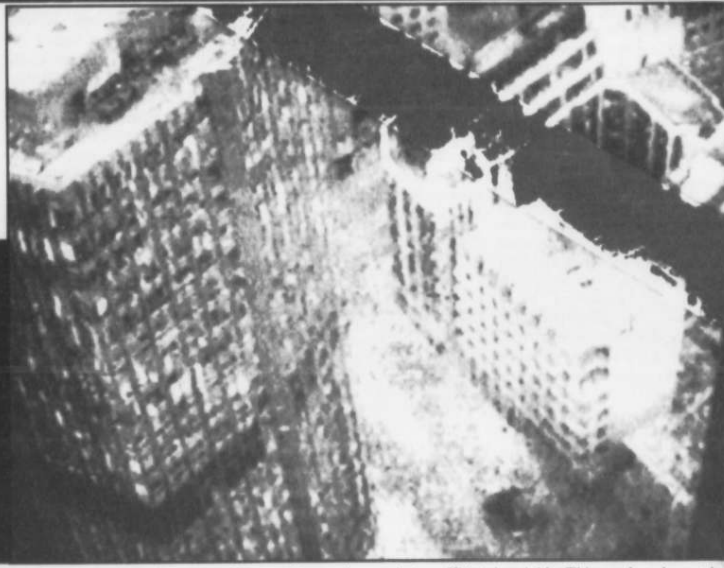
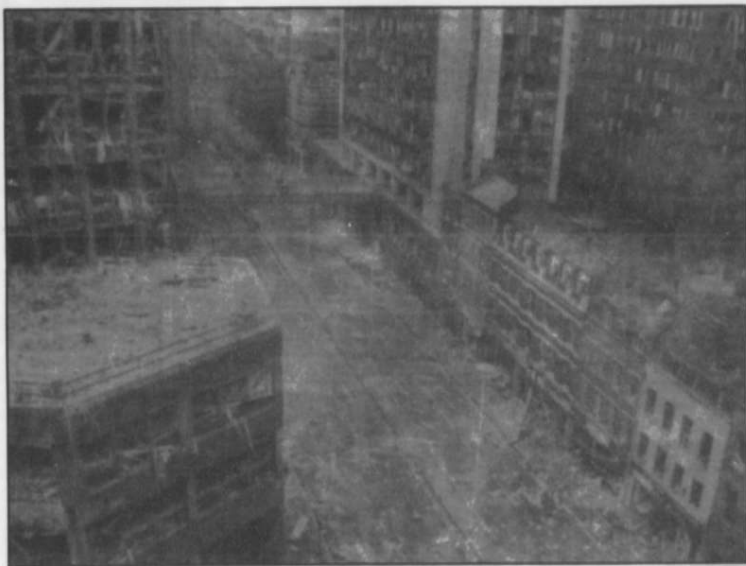


RED ACTION

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IRA CALL THE SHOTS!



BRITAIN BOMBED TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE

For 25 years the British government has insisted that it is not engaged in a war which can be resolved by negotiations or treaties. The IRA, it said, was nothing more than a band of common criminals; a settlement with them was as unthinkable as one with the Kray gang. Today it is obvious that if there is to be a settlement it will be a negotiated one. But do the negotiations, "knocking heads together rather than knocking teeth out" as one republican spokesperson envisaged the process, represent an IRA victory or an IRA defeat? Nobody knows. That is nobody in Britain knows. This includes British intelligence who apparently believed that an immediate ceasefire would follow the Downing St Declaration in December. And in that confusion and ignorance lies the answer.

In the same week the IRA ceasefire was announced, Neal Ascherson in the Independent on Sunday admitted that, having closely monitored media speculation throughout the week, he was, "staggered to discover that nobody had the faintest idea what to make of it". However the wild hypotheses offered by various 'experts' still went a long way to answering the question. The answer was staring them in the face, but still the penny did not drop. If the British government did not know what was going on, then the ceasefire was not part of a Brit agenda. As the media grappled with this realisation, credit for ending the violence

was offered, with various degrees of conviction to the American administration; John Hume; Fianna Fail. Indeed anybody but the architects of the peace process; the leadership of the Provisional IRA. The reason for the omission is clear. If indeed the ceasefire is part of an IRA agenda, it is out of strength rather than weakness and represents the beginning rather than the end of the process with more surprises to follow.

An IRA agenda means that the IRA have NOT bombed their way to the negotiating table; the 'table' would not exist without them. It is their table. Far, far worse. The reality is they have bombed Britain there.

Proof of an 'IRA agenda' and the foresight of the republican movement can be traced by the chronology of events. In 1988 the republican movement published two discussion documents entitled: *A Scenario for Peace*; and *Towards A Lasting Peace*. These documents subsequently formed the basis for discussions between Gerry Adams and John Hume leader of the SDLP. These talks were not warmly welcomed; Hume was universally condemned for breaching protocol by talking to the men of violence. The unionists referred to him as a 'dupe', yet Adams convinced him that it was a risk worth taking. After about 18 months the talks petered out. The war continued. In April 1993 it was leaked that Adams and

Hume had again resumed dialogue and in September when they announced they had reached agreement, there was consternation. Hume was again denounced. The Dublin government refused to handle anything bearing Adams' 'thumbprints'. Major declared that the thought of talking to Adams "turned his stomach". The strain on Hume, isolated as he was within his own party, was intense. If the IRA were not serious his career and reputation were finished. He needed constant reassurance. Throughout the negotiations with Dublin the republicans sat, as one described it, 'literally holding his hand'. Eventually, when, in November, Hume collapsed of exhaustion, the Irish Taoiseach was handed the baton and began the next stage of the relay in talks with John Major. At the same time parallel discussions unknown to Dublin were being conducted between the British government and the IRA. Confronted by rumours of contacts with republicans, Sir Patrick Mayhew tried to reassure loyalists describing one report as belonging "more properly in the fantasy of spy thrillers than in real life.". Loyalists were not reassured. Then, possibly as an impetus to the talks between Dublin and London, Sinn Fein confirmed loyalist paranoia. Mayhew was humiliated. Britain in an effort to synchronise their public and private positions insisted that the Provisionals had initiated the contact with a communique that began: "The conflict is over

but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close." In response the IRA made public the documentary evidence of the exchanges which left it in no doubt it was the republican movement from whom advice was required. In December 1993 Reynolds and Major signed the Downing St Declaration. At British insistence neither government referred to its parentage: the Hume/Adams talks. This was understandable. For Adams/Hume; Hume/Reynolds; Reynolds/Major were the necessary preliminaries to the main bout-Adams/Major. And unlike previous occasions when the Brits and the 'IRA' sat around the table as in 1972 and '75, this time as part of the republican strategy, they would do so publicly.

