was the aim: *"Huey P Newton knew that once you organise the brothers he ran with, he fought with, he fought against...once you organise those brothers, you get niggers, you get black men, you get revolutionaries..."* With Bobby as chairman and Huey as 'Minister of Defence', they were up and running, as he says, *"just like that"*.

They were asked why the panther became the symbol of the Party:

"The nature of the panther is that he never attacks. But if anyone attacks him, or backs him into a corner, the panther comes up to wipe that aggressor or that attacker out, absolutely, resolutely, wholly, thoroughly, and completely."

So the Black Panthers were the "Black Panther Party for Self-Defence" (BPPSD). Other cultural nationalist groups who traded on the Black Panther name, "paper panthers" Seale calls them, began to organise. Their tactic was to "print something that was an attempt to cut us up intellectually." In practice, they approached the working class elements of the BPPSD to "provide security" at events. For the cultural nationalists, the "house niggers"; (rather as Red Action were regarded as the field niggers of the left by Leninist groups). Despite talk of armed struggle, the cul-

"...they approached the working class elements of the Black Panthers to 'provide security' at events. For the cultural nationalists, the 'house niggers', the Black Panthers were the 'field niggers' - rather as Red Action were regarded as the field niggers of the left by Leninist groups."

tural nationalists consistently failed to produce armed elements on the street that could withstand confrontational situations with the police:

"They were just trying to make guards out of us, for some artwork shit around there. They were trying to give us orders...That became a real thing in distinguishing the brothers off the block and those who only talk, those who have their intellectual possessions in pawn to the man, the power structure of this racist, capitalist system."

Relations were broken off, and the cultural Black Panthers faded away.

The 'nationalism' of the 'Self Defence' Panthers was understood in the following way:

"We...see ourselves as a nation within a nation, but not for any racist reasons. We see it as a necessity for us to progress as human beings and live on the face of this earth

"NIGGERS WITH GUNS!"

'SEIZE THE TIME'. BOBBY SEALE.
THE STORY OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY



Huey Newton in 1968.

along with other people. We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity. We do not fight exploitive capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism."

How was the concept of a "nation within a nation" to be approached? Seale relates a

conversation with Yippie (a 'yippie' is a 'political' hippy) Jerry Rubin in which several factors are combined: *"When I told him that we wouldn't be defining ourselves as a nation within a nation based on colour alone, that we would be defining ourselves as a nation within a nation based on the existing economic status of black America, Jerry understood this. Our geographical location here in America, that we are in fact second class citizens, and that we are scattered in wretched ghettos and rural areas in the thousands and millions...also the language of the black community as it is directly related to the colonised situation that black people live in, the oppressive conditions that we are all subjected to: all of this, from history to now, is the foundation for our psychological make-up."*

The basis of organisation therefore, is explicitly based on

money for guns by selling Mao's Red Book to college kids. This was the way it went: *"We'll protect a mother, protect a brother, and protect the community from the racist cops. And in turn we get brothers in the organisation and they will in turn relate to the Red Book. They will relate to political, economic, and social equality in defence of the community."*

After a number of confrontational incidents, the media began to show a predictably sensationalised interest. The whole thing took off with an armed demonstration at the California State Capitol, in May 1967. The Panthers were on the front page of the London Times. The first heavy arrests were made. Twenty-four Panthers were charged with that old favourite, conspiracy. For Seale, *"the Afro-American lumpen proletariat had become the vanguard."* Police persecution was intensified, to the point that Huey Newton was arrested after a gun battle in which one cop was killed, and another badly wounded. Huey in jail became a potent symbol of the struggle of black Americans against the racist state, and membership of the Panthers,

rocketed from around 75 to over 5,000 over the next few years on the back of a 'Free Huey' campaign. Initially, the cultural nationalists tried to take over, attempting to replace a white lawyer with a black lawyer, etc., which Seale rejected as sheer racism: *"Black racism is a fault of a few within the black community. Black racism is a very selfish thing, it is definitely not a progressive or a productive thing."* He also noted that some of the people calling for an all black legal team, simply wanted the work for themselves.