Expectation of a republican response to the Downing St declaration was intense. They obstinately demanded clarification. Major insisted none was necessary. There was much bluff and bluster from Dublin and London about "patience running out and carrying on the peace process without them". Eventually under international pressure Major caved in and detailed clarification was provided. In July Sinn Fein gave its response: accepting that the declaration was a step in the right direction but crucially was not in itself the basis for a solution. **IRA REJECT PEACE!** ran the headlines. But significantly Anglo-Irish talks were suspended in tacit acceptance that an element other than London and Dublin was setting the agenda. And again when the IRA announced the ceasefire nobody was more gobsmacked than the British government. Days earlier, Michael Ancram Minister of State privately dismissed rumours of a ceasefire as an

IRA 'gimmick'. (This needs to be put in perspective. In early August a twenty-five strong *Red Action* delegation to Belfast ALL knew that there was going to be a ceasefire. They KNEW it was going to begin in September though most understood it was to be of a three month duration. Major still believed it was only for three months a week after the IRA announced that it was a complete cessation.) On the day itself, within minutes of the announcement, timed to coincide with American breakfast news, Adams was conducting live interviews by phone on American television. In contrast the British government took hours to respond. Throughout the following week Major fussed over the word 'permanent,' in the process sacrificing any remaining credibility. Whoever was in control of the process, it certainly was not him.

Evidence of Adams' thumbprints apart, intense debate raged even within the republican movement itself. The secrecy with which the strategy was pursued created great alarm, in particular the genuine ignorance that existed over the basis for the initial Hume/Adams agreement. At a public meeting in Belfast in August a former prisoner who had served 16 years asked: 'What right has Seamus Mallon [an SDLP MP] to see a document denied to me?' There was much suspicion, and even speculation privately of a sellout, though this was more a result of inadequate political structures within Sinn Fein rather than an inadequate political strategy. (Within the IRA however, some felt that if the republican analysis was correct, that the Brits wanted out, then the time was ripe to launch the 'Tet Offensive': hit the Brits with everything INCLUDING the

Exclusive Interview with Editor
of An Phoblacht/Republican News- see page 5

continued on page 3

This year, as in previous years, RA members and supporters travelled to Belfast for the traditional August Internment commemoration. This year had extra significance as it was the 25th anniversary year of British troops being sent into Ireland. The 'weekend' has changed significantly since RA members started going ten years ago. Feile an Phobail, or the West Belfast Festival as it is now known, stretched from the 7th to the 14th August with the emphasis on the positive side to the struggle with everything from political events to kids' street parties. As Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams explained, "For years the failure of these British offensives was commemorated in a way which was negative and invariably at the cost of our own community. Lately we have learnt, instead, to celebrate our own strength and determination. The W.Belfast

Festival and Ardoyne Fleadh are clear examples of this, an example of our collective ability, creativity and determination". During the period of their stay, RA members attended a number of debates, exhibitions, videos, plays and social events. The highlights included, as always, Prisoners' Day (with an emotional launch of the Hunger-Strike book), visits to POWs, a presentation to women representatives of the struggle which included an appearance by ANC and ex-MK member Robert McBride, as well as joining the huge march to Belfast city hall with over 25 marching on the RA contingent. Although at times enjoyable, the main purpose of the visit is as a political crash course, especially for those attending for the first time, it is a chance to view the British State, teeth bared. Below we print a number of impressions from those who attended for the first time...



Red Action would like to congratulate the organisers of Feile An Phobail and thank the people of West Belfast for their hospitality. We would like to give a special mention to our hosts who provided billets, the POW department, and the POWs themselves for making us feel so welcome during our visit.

First Impressions

"This August saw my second trip to West Belfast, the first being about five years ago. That first visit left a big impression on me but the visit this year proved to be the five most politically inspiring days of my life. I arrived on the Wednesday, a few days into the festival, and headed for Springhill. The night was a benefit in the memory of Paul 'Topper' Thompson, a young man murdered by the UVF. Before the week-long event, the loyalists had warned that festival goers should 'prepare for death' but this seemed to deter no-one. The mood generated was one of enjoyment, remembrance and optimism. On the Friday we visited IRA volunteer, Sean Corry, who is serving a nine year sentence. Nerves were quickly washed away when Sean appeared buzzing enthusiastically and eager to talk. He told us about the present conditions in the Kesh and how the republican wings in the H-Blocks are organised as a commune. This differs radically from the loyalists' wings which run on a 'Daddy'-type basis where the 'harder' men control the regime. Long Kesh has often been called the 'University of Life'. Sean reckons that before anyone becomes involved in the armed struggle they should spend at least four years in the Kesh! The overall mood of the five days was extremely positive. The Republican people crave for peace and know it will only come about with an end to British

occupation. However, winning the nationalist struggle is only the first step in the class struggle and the fight for a united socialist republic. ■

The Falls Road was our first stop and it was here that our accommodation was sorted out. We found that we would be staying in the Twinbrook Estate. Twinbrook is where the hunger-striker Bobby Sands was from.

When we eventually breached the pub's security and gained access after a couple of embarrassing attempts, we found that it was there for a good reason as there had been a loyalist attack on the pub which had resulted in the sectarian murder of young lads having a drink and playing pool. This put things into perspective somewhat.

Indeed, later on during the course of our stay a catholic was abducted from the Divis Flats area by orange bigots before being tortured and murdered. As if we needed convincing of the sectarian nature of loyalism whereby any 'taig' is fair game. Perhaps Militant and their ilk could pay a visit to the Shankhill and preach to the natives about 'class unity'.

The following day we made our first prison visit. 'Our' POW wore a *fainne* (meaning he spoke Irish) and we got into a conversation on the respective differences of attitude to the language in the six counties and the rest of Ireland. I personally hated Irish at school in Dublin and still harbour none too fond memories of being battered about the place by redneck masters who were no doubt inspired by DeValera's vision of 'comely

maidens dancing at the crossroads'. The story was totally different for our prisoner as he had not been taught it in school but had learned it all in the Kesh where it had the added benefit of confusing the screws ... to such an extent that some of them were learning it in order to hear what was going on! ■

An act as simple as walking back from the local shops on a Sunday morning was met with questioning by a young squaddie, an intimidating act, his mate kneeling pointing a rifle and then joining us as I was asked my name, address, date of birth, movements, why I was in Belfast and why I should go home, eventually letting me go, spitting at me as I went - a brit trophy I didn't want.