The real work was done by working class blacks. *"A lot of brothers were flocking to the party. There were a lot of brothers, a lot of party members who worked doing leafletting, announcing rallies, raising money, and stuff like that."* The Panthers made a 'working alliance' with a predominantly white group, the 'Peace and Freedom' party, and ran Huey

for Congress on their ticket. On the whole the alliance with this group of white liberals was only a limited success. Other alliances with self defence groups such as Los Siete de la Raza, a San Francisco latino organisation, and the Young Lords, a political Puerto Rican street gang, were more successful due to their common class situation:

"Alliances between poor oppressed peoples work out readily. It is the poor oppressed people who have to dictate their political desires and needs, and explain what should be done and what should not be done. The organisations of the lumpen proletariat are the ones we can relate to. We even have a problem with black students sometimes because they tend to have a detached understanding of the realities in the black community."

At the same time, Seale warned:

"We are not against intelligence. The Party is very intelligent and we read the same materials that the college students have. But it's different when cats like Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver write and talk, because it comes out of experience. It comes from the guts of their souls."

These differences showed up when the Panthers formed a high profile "working alliance" with the most radical civil rights group of the time, SNCC. *"A lot of cats down there were college students. They couldn't see it when we told them that a lot of their ideas were black racist and that we couldn't operate in a black racist thing...Black racism is not overt in most people in the black community, but its the way a lot of those cats in the colleges think. They think about their own selves being free, and they think with the same racism that a lot of white people project on to them. And you're not going to end racism by perpetuating more racism."*

The "working alliance", which was effectively with SNCC executives, Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael and James Forman, eventually split apart.

Seale says that the cultural nationalists, *"projected a puritanical concept of blackness. They relate only to the purity of blackness, of being a black person."* This is a concept taken directly from the 'puritanism' of the white supremacists. In a telling analysis, Seale asserts that: *"black racism, and cultural nationalism were ultimately the tools of the power structure [RA's emphasis], and that they stagnate the people's revolutionary struggle for needed change in the community."*

The reality is that: *"We know about the brainwashing of black people, but this is not really separate from the brainwashing of the proletarian masses of America...One must tell the true history in terms of the class struggle, the small ruling class dominating and oppressing the massive, proletarian working class. When I say working class, I mean those that are employed and unemployed, living below subsistence and at subsistence level."*

Meanwhile, police harassment and murder of prominent Panther activists hotted up. Prominent activists Bobby Hutton and Bunchy Carter were murdered, Eldridge Cleaver and David Hilliard were arrested. Other activists were to receive the same treatment, John Huggins, Fred Hampton, Mark Clark and Tommy Lewis, were the best

known of many Panthers who were to be shot by the police. The persecution culminated in the arrest and trial of Seale himself. Because he insisted on defending himself rather than accept the state lawyer assigned to him, Seale's court appearances were made fettered in irons, chained to a chair and with a gag stuffed in his mouth. He recalls:

"The marshal holding my head was a white cat, and the marshal trying to jam the rag in my mouth was a black cat. They're both pigs. It doesn't make any difference what colour they are."

Seale concedes that the Panthers' organisation suffered from a number of problems that it brought upon itself. Its paramilitary origins corresponded to what James Forman called,

"the high command principle, an adaptation of the concept of democratic centralism, designed especially to help the panthers keep their paramilitary orientation and centralised leadership but at the same time allow the base to participate in decision making. In making a major policy decision, for example, the party would circulate a proposal through the rank and file and call for discussion of it at various levels."

Forman adds, perhaps unnecessarily, that, *"To my knowledge this procedure was never implemented."* Certainly, there is no evidence from Seales' own account that any initiative worked its way from the bottom up. It seems that Huey Newton simply issued "Executive Mandates" as the mood took him.