On an organised visit to Milltown cemetery a section of squaddies came out to question why our group was looking at the graves, trying to get names and addresses. When our group stayed quiet we were told that it was 'us lot that had asked them over there' and that they should leave and let the UVF get amongst us. ■

The highlight of the weekend for me was the launch of the prisoners' book, *Nor Meekly Serve My Time* which had everything from songs to the reading of extracts from the book by the POWs who wrote it. The hair on the back of my neck stood on end when Ray McCartney read his memories of the H-Block hunger strikes. At one point Ray almost lost it as he read

the names of the 10 hunger strikers who died in 1981. He managed to get it together and finished the reading. It was a poignant moment. Saturday saw us visit republican prisoners in the blocks. For most of us this was a new experience and the procedures involved were real eyeopeners. It takes over an hour to process visitors before you eventually get through to see a republican POW. The guy that we visited was very sound, one of the editors of the *Captive Voice*, the prisoners' magazine. The visiting area is shared by both republicans and loyalists and it was a bit distracting every time some lunatic in a Rangers top passed by us! ■

My first impression of West Belfast was its apparent 'normality'. I'd always expected there to be something intrinsically different about the town and its people; after all, there is an urban guerrilla war going on. However, in most respects West Belfast is just like any working-class town in Britain - imagine Sheffield, but with an occupying army. It is this 'sameness' which I initially found most striking, and most inspiring. The people of West Belfast are ordinary working-class people, 'ordinary people acting under extraordinary circumstances' is a quote the republican movement often uses, and they are an illuminating example of just how much people can achieve within their own communities, even under such repressively hostile conditions. The lefty shit about "the isolated fanatics of the IRA" is very obviously just that; the movement

is absolutely indistinguishable from the people it represents. Feile an Phobail was organised and run brilliantly, by the class and for the class. The sense of community there is all-pervading; from the cheap and efficient black cab system, run primarily by ex-prisoners (anywhere you want to go for 50p, plus they provide a better local news service than CNN), to the reassuringly tight security at the Springhill disco; all run and arranged by the community for the community. On the night following the sectarian murder of Sean Monaghan by the UDA, the 'RA placed a blockade around the vulnerable Ardoyne area to keep the death squads out, and ensured that anyone leaving the area did so in the relative safety of a black cab. ■

Though I had been to Ireland many times before I had never been on a visit to the Kesh. Two visitors were allocated to each POW. The first question 'our' prisoner asked was were we over with the Troops Out Movement? No, *Red Action*, we replied. He said that he had seen the last paper, "The one that carried the statement from the volunteer on the front." He explained that people had been very impressed with the statement and "had discussed it on the wing." He himself was from Derry. His pal had been killed by the Brits when he was twelve and that, coupled with the Hunger Strikes, determined his 'choice of career'. He mentioned that there was a photo of him at twelve on a hunger strike demo in 1981. It struck me then as we talked that in a way Sean himself symbolised the failure of British policy and the inevitability of the island being free from British rule. As a twelve year old he had marched in support of the hunger strikers under a banner; CHILDREN OF 68 HUNGER STRIKERS OF 81. Now the children of '81 are the IRA volunteers - volunteers of '94. For twenty five years the British establishment has employed a wide variety of strategies all designed to crush republican resistance. From open terror such as Bloody Sunda, to internment and criminalisation; ■

Ringed in both photographs Sean McMonagle. First on a hungerstrike march in 1981. Second as an IRA Prisoner of War in Long Kesh in 1994.



THE LEFT: 'UNDERSTANDING THE LINE OF THE MARCH'

One of the principal paradoxes of Britain's Marxist Left is that it studiously ignores practically anything Marx himself had to say on the subject of Ireland. For 25 years it has derided the armed struggle as a tactic, and the objective of an island free from British presence as an objective. Republicanism was, they argued, a reactionary concept; a distraction from the real struggle. Instead, the Left counterposed the concept of social struggle and 'workers unity' in the process of course, accommodating Britain's armed occupation of the Six Counties. Loyalist death squads and 30,000 armed troops could, they felt, be set aside as an inconvenience, leasways until - after the revolution. Into the thinking of these 'marxists' neither Britain nor reality were allowed to intrude. Marx's dictum in 1875, "that as long as the independent life of a nation is suppressed by a foreign conqueror it inevitably directs all its efforts and all its energy against the external enemy" and that the social revolution could only proceed when the national question had been settled would, had they been aware of it, be dismissed out of hand as a petit bourgeois aberration. Given that track record, it could be guaranteed that the announcement of an IRA ceasefire would be greeted from the outset

by cries of 'sellout' and 'surrender', specifically from that quarter who had either taken a neutral position on the war (ie a tacit acceptance of the status quo) or, rejected the armed struggle as a tactic.

Northern Ireland Militant Labour as the name might suggest, is looking optimistically towards an 'internal settlement', and the return of politics to the mundane level with which they are familiar; such as 'standing in elections to a new assembly'. After a couple of weeks of prevarication Socialist Worker decided they welcomed the ceasefire. 'An important obstacle to class politics in Ireland has been removed'. For these revolutionaries it is of course the IRA and the armed struggle rather than British occupation and partition which is the obstacle to unity. Always eager to remake everything in their own English middle-class image, they now refer to Albert Reynolds as an 'Irish Tory'. Having for 25 years sought accommodation with loyalism and the border, perhaps they see the ceasefire as an opportunity to 'recolonise' the south. But perhaps the more obscure, Workers Power group illustrates the 'true trot' case most succinctly. It first announced that it does "Not welcome an IRA ceasefire"; and then within a sentence insists that "NEVER SUPPORTED" the armed struggle in the first place.

The Revolutionary Communist Party who, unlike all others, had a pro-republican position up until 1992 when it was inexplicably

dropped, insist that "the republicans have to accept that the struggle is defeated. The movement has its back against the wall. What's needed is a new movement". In their bulletin 'Irish Freedom' they 'endorse the analysis put forward by Mark Ryan in his new book *War and Peace in Ireland*'. The reader is invited to turn to page 23 'to begin the work of clarification and understanding' only to find that page 23 doesn't exist. An inauspicious beginning, you might think.

While almost as deservedly irrelevant in Britain now as they have been in Ireland for the last 25 years; where Left propaganda like this has some impact, it serves only to demoralise or confuse. Still their analysis can provide, like a seriously flawed compass, a useful rule of thumb; in that, whatever the course mapped out by them for victory, success invariably lies in setting off with appropriate haste in the opposite direction! According to the Communist Manifesto: "Communists...[should] have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of the march...and the general results of the proletarian movement." But far from enjoying advantages, Trotskyism in Britain is plagued by so many obvious inbuilt handicaps they might be registered disabled: so how to explain the discrepancy? If confronted with their wretched history they just shrug their shoulders and say by way of an apology: 'Well, we did our best'. In the unlikely event they were honest, they might add: "And, after all, (to quote a line from the Godfather) we're not communists!" ■

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Away from the glare of publicity surrounding the 'peace process' it was very much business as usual for RA members and supporters.

We gathered in a London pub along with other fellow republicans to raise funds for Irish Republican Prisoners of War. During the evening where Glasgow's *Athenrye* played a rousing set and were ably supported by London's *Dead B Specials* artwork produced by POWs in Long Kesh was presented as raffle prizes and a number of those present took the opportunity to buy copies of the new *Hunger Strike book, Nor Meekly Serve My Time*.

The following morning as the organisers, many nursing hangovers, counted up the night's proceeds it became clear that it had been another successful night for POW welfare.

While Irish prisoners remain in Britain's jails *Red Action* will continue to play our role as working-class militants.

Supergrasses and Shoot to Kill; Death squads and censorship; nothing worked. On the contrary these policies did nothing to diminish the spirit of resistance, but served instead to throw up another generation of IRA volunteers. For Sean, the murder of his friend and the hunger strike were the catalyst. After that he knew what he had to do. For other twelve year olds the SAS victories at Loughall and Gibraltar would have carried a similar significance. The greater the success of the operation in the short term the stronger the guarantee of ultimate failure. The more devious and cruel the tactic, the more each generation was equipped with a tangible reason of their own for getting rid of them. Everything the British tried in the long run simply strengthened the struggle. They were their own worst enemy, endlessly digging their own graves. ■

dispatches from a war zone



On Thursday 1st September a loyalist death squad murdered 32 year old John O'Hanlon, an innocent catholic. At around the same time, in another part of North Belfast, an attempt was made to murder another innocent catholic. Both attacks came 22 hours after the Provisional IRA announced a "complete cessation of military operations".

In the early hours of Sunday 4th September, loyalist terrorists again attempted to murder yet another innocent catholic at the notorious Rosapenna Street/Old Park Road junction in North Belfast. At 9.40pm the same evening, the UVF detonated a 10lb car bomb at Sevastopol Street on the Falls Road. Their intended target was the Sinn Fein office but the explosion caused more damage to surrounding houses and a library. One householder had a narrow escape when part of the Renault 19 car smashed through the front door of the house and landed in the hallway.

Despite these murder attempts, John Major and his government are going out of their way to assure Unionists and loyalist death squads that nothing has changed and that the Conservatives will not sell them out. In the same breath Major has stalled the whole peace

process by demanding that the IRA change the phrase "complete cessation" to "permanent cessation". Still, it comes as no surprise that the British government plays semantics and nit-picks over the wording of republican statements while bending over backwards to appease the very people who do not appear to want peace.

OGLAIGH NA HEIREANN

To understand why nationalists can see nothing but intransigence from Unionists and the British government one only has to look at their attitudes since the IRA statement, reported, in part, below: "Recognising the potential of the current situation and in order to enhance the democratic process and underlining our definitive commitment to its success, the leadership of Oglagh na hEireann salutes and commends our volunteers, other activists, our supporters and the political prisoners who have sustained the struggle against all odds for the past 25 years."

"We remember all those who have died for Irish freedom and we reiterate our commitment to our republican objectives."

"We believe that an opportunity to secure a just and lasting settlement has been created."

"We are therefore entering into a new situation in a spirit of determination"



a scene from the Falls

and confidence, determined that the injustices which created this conflict will be removed.

"A solution will only be found as a result of inclusive negotiation. Others, not least the British government, have a duty to face up to their responsibilities."

There were wild scenes of jubilation outside Sinn Fein's headquarters following the IRA statement as thousands of people turned up to cheer Gerry Adams. He told reporters that the IRA statement had created, "a moment which must be seized, particularly by John Major, Jim Molyneux and Ian Paisley."

There were celebrations all over Belfast as nationalist people took to the streets in cavalcades of cars. Police stations and army barracks were festooned with tricolours as the people celebrated and welcomed this new phase of their struggle for self-determination.

"...JUST A TRICK"

Meanwhile on the Shankill Road and other loyalist areas of Belfast, local people being interviewed by the media were espousing the fear instilled in them by their leaders. Quotes such as, "It's just a trick", "you can't trust them", "they'll still be shooting protestants", "the Ulster people decide what's going to happen in Ulster. Mr Major and anybody else won't decide." (sic) Instead of celebrating the ending of a violent struggle like their nationalist counterparts the people of the Shankill looked on this momentous occasion with all the cynicism, fear and, in many cases, sectarian bigotry taught to them by their old fashioned orange-and-proud-of-it Unionist leaders who go around their constituencies whipping up hysteria. After the publication of the IRA statement I watched a television interview with Hugh Smyth, the Unionist mayor of Belfast. Mr Smyth, instead of demanding that loyalist terrorists lay down their arms and stop murdering innocent catholics, told them not to be hasty, to analyse this first and make sure

process which they will be unable to control."

What then of the bloodbath scenario and the loyalist backlash, long presented by apologists as the justification for British occupation? Given that for a quarter of a century loyalist violence has been presented as reactive it was instructive to note that the instinctive response to the IRA ceasefire was to threaten 'civil war'. But even as a notion this is fanciful. The loyalist paramilitaries lack the logistics, the political resolve and, crucially, a clear cut objective in the event of British withdrawal. Despite the seizure last November of two tons of explosives on a Polish registered ship at Teesport in Cleveland destined for the UVF, it is generally acknowledged that the entire operation was set up by MI5 with the cooperation of Polish Intelligence. Even if they had the gear, who would they bomb?

While the IRA have shown it possible to bomb someone out of your country, once they [Britain] had left it would be impossible [for Loyalists] to bomb them back in again. The more effective the military campaign the more effective the political alienation. And anyway bombing your 'capital city' is hardly a display of loyalty that most people would comprehend.