With the organisation so radically divided into the leaders and the led (at the outset, the Panthers adopted a military style hierarchy, with field marshals, captains, lieutenants and the rest of it, though this was later dumped) it is not surprising that many of the rank and file lacked any real sense of the movement's aims. A lot of later recruits just enjoyed dressing up in the Panther uniform of black leather jacket, beret, etc. and hanging out. Seale identifies a further consequence of the pseudo-military structure, *"Another problem at that time was that the brothers identified only with the gun."* Political activities that didn't directly involve armed confrontation were relegated to a position of secondary importance.

The situation became serious enough for the Party to institute a purge of members in January 1969. The CIA and FBI had previously had considerable success in infiltrating touts and agent provocateurs into the Panthers' networks, causing considerable disarray. The purge appeared to solve the problem. From the end of the year, the state changed tactics: *"some 300 arrests were made upon the key leaders and organisers and co-ordinators of the Party throughout Los Angeles. About 50 members, the key ones, the ones who were leading and organising the other groups of people in the community, were arrested over and over again. Ninety percent of the charges on all those arrests were dropped after we bailed the people out..."*

There was consistent harassment... This was a means by which the fascist, racist police in LA and the power structure were trying to wipe out the Black Panther Party." One of the most serious obstacles nonetheless remained largely an internal one. A number of the 'hoodlum' elements began to get out of hand. It

reached a point where the Party refused to bail out one group of offenders after a particular bust.

"that was the start of a little black racist jackanape faction in the Party. As it turned out, this faction had an agent provocateur in it and we didn't know it... This little faction of cats was hanging on more to black racism than to a progressive revolutionary program of serving the people. This little faction didn't understand that it was a class struggle we were in, and not a race struggle."

The faction did the Panthers a good deal of damage in facilitating a media image of the Party as a bunch of criminals and reverse racists. The role of the provocateur in all this was finally revealed when he walked into a Grand Jury courtroom through the back doors, escorted by the FBI.

Despite the inevitable difficulties the Party encountered in setting up as an armed organisation in opposition to a racist state, a socialistic programme began to gain definition in the midst of the struggle.

"The Party's community programmes are the peoples' programmes, that we define as revolutionary, community, socialistic programmes. A lot of people misunderstand the politics of these programmes... They're not reform programmes; they're actually revolutionary community programmes. A revolutionary programme is one set forth by revolutionaries, by those who want to change the system to a better system. A reform programme is set up by the existing exploitative system as an appeasing handout, to fool the people and to keep them quiet."

The Panthers ran services directly related to the immediate needs of the communities they lived in. These involved a food programme, health care, legal aid, voter registration, and a free clothing programme: *"When we have community socialistic programmes such as these and move to them to a level where people actually begin to receive help from them, it shows the people that by unity, by working and unifying around such programmes, we can begin to end the oppressive conditions."*

This work was reinforced by political education classes, demands for the freedom of political prisoners, and union work.

"We want the workers to understand that they must control the means of production, and that they should begin to use their power to control the means of production to serve all the people."

But always, the flesh of the community and political work was held together by a skeleton formed by the uncompromising insistence on the right to self defence. Seale explained the Panthers' policy in these terms:

"We aren't hungry for violence; we don't want violence. Violence is ugly, guns are ugly. But we understand that there are two kinds of violence: the violence that is perpetrated against our people by the fascist aggression of the power structure; and self-defence - a form of violence used to defend ourselves from the unjust violence that's inflicted upon us."

The Panthers also advocated a decentralised police force under the control of elected neighbourhood councils, who would have the right to hire and fire all police officials, including the very highest ranks. From their experience in

living in neighbourhoods where social control was inflicted in a Rodney King manner by unaccountable gangs of armed police, as famously in Los Angeles today, the Panthers saw reaction to the armed force of the state as the key issue for a revolutionary organisation.

"The point of community control of police is that those people living in those neighbourhoods will actually do the hiring and firing of the policemen who patrol that area, and those policemen will be from those neighbourhoods... All the facilities, all the cars, all the equipment for the police that the city now owns, will be in the hands and in the control of the people in the community."

Those elected to control the police would themselves have to live in the neighbourhood, and would be subject to immediate re-election by petition. Naturally, such a system of control couldn't exist in isolation: this demand would inevitably extend to demands for similar control of the judiciary, and to political and administrative posts. In other words, to the demand for a consistently democratic socialist society.

Of course the Panthers failed to conform to the abstract ideal of theory and practice demanded by armchair Leninists. They grew from within an environment marked by extreme deprivation, violence and repression, and the Black Panther Party's ideology and practice inevitably bears the marks of the social conditions from which it emerged. But rather than indulge in "intellectually cutting up" the black revolutionary movement as it grew out of the struggles of sixties America, contemporary socialists would do better to learn from the genuinely revolutionary spirit and practice exhibited in the narrative of Bobby Seales' contemporary record. For British socialists in particular, there are obvious lessons near to home regarding such issues as northern Ireland and the fight against fascism.

The litmus test for any revolutionary organisation that claims to stand for the overthrow of the capitalist state, is the viciousness of the state's reaction to the threat it is perceived to present. There is no appeal from the verdict of M15's Peter Wright that the 'revolutionaries' of the SWP were *"about as dangerous as a pondful of ducks"*. The state is accordingly happy enough to accommodate them as a safety valve. Judged according to the same test, the Black Panthers should be considered to have been a threat of the first order to the American ruling class. The entire mechanism of repression, from the police in the street, on up through the CIA/FBI security networks, to the judicial apparatus sitting on top of it all, pulled out all the stops to crush the Panthers. As Seale notes in his 1991 introduction, *"there are still Panthers locked away in prisons across the country doing hard time on charges manufactured by the government."* James Forman's own conclusion is well justified:

"The call for resistance issued consistently by the Black Panther Party is a heroic effort. Its attempt to win the minds of many young black people toward political and military struggle stands as a hallmark in the resistance struggle of black people."

Seize the Time, The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton.

Black Classic Press, 1991



During November 1992, Red Action members travelled to the Basque country (Euskadi) and met with activists involved in the struggle for Basque national liberation. One of these activists, an ETA ex-political prisoner agreed to be interviewed for Red Action.

For security reasons he preferred not to give his name but is a 31 years old man who was born on a farm and was released from jail two and a half years ago after serving 11 years in prison.

*** WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS THAT LED YOU TO JOIN ETA?**

The conditions for which people join ETA at the present time are the same as when this political armed organisation was born. By this I mean the total lack of democratic freedom for the Basque country and therefore the denial of even the most minimal historical rights that belong to it. These rights are denied by force of arms by the Spanish army. Together with the political-judicial framework being violently imposed upon our people we must not forget the persistent practice of systematic torture in the arrest centres (there have been more than 120 cases during 1992) and the constant repression of the right to express oneself, demonstrate, etc.

I joined ETA after the death of the dictator Franco, a time in which a so-called 'democratic system' was established. A new constitution allowed the Spanish state to fundamentally deny the universally recognised right to self-determination as previously recognised in Item 8 of the Spanish constitution. The referendum concerning this constitution was rejected by the Basque Country but the political system didn't take any notice. As a Basque citizen, I felt the only organisation which defended our collective and individual rights was the armed organisation. That was the reason I joined ETA.

*** CAN YOU GIVE OUR READERS SOME IDEA OF THE SORT OF PEOPLE WHO JOIN ETA?**

Just like any other group of citizens, ETA is a heterogeneous organisation and it can be said that its membership is a reflection of any group of people within Basque society but obviously with a higher political commitment due to its clandestine methods of operation.

*** WHEN ARRESTED, HOW WERE YOU TREATED BY THE POLICE?**

When I was arrested for participating in militant armed struggle, from the very first moment the treatment I received was humiliating and I immediately suffered long periods of torture inside police stations. At nights I was taken to the mountains and there they simulated mock execu-

tions. This lasted for many days during which I was kept in isolation and denied the right to a lawyer and medical attention. My trial also turned out to be a forced

procedure of political punishment for my political dissidence. Therefore, the result of the trial was predetermined. It is important to note here that the court and its judges are not the regular ones used for any other process but a special one located in the capital (Madrid) of the Spanish state under the protection of the central power.