Similarly bombing Dublin with or without help from British Intelligence would leave them instantly isolated nationally and internationally. Retribution could be expected to be swift. Nor do the Loyalists show the same commitment or resolve long associated with republicans. Their hunger strikes tend to begin after breakfast and end just before lunch; a recent roof-top protest in Crumlin Rd jail ended as soon as it got dark. Like the 'laager louts' of the AWB when the time came, it transpired that they were prepared only to fight to the last drop of everyone else's blood. So if protracted military manoeuvres appear out of the question what room exists for political ones? Just as discouraging... since 1912 the preferred unionist strategy has been: Ulster says NO! And while the republican movement has produced its 'Mandela' there is no hint of the emergence of a unionist De

their was no sell-out to nationalists. This appears to be the policy of the whole unionist family: "We condemn loyalist violence, but ..." Of course, we have the British ministers who excuse loyalist murders as "reactive violence" to thank for this policy.

The unionist hysteria went into overdrive when, in a brave and historical move this week, Albert Reynolds invited both Gerry Adams and John Hume to a meeting in Dublin, the first direct contact between a Taoiseach and a republican leader since the foundation of the Irish state. In a joint statement the three leaders appealed to unionists to join them in the search for peace. "We cannot resolve this problem without the participation and agreement of the unionist people. We call on everyone to use all their influence to bring this agreement about."

The unionist reply was swift and vehement. Upper Bann MP, David Trimble, said, "Mr Reynolds rushes in with indecent, obscene haste to have dealings with them." The Tory reply wasn't much better. Andrew Hunter, chairman of the back-bench committee on Northern Ireland, said the meeting was a "disastrous miscalculation by the Irish government which potentially has the most damaging consequences." These, although bad enough, were mild compared to the rantings of Paisley and his disciples who dug up the same old rhetoric of the South being in cahoots with the IRA to force protestants kicking and screaming into a united Ireland. All this despite the fact that Mr Reynolds assured them that the Irish government had no ulterior motive and despite Gerry Adams' pronouncement: "We threaten you only with democracy."

Is it any wonder then that while murals in nationalist areas talk of peace and democracy that loyalist gable 'artists' write of the war just beginning; rivers of nationalist blood and that same old chestnut of never forsaking the blue skies of Ulster for the grey skies of an Irish republic? Wake up people! Those grey skies above you now are caused by social and economic deprivation and they are as grey on the Shankill as they are on the Falls.

Klerk. If all the loyalist community can offer in the way of dialogue is monosyllabic, they will find themselves represented in negotiations by a surrogate, or safely ignored. A fate designed previously by Britain for the IRA.

If the future of unionism as a political entity is less than rosy what then the verdict on Britain, the co-accused? Since the mid 1980s at least, successive British administrations have wanted out. But they wanted to leave with dignity. During the 1981 Hunger-Strike Thatcher prophesied that the "IRA had played its last card". It was in fact directly the reverse. The IRA run the prisons. The screws have long ago lost the stomach for the fight. The position inside is a microcosm of a wider picture. Successive surveys of public opinion have shown that upwards of 60% are in favour of a British withdrawal. It is not that the British public are waving the white flag of surrender, it is more because they do not see it as their fight. After all, if the army is kicked out of Ulster; even a clear cut military victory would not be followed by a retributive invasion of the 'mainland' by the IRA! So what do they care. As Edward Pearce pointed out in the Guardian: "The British voter doesn't give a damn for Ireland, united or otherwise. But a perceived withdrawal will be quickly seen as high-toned defeat, and that swiftly becomes very bad politics. How not to be there without having left is the conundrum of all British governments." So while the British public are largely neutral in the governments fight with the IRA; being seen to lose would mean more than simply a loss of face.

After Suez, Britain awoke to find that it was no longer a world power. Now the crisis is within what is defined by the state as its border. The subsequent fallout will impact directly not only on the government of the day but on the state itself. No longer a colonial power, the British establishment may find that when the dust settles it is now without even a stable democracy. If so, then the Downing St Declaration may well come to be regarded as the longest suicide note in history.

RA EDITORIAL



the response from the Shankill

THE FUTURE

It is time for the old animosities and sectarian bigotries which have caused such divisions among our communities for so long to be forgotten. The future of Ireland is now in the hands of all its people - protestant, catholic and dissenter, unionist and nationalist. It is us who elect our politicians, so it is up to us to tell them that we want no more death or destruction on our streets, we want peace. We must demand that they take the initiative now, demand that they either forget their petty bickering and sectarian rivalries or find themselves a new job.

The peace that we seek is not just for ourselves but for our children, grandchildren and future generations. Past generations have always had an inbred mistrust of "the other side" which has been seized upon by manipulative people who use these divisions for their own selfish aims. It will be difficult for many people in both communities to find the trust that will break down these divisions but for the sake of our children they have to try. There is a golden opportunity now to end the struggle and strife of the past. It must be grasped and nurtured, failure to do so would be criminal and inhuman and is condemning future generations to the pain and misery already suffered by generations of Irish people.

The IRA has taken a brave decision and if it brings peace, stability and justice which many have hoped and prayed for, then they, and all republicans, will have earned the gratitude of future generations.

There is an enormous burden on all the people striving to achieve

the political rather than military solution in this country and it is not helped by intransigence. The British government is in a position to cement the ceasefire. It must pass the message on to the unionists that their days of holding all the people of Ireland to ransom are over and that nationalists have a right to be treated as equals.

The IRA ceasefire is not the end but the beginning. We must all give our support to those brave people seeking political change in Ireland. We must also remember those who have died in the past 25 years, their deaths will not have been in vain if a new Ireland is born.

Nationalists owe a great deal to the volunteers of Oglagh na hEireann. They have, through their courage and sacrifice, earned many concessions for the nationalist people. Their determination and bravery has never faltered and their bravest deed of all was being brave enough to say we have gone as far as we feel we should go, it is time now for the political leaders to find a just settlement to suit all the people of Ireland.

The time for intransigence is past. The British government and militant unionism is all that bars the way to complete peace in Ireland. The people of Ireland are crying out for peace. The Republican movement is willing to give it to them. Those who stand as a barrier to peace will be judged by history and cursed by future generations. The hand of friendship is being offered. Will you slap it aside, or join us in making an Ireland where all can live in equality and as brothers and sisters?