*** WHAT WERE CONDITIONS LIKE IN JAIL?**

Conditions within the jail are historically determined by the conditions of the struggle and so these conditions are used to blackmail the movement. For instance, a few years ago the Basque political prisoners were held in two jails within the Spanish state. After the break in the first political talks between the Spanish state and ETA, prisoners were dispersed throughout the whole Spanish prison system, isolating them by denying communication. The prisoners also suffer beatings, ill treatment and systematic harassment.

At nights I was taken to the mountains and they simulated mock executions

*** HOW DID YOU ORGANISE YOURSELVES WITHIN THE JAIL AS POLITICAL PRISONERS?**

As on any battleground, the organisation adapts itself to the conditions. Within a few years of our prisoners being dispersed, the collective established some information courses. Also, despite the terrible mental and physical conditions our organisation is reflected in our political contributions to the problems faced both inside the jail and outside in the Basque country. In other words our behaviour is characterised by the way in which we seek to resolve our own individual situations and the seeking of an overall political solution reflected in the demand for a Political Amnesty.

*** HAVE YOU SEEN CONDITIONS IMPROVE FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS?**

On the contrary, because the government has proved powerless in its fight to combat

The relationship between our peoples is one of solidarity as both are nations with no state, but at the same time oppressed by two states

the armed struggle of ETA, it attacks the 'next best thing' - the collective of Basque political prisoners. Through the brutal cruelty of living conditions (beatings, humiliations, isolations etc) they try to blackmail both our organisation and the Basque liberation movement as a whole.

*** WHAT EFFECT HAS YOUR TIME SPENT IN JAIL HAD ON YOUR POLITICAL OUTLOOK?**

It has clearly influenced me by strengthening my politics in every way and I'm absolutely convinced that the path I

adopted was the right one to follow.

*** DO YOU THINK THE ARMED STRUGGLE OF ETA IS SUCCESSFUL?**

Absolutely, yes, as the daily fight is the only way to attain freedom. I must mention here that despite being released from prison I do not feel free as the reasons for which I was imprisoned in the first place are still there and there will be no justice until those reasons are eradicated and the 2,000 refugees, 50 deportees and 600 Basque political prisoners come back home. So, I believe that until there is a successful resolution there will be no peace.

*** WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETA AND THE REST OF THE BASQUE LIBERATION MOVEMENT?**

ETA is an armed organisation. Although it shares a common strategy with the rest of the organisations within the Basque National Liberation Movement, its methods are more specific and concrete.

*** WHAT IS GAL?**

GAL has been used as a tool of the state in its campaign against ETA characterised by the fact that although it is a paramilitary organisation it has been closely linked to the police to the extent that in reality the Spanish police and GAL are in effect the same thing.

*** HOW DO YOU SEE THE STRUGGLE OF THE CATALAN PEOPLE AS COMPARED TO THAT OF THE BASQUE PEOPLE?**

The relationship between our peoples is one of solidarity as both are nations with no state, but at the same time oppressed by two states - the Spanish and the French. However, there is no organisational relationship.

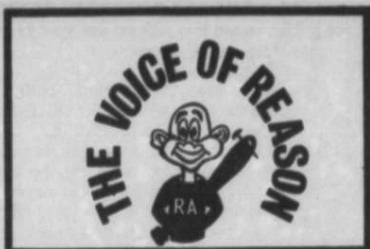
*** WHAT PROSPECTS DO YOU SEE FOR THE BASQUE LIBERATION MOVEMENT, HOW STRONG DO YOU SEE ITS POSITION?**

The coherence and strength of the Basque liberation movement and as an integral part, Herri Batasuna has proven during these years of resistance against repression that the violence of the state has been unable to hinder the strengthening process of the movement

*** WHAT PROSPECT DO YOU SEE FOR ETA AND SOCIALISM IN THE FUTURE?**

ETA as a Basque socialist revolutionary armed organisation has repeatedly made clear to both the Spanish state with whom they

have already held some official political talks and the general public its own perspectives to solve the conflict which can be summed up as a wide process of political negotiation after which the basic rights of the Basque country and its people will be established. ETA as an independent socialist organisation has proposed a framework from which the Basque country can decide its own future regarding both our own political and judicial framework free from the present impasse imposed by the Spanish state.