M. Collins, Belfast

continued from 'IRA Calls the Shots' (page 1) kitchen sink.) So how might the irreconcilable be reconciled? Who had moved? Naturally there had to be a sellout. The question was who was selling out who? The RCP's *Irish Freedom Movement* magazine reflecting much left wing opinion in England was emphatic: "There is no avoiding the grim reality that the peace process represents a historic defeat for the liberation movement." On the other hand the right wing *Spectator* journal gnashed: "Far from being marginalised the men of violence are to be moved centre stage. To say that the [Downing Street] Declaration was a great victory for the IRA is not rhetoric; it is hard Gradgrind fact."

Well, there can be little doubt as to who is centre stage. As to who has moved the evidence is equally stark. Margaret Thatcher once stated that the north of Ireland was, "...as English as Finchley..." Major and Mayhew have constantly repeated that their government has no "selfish, strategic or economic interest" in it. Accepting that it is indeed the British who have moved, the equally pertinent question is why now? It is readily admitted that the Baltic and Bishopsgate bombs carried a genuine and immediate threat to "London's pre-eminence as an international centre of capital...which increased the governments feeling that some sort of acclamation with the terrorists was inevitable". This, was no longer an "acceptable level of violence". An IRA admission in October 1993 six months after Bishopsgate that "...the IRA last summer were forced into abandoning 18 tons of explosives which were destined for six simultaneous bomb attacks on prestigious targets in London..." must have concentrated the British mind wonderfully. So is Britain preparing the way for a sellout as loyalists contend? Stephen Glover in the *Evening Standard* thinks not: "Such a policy would be a suicide note for the British State. It could not be done. I am sure that Mr Major and Sir Patrick understand the dangers, and so I can't believe they are cynically planning a sellout. But just because they are not planning a sell-out it does not mean there isn't going to be one. They are embarked on a

'...MORE BISHOPSGATES? ...CERTAINLY'

Danny Morrison interview 'Panorama' Winter 1994...

P: If peace does not come at this stage, if the Downing Street Declaration just withers on the vine, what happens?

DM: Well, there's no resolution to the conflict and therefore the conflict will continue. It's inevitable but we would hope that British public opinion, be it through IRA pressure on business people in London or ...

P: You mean bombs?

DM: Bombs in London, certainly, or the British people

realising the lies and the deceit they have been fed by their government to justify its position in Ireland, that that comes through.

P: But the campaign can't go on indefinitely, people can't keep on fighting and dying for another 25 years.

DM: Well, I heard this in 1972, I heard it in 1975. I heard Roy Mason say in 1978 he was squeezing the IRA like a tube of toothpaste. I heard Margaret Thatcher say in 1981 that the Hunger Strike was the IRA's last card. She's gone. John Major may have to go. We may have to sit it out, but we're prepared to forfeit our freedom and our lives because we're talking about permanent peace and the end of conflict and to us it is a worthy goal.



On 29th April 1992 four Los Angeles police officers were cleared by a white jury of a series of assault related charges which arose from public outcry over the beating of a black motorist, Rodney King, on 3rd March 1991.

The most positive and significant aspect of the rebellion which followed was the gang peace which ensued between LA's two street gangs the Crips and Bloods. In an interview on 15 May 1992, Baby Nerve of the Watergate Crips described the gangs' agenda as "Build and destroy. We're going to build ourselves and we're going to destroy their system."

LA has a gang culture which reaches back to roots in the early South Central gangs of the 40s and 50s-the Businessmen, Sausons, Gladiators, Outlaws, etc-black gangs formed in response to white violence in high schools. In the 60s the gangs came under the influence of the civil rights and black power movements. In his history of LA, 'City of Quartz', Mike Davis recounts a civil rights protest at a whites only restaurant, where the Sausons saved the protesters from attack by a gang of white thugs. Two Sausons, Alprentice 'Bunchy' Carter and John Huggins, became local organisers for the Black Panther Party, while a third, Brother Crook, organised a Community Alert Patrol to monitor police violence.

The developing of a revolutionary consciousness within the gangs was met by a combined FBI/LAPD assault on the gangs' structure and organisation. The Public Disorder Intelligence Division, an anti-'progressive' counter intelligence and surveillance group was set up and in February 1969 Carter and Huggins were murdered by a rival gang controlled by FBI agents. In 1970 the Panthers' LA structure was destroyed through a SWAT team attack on their South Central headquarters.

The Crips and Bloods were the bastard children of the Panther generation. The Crips were formed by Raymond Washington, who had come under the influence of the Panthers, and Crip originally stood for 'Continuous Revolution In Progress'. The Crips though were a product of the decimation of radical political leadership within the black community. They had the guns, but without the Panthers' political agenda. Gang culture became an all out war, a battle for territorial control between Blood and Crip. Ex-Crip 'Ghetto Star' Sanyika Shakur-Monster Kody Scott describes the Blood/Crip conflict as "A war fought without terms. A war fought by any means necessary, with anything at their disposal. The death toll is in the thousands-wounded, missing in action, unaccountable, unthinkable. No-one is keeping a tally."

The Blood/Crip war has for over 22 years prevented succeeding generations of LA youth from mounting any resistance to the status quo, and given the LAPD the excuse to stage Operation Hammer, which entailed the mass round up of 'gang suspects' by police. Thousands of black and Latino youth were arrested and their names entered onto police files as gang members.

With the gang truce of 1992 the balance of power in South Central began to slip away from the LAPD and their paymasters. In the days after the announcement of the gang peace, the Bloods/Crips issued a set of joint proposals for rebuilding the neighbourhoods, transforming the city's schools and educational programmes, replacing welfare with jobs, community controlled law enforcement and stimulating economic development. The document called for federal investment of \$2 billion for the rebuilding of the city, \$1 billion for job creation, and \$700 million for education. In return the Bloods/Crips pledged to work to end the drug trade in LA and reinvest the proceeds, and to "match funds for an AIDS research and awareness centre in South Central and Long Beach," to be staffed by minority researchers and physicians. "Give Us The Hammers and Nails-We Will Rebuild the City".

The LAPD acted immediately to attempt to break the peace. Earlier attempts to reforge the Crips as a revolutionary force within the prison system, through the Consolidated Crip Organisation, were broken by isolation of activists within the system, and the forced integration of warring 'sets' within the prison regime. Similar methods were employed against the peace. The federal Justice Department dispatched an elite task force of federal marshals to LA and acknowledged that "this is, frankly, the biggest effort ever, federally."