Shooting Grouse Out Of Season?

months and moved the venue to a remote outpost in Lanarkshire. The main reason for the change of date and move away from rallying either in Edinburgh or Glasgow was not because, "the police disrupted last year's rally" as they claimed in British Nationalist, but was, in fact, due to the fact that their 1991 Scottish Rally was physically smashed by a militant anti-fascist mobilisation organised by Glasgow AFA.

In addition, several incidents during 1992 served notice that the BNP were literally "under the cosh". Fascists have found that even their safest watering holes are not immune from attack. Two BNP members were ambushed while out sticking and pursued into their pub where further meaningful 'debate' took place. Such was the terror created by this incident that other fascists in the pub sat quietly watching one of their mates taking a beating, whilst the barman vaulted the bar and fled up the street never to be seen again.

In another incident in Glasgow city centre, six fascists had to

barricade themselves in a pub when they came under attack from three anti-fascists! In other incidents, boneheads from the sticks, out for the day in the big city, have been advised to dress more carefully as a result of meeting irate members of the public, keen to display their hatred of nazis.

In Edinburgh a group of concerned football fans smashed up the Trees Pub, favourite drinking den of the BNP and Hearts casuals. As a result of this incident, the brewery sacked the management of the pub and the bar staff who had been exhibiting sympathy for the fascists. Hibs football fans also stumbled upon a BNP leadership meeting in Glasgow as they passed through the city on their way back to Edinburgh after a Hibs match against Motherwell. The BNP contingent included Steve Cartwright, Scott McLean and Warren Bennett (all leading organisers in Scotland) as well as visitors from London. They were immediately set upon and ended up barricading themselves in the pub's kitchen before being given a police escort to safety.

NO ROLE FOR THE PROLE!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Although written at the outset of the history of capitalism as a world wide phenomenon, this pattern discerned by Marx will be immediately recognisable. Unemployment is ineradicable not because politicians get their sums wrong, but because, "Modern industry's whole form of motion depends on the constant transformation of a part of the working population into employed or semi-employed hands."

For any capitalist therefore, the possibility of alternatively increasing and decreasing the numbers of workers at his disposal is an absolute condition of continuing production. For the capitalist class as a whole, this is only possible where there exists a permanent reserve of workers without work who may be employed or made redundant as the movement of the economy as a whole dictates. When the economy enters a phase of expansion, the unemployed workers must be immediately available to supply their labour to meet the demands of the higher level of production and at such times, Marx concludes, the reserve army may be virtually eliminated, but "only momentarily". But as Marx says, it is crucial for the well being of all capitalists that process of expansion proceeds without "doing damage to the scale of production in other spheres". Otherwise, bosses will simply be poaching workers from each other, which ultimately would have the effect of stifling the 'boom' at birth. Moreover, competition between capitalists for a limited supply of workers would have the inevitable effect of driving up wages and making the projected increased level of production unprofitable.

The reserve army of unemployed therefore has a second function: "Taking them as a whole, the general movements of wages are exclusively regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army... They

are not therefore determined by the variations of the absolute numbers of the working population, but by the varying proportions in which the working class is divided into an active army and a reserve army, by the increase or diminution in the relative amount of the surplus population, by the extent to which it is alternatively absorbed and set free." The absolute number of any given workforce is for capitalism, irrelevant: the essential feature of the working population whatever its size, is its division into the employed and the unemployed.

The level of wages is a major factor in determining the level of profits: the more paid out in wages, the less left over for the capitalist. To ensure the level of profits, and so the very possibility of production, especially, but not only, during a phase of expansion, the capitalist economy must contain a mechanism for continually exercising a downward pressure on wages:

"The industrial reserve army, during the periods of stagnation and average prosperity, weighs down the active army of workers; during the periods of overproduction and feverish activity, it puts a curb on their pretensions. The relative surplus population is therefore the background against which the law of supply and demand does its work. It confines the field of action of this law to the limits absolutely convenient to capital's drive to exploit and dominate the workers."

Although Marx maintains that the general level of wages is fixed according to the costs of its reproduction within a particular society, this level is free to fluctuate between certain limits: this is the area in which the existence of the army of unemployed is decisive:

"Taking them as a whole, the general movements of wages are exclusively regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army."

Who amongst those looking for work, has not experienced the threat, explicit or implied, that if you do not want the work at a certain (low) level of wages, there are plenty who do? Who among those in work has not felt obliged to accept poor conditions

or intensification of labour because of the knowledge that someone without a job would accept if you refused? "The degree of the intensity of the competition amongst [the workers] themselves depends wholly on the pressure of the relative surplus population." Wages and conditions are always variable within certain limits according to the relative balance of forces in the class struggle. The desperate conditions and huge numbers of the 'reserve army' of unemployed ensures that the balance is set in favour of the capitalist and at a level that ensures a profit.

This pressure contributes to a secondary effect. Since many of the costs of the capitalist vary according to whether a greater or smaller number of workers are employed, (since extra tools, machines, factory space and facilities, etc. would be required as the number of workers increased) the capitalist always seeks to compel a given number of workers to work harder or longer rather than employ more workers. "It is in the absolute interest of every capitalist to extort a given quantity of labour out of a smaller rather than a greater number of workers."

The larger the enterprise, the more compelling this motive becomes. This process then yields a double benefit to the capitalist: the immediate costs of production are cut, while a greater number of workers are kept out of employment, increasing the pressure that can profitably be exerted on those that are employed.

"The over-work of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of its reserve, while conversely, the greater pressure that the reserve by its competition exerts on the employed workers forces them to submit to over-work and subjects them to the dictates of capital."

Thus in Britain today the number of workers obliged to work massive amounts of overtime to keep the job or make a living wage is balanced by millions of workers with no work at all. It is a situation engineered by and for the profit of, the capitalist class:

"The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by the over-work of the other part, and vice-versa, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalist and accelerates at the same time the production of the industrial reserve army on a scale corresponding with the progress of social accumulation."

Marx himself remarks that the levels of over-work are so great that if the amount of work undertaken by each available worker were restricted to a "rational amount", "unproductive workers" (servants, police, etc.) would have to be turned into productive workers just to maintain the current level of production.

Naturally, the working class resists this pressure with the best means at its disposal: combination counteracts the effects of competition:

"Thus as soon as the workers discover that...the degree of the intensity of competition amongst themselves depends wholly on the pressure of the relative surplus population, as soon as by setting up trade unions etc., they try to organise planned co-operation between the employed and the unemployed...so soon does capital cry out at the infringement of the eternal and sacred laws of supply and demand."

Hence the simultaneous passage of anti-trade union legislation in harness with the conscious imposition of a mass unemployment economy during the Thatcher years.

The views of the satirist cum bigot of the working class as unproductive or redundant must therefore be understood in the context of a genuine political currency. In saying that proles are useless in modern technological economies, the bigot disguises the fact that as capitalism develops, so it requires higher and higher levels of unemployment as a condition of continued profits. It puts the blame on the victim ('useless' people, parasites, vermin) and diverts it from the system that victimises them.

When Norman Lamont famously remarked that high levels of unemployment were "the price well worth paying" for the overall prosperity of

the economy, he was voicing the same spectrum of views, in the more tactful public voice of the establishment. He was somewhat inadvertently referring to the main pillar of the Tory party's social and economic strategy. Seeing the balance of class power slipping out of the traditional systems of control during the seventies, most notably during the '74 miners' strike, the ruling classes consciously decided to violently restructure the economy to restore the traditional balance.