The Justice Department's strategy was to apply RICO-federal anti-racketeering laws to indict the

gangs as criminal organisations. From May 17th 1992 gatherings of more than 3 people were banned by Sheriff's order, to prevent gang meets between the Bloods and Crips. Gang picnics were attacked by LAPD members in V-100 armoured personnel carriers firing Thunderflash stun grenades. Soon after the peace was declared, 4 members of the Rollin's 60s Crips were wounded in a drive by shooting organised by undercover cops wearing Blood colours.

The Bloods/Crips were only one of the LAPDs targets. A "We Tip" hotline was set up to invite people to inform on friends or neighbours suspected of looting. LAPD Metro Squad units raided tenements in search of stolen goods. Curfew violators, including the homeless, were given 30 day jail sentences. A looter caught with a packet of seeds and a carton of milk had his bail set at \$15,000. Over 20,000 were arrested and jailed. Immigration and Naturalisation Service officers were brought into Latino neighbourhoods. Immigrants in custody were told that if they didn't agree to voluntarily leave the US, they would face long jail terms. Over 700 were deported.

Dewain Holmes (Snipe) one of the architects of the gang peace was jailed in late 1992 for 7 years for a \$10 robbery that 20 witnesses said he didn't commit. Holmes was an ex-gang member who became politically active after his friend Henry Peco was shot 43 times by undercover LAPD cops and left to bleed to death on the street for 5 hours. Holmes helped form the Henry Peco Justice Committee in 1991 and organised large protests in response to every instance of police abuse in South Central and East LA.

American capital has discovered there is a price for turning its back on the working class. US journalist Christian Parenti has commented "the post-riot grass roots movement in LA was asking for downward redistribution of wealth and political power. The city's elite, the governing class, were faced with a choice, reform or repression. Clearly they've chosen the latter."

American capital has made a choice. It will survive by 'lockdown'. Financial districts like LAs Bunker Hill are now surveillance camera sanctuaries. Banks have electronically controlled bullet proof steel doors. 'Guard gate security' separates LA's rich from its urban poor. For the poor, there is a different kind of "security". The US has the highest rate of imprisonment in the world, with over 1 million behind bars. In California, from 1982 to 1990, while spending on schools and social programmes was cut, funding for prisons rose 359%. Black males comprise 6% of the US population, but nearly 50% of its prison population. Black males in the US are jailed at a rate of 4 times that of a black male in South Africa. As African-American activist Assata Shakur describes it, "We have experienced a job blockade, an education blockade, a healthcare blockade, and a freedom, justice and liberty blockade."

CHIAPAS, MEXICO

On January 1st 1994 the North American Free Trade Agreement came into force, after two decades of planning. The Treaty removed all barriers to trade between the US, Mexico and Canada-such "barriers" including trade tariffs but also environmental, health and labour laws. The minimum wage in Mexico stands at 51 cents an hour. NAFTA was the US springboard to exploitation of Mexican cheap labour as a means to quick profit and a weapon to drive down real wages in the US. For Mexican workers and peasants NAFTA offered only the promise of hell today, worse tomorrow. 20 million Mexicans - a quarter of the population - live in absolute poverty. Unemployment stands at 18%. Average food consumption drops every year. In 1993, 15,000 indigenous Mayan Indians, out of a total of 1 million, died of hunger, malnutrition or violence, in the Chiapas province alone.

On 1 January 1994 2000 guerrillas from the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) marched into seven towns in the state of

Subcomandante Marcos, EZLN spokesperson.



BLOODS, CRIPS AND ZAPATISTAS

Chiapas, occupied the municipal buildings, burned official documents, opened food warehouses to the poor, burned down town halls, and set free over 200 prisoners in attacks on four prisons.

Chiapas was the chosen battle ground for the EZLN, who declared their rebellion to be in line with Article 39 of the Mexican constitution, which states that "the people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government." Support for the EZLN was demonstrated across Mexico from demonstrations to graffiti saluting the rebels. Bombs exploded in Mexico City and Acapulco.

On 6th January the EZLN issued a communique: "Here we are, the dead of all times, dying once again, but now with the object of living." Simultaneously the Mexican state moved to smash the uprising. The Daily Telegraph reported "Witnesses said 7 suspected insurgents were bound and then forced to lie on the ground before they were shot in the head in the marketplace of the town of Ocosingo, in Chiapas state." 15,000 troops, helicopter gunships, artillery and bombers were dispatched to Chiapas to suppress the uprising. The Mexican military fired on press and Red Cross personnel when they tried to enter Ocosingo, Tenejapa, Oxbhe and other towns. A US human rights delegation discovered that, as part of a cover up operation, the military had secretly buried 48 unidentified bodies in Tuxtla Gutierrez and numerous corpses of indigenous peoples in Ocosingo.

On January 14th the Congress of Indigenous and Peasant Peoples met to declare solidarity with the EZLN. Peasants in the region began occupying areas owned by major land owners. The Zapatistas declared "The extreme conditions in which our fellow country people live have a common cause: the lack of liberty and democracy. We believe that authentic respect for liberty and the peoples democratic will are indispensable requirements for improving the economic and social conditions in which Mexicans dispossessed live."

By late January the PRI, aware of the level of support for the EZLN, declared a unilateral ceasefire and agreed to talks. The Interior Minister, Patrocinio Gonzalez Garrido, a former governor of Chiapas with a history of involvement in human rights abuses, was forced to resign. Subsequent negotiations led to a government commitment to dramatically increase social spending and a human rights investigation.

In August 1994 the EZLN convened the National Democratic Convention, inviting 6000 representatives of Mexican "civil society": indigenous community leaders, delegates from shanty towns, peasant parties, women's and gay groups. Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos declared that the armed struggle was on hold. "We are moving to one side, although we are not going away, we hope that this convention will give us the opportunity to return to the silence that we broke, the night from which we emerged... We are prepared to shed more blood if that is the price that has to be paid for a real democratic change in Mexico."

In 1988 the PRI retained power through fraud; a computer counting votes broke down when it was revealed that the opposition candidate was ahead. The 1994 elections, which President Salinas declared would be a vote for NAFTA and against the EZLN, took place at the end of August. The PRI won again, with 50% of the vote. A UN monitoring group declared the result "deeply flawed." Names had disappeared from the electoral register at 65% of polling stations, with evidence of intimidation at 17% of polls. In



Despite advertising the elite Vassar University, a black male has a much greater chance of entering jail than higher education. The US prison population now exceeds 1,000,000.

response the National Democratic Convention called a Popular Electoral Tribunal to investigate the result.