This decision corresponded to an inevitable degree of restructuring as crisis replaced the growth economy of the fifties and sixties. The only mechanism available to capitalism in crisis, outside of overt totalitarianism, is mass unemployment. Whereas unemployment in post war Britain would fluctuate according to the strength of the economy, falling to as little as 1 or 2%, the Tories now decided to build an economy on the basis of permanent mass unemployment. Only through this drastic mechanism, they felt, could the over confident working class as a whole be brought to heel. We have seen how Marx exposes precisely how the mechanism works.

Consequently, even at the height of the economic 'miracle' of the Thatcher years, no one pretended that mass unemployment would end - the essence of the miracle itself was to maintain current levels of production while making large sections of the workforce redundant. The Thatcherite companies of the eighties had abandoned the project of increasing production - they sought instead to maintain existing levels of production with fewer workers. No current economic forecasters, whether they claim to see recovery or continued stagnation, pretend that unemployment will do anything but rise. Counted on the pre-Thatcher system, it already stands at over 4 million - not counting those in casual or part time work, the underemployed. The present recession is a complete vindication of Marx's conclusion that unemployment is "the absolute general law of capitalist production".

The same group of football supporters were involved in clashes with fascist skins and casuals at the Madness concert in Livingston in January. Initial reports in the press claimed that the violence was indiscriminate, however eye-witnesses claim that several groups of casuals and skinheads had united under the BNP's leadership in order to cause as much disruption to the gig as possible and to take on the Hibs casuals. A source close to the action tells us that all hell let loose at the gig with the Hibs boys coming out well on top.

The biggest public humiliation for the fascists in Scotland came at the end of 1992 when anti-fascists clashed with BNP members before, during and after the annual march against racism and fascism in Glasgow. In all, seven BNP members required hospital treatment - the most notable being Richard Fawcus, one of the BNP's English leadership and Stuart McLean, a local organiser.

The political equivalent of shooting grouse out of season?!

WE ARE RED ACTION

The collapse of Soviet communism has signalled the end of an era. Capitalism's golden age was defined by the economic and political certainties of the Cold War, has turned to crisis. As a discipline on the entire working class, mass unemployment is restored as a permanent condition. As capitalism expanded, many reforms such as nationalisation, implemented to serve the needs of capital, also served the needs of society. As capitalism contracts, deindustrialisation and the return to the principal of privatisation in health, public transport, housing and education sustains the profits of the wealthy directly at society's expense. In the short term, open conflict within and between classes is certain. Ultimately, the choice faced will be government without consent or social revolution.

Leninism, which decrees the interests of the working class are subordinate to the will of one revolutionary party, is the decisive influence on the far left. An apologist for the authoritarian state, it advertises the lie that dictatorship (ie minority rule) can be progressive. This betrayal mocks the theory and practice of Marx and Engels and any notion of independent working class initiative. The surrender of the political high ground to the opponents of total social change has paralysed the working class internationally.

Sectionarian division on the left continues to be a comfort to a system which socialism promised to replace. Factions, whose immaculate programmes for party dictatorship result in the pursuit of goals exclusive to themselves, contribute nothing to the real movement of the working class, except to help delay its political renaissance. In all essentials reactionary, they are the socialists of the previous generation. Anarchism, which claims to be a libertarian alternative to Leninism, could never work. Anarchism means the principled opposition to the exercise of any authority. Accordingly, even the most perfect democracy would be regarded by anarchism as authoritarian as it means the imposition of a social decision by a majority on a minority. The answer to bureaucratic authority is democratic authority, not the abolition of authority. We must start afresh.

In every country the working class possesses one striking advantage over the capitalist - numbers. However, numbers without unity and unity without organisation is free of political advantage. The purpose of a revolutionary working class organisation is to raise the working class to the position of the ruling class. To transfer political power from the minority to the majority. Unconditional democracy is the sole political form through which the aspirations of the majority can then be exercised and made secure. A revolutionary organisation must always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole. It must be working class in instinct, composition and orientation. It must be built in a democratic manner from the bottom up, rather than by decree from the top down. Direct democratic control by working people over their own organisations is the necessary preparation for the future rule of working people over their own countries.

WE ARE THE REDS!

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