Mexico was described by the right wing Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa as "the perfect dictatorship, because it is camouflaged." The camouflage, and the dictatorship remain in place, but the EZLN uprising has shown the possibility of a real political alternative, and the establishment of the National Democratic Convention has moved forward the creation of a democratic "national revolutionary movement." The EZLN has declared "We will not take the country hostage. We neither want nor are able to impose on civilian Mexican society our ideas by the force of our arms, as the current government imposes its project on the country with the force of its arms."

Marcos and the EZLN set their role as creating a pace by force of arms for popular revolt to succeed. "Whatever the case," Marcos writes, "We will have the opportunity to die in battle fighting, instead of dying of dissent, as the indigenous people of Chiapas usually die."

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

On 24 June 1994 the liberal left New Statesman journal wrote "We are living in dangerous times. Michael Mansfield QC considers the Criminal Justice Bill "the most draconian act this government has put through". He compares it to South Africa, with "banning orders wherever 2 or 3 are gathered together...The democratic right to demonstrate is going down the pan."

The Criminal Justice Bill, and the history of repression of which it is the culmination (from police attacks during the miners strike and News International dispute to the harassment of travellers and the constant attempts to introduce ID cards through the back door) goes to prove that British capital, like its US and Mexican counterparts, has decided that the cost of democracy, of guaranteed civil liberties and a welfare safety net as the bedrock of social consensus, is a price it can no longer afford.

"Democracy" has never had much currency on the left. The adoption of the Leninist conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat meant that for most of the left "democracy" wasn't an issue; democratic rights for ordinary working class people was seen as "reformist". What was necessary was the replacement of the "sham" of democracy with the rule of the revolutionary party, as embodiment of the real interests of the working class! But democ-

cracy is something most working class communities wanted more of, not less.

The implementation of the Criminal Justice Bill will entirely remove the legal right which is the fundamental prop of democracy-the right to protest. The accelerating impoverishment of working class living standards can only be maintained by the denial, through both legal and physical repression, of the right of, and capacity to, resist.

As Mike Davis wrote of LA in 1992, "I see the uprising as having a revolutionary democratic content simply because each of these conflicts has usually been resolved around the fact that these citizenship rights cannot be minimally satisfied through the supposedly democratic institutions of this society. This has forced the struggle for elementary democratic rights, to take a different form, sometimes an insurrectionary form. THE STRUGGLES FOR THESE MINIMAL RIGHTS HAVE TO FLOW BACK INTO THE STREETS."

With capital no longer having the capacity to underwrite reforms, the struggle for reform, for civil rights-for democracy - can only succeed as a revolutionary struggle. When Civil Rights marchers in Derry and Belfast in 68 and 69 were baton charged, that much was clear. It was clear in the 1984-5 miners strike, when the raising of the demand for the right to work was met with the militarisation of the police force. It was clear in LA in 1992 and in Chiapas in January 1994.

But if the struggle for democratic rights is in essence revolutionary, then the form of political organisation clung to as a model by the left cannot be adequate. The Bolshevik party is by its nature anti-democratic. It cannot be therefore a weapon for the preservation and extension of democracy. As the EZLN's Subcomandante Marcos put it, the crisis of the Stalinist states across Eastern Europe "brought us to the thinking that the problem of power and the way forward for society is something that cannot be resolved from above. In the end, the social base, the people, are alienated from the political process."

The EZLN are the clearest expression of the alternative, but the efforts of the Panthers in the 70s, and the Blood/Crips truce point to similar conclusions. The Panthers' political activities consisted of organising breakfast programmes to feed working class families, setting up Free Health Clinics, organising educational classes, protecting the community from police attack. All of this would be considered reformist by the left - but it was significant for two reasons 1) because it met the interests articulated by the communities the Panthers claimed to represent and 2) it was backed up by force - the force of arms.

Replacing the Leninist model of revolutionary organisation in practice is a new model of organisation-of the party as servant of the class, guarantor of the interests of the class-in essence the guardian of the communities right to organise, rather than a substitute for the self organisation of working class communities. The EZLN have argued "The Directorate of our army has never spoken about Cuban or Soviet socialism. We have always spoken about the basic right of the human. Education, housing, health, food, land, good pay for our work, democracy. Some may call this socialism. We say, make a democratic space, make enough liberty so that we can decide who we agree with, and by "we" I mean the people, not the army."

The EZLN has no political agenda of its own. It is directed by the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee which is made up of delegates from indigenous and peasant communities, mandated by village assemblies. According to Marcos, "The proposal to start the uprising was passed to all the communities. Everyone was asked what they thought. Then there was a direct vote. It was the same when the government proposed talks. You have to go to everyone of these communities because those who have decided the war have to decide if it will stop."

Neither the EZLN nor the groups thrown up by the community struggles in LA and elsewhere across Americas ghettos are perfect. They are products of struggle. But their experiences embody a powerful lesson-democracy can only be defended by democratic revolutionary practices. The EZLN, the Panthers, the Blood/Crip groups are part of their communities, accountable to them, acting in their interests, facilitating the right of the communities to organise themselves through force.

When the Panthers were first formed in Oakland in 1967 they worked with other community groups to get a stop sign installed at a dangerous intersection where children had been killed. When the local council refused to respond, they stopped the traffic at gunpoint. For the 'big thinkers' of the middle-class left this would just be "community work" - but it showed the Panthers could be a vehicle for the aspirations of their community, and that they could support those aspirations by force. Their agenda and the needs of the black working-class in Oakland were the same.

If we want to resist the attacks on democratic rights embodied in the Criminal Justice Bill, their experiences will be of greater service to us than the petitions and placards of our own middle class pacifist left.

The task for working-class militants here is not to build a movement in the mirror-image of the EZLN, nor to look to groups from the American ghettos of the 1970s as a role model, but simply to apply their lessons in practice today. The revolutionary organisation has to be the property of the working class rather than a weapon against it. The 'left' will protest the introduction of the Criminal Justice Bill; we have to rebuild a movement that can resist its effects, a force that serves the interest of the class from which it grows.

This should be the history we look to in organising today; the revolutionary organisation has legitimacy so long as it is part of the community, not divorced from it, posturing as some self-seeking vanguard.

The LA gangs the Crips and Bloods were the bastard children of the Panther generation.



On 1 January 1994 2000 guerrillas from the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) marched into seven towns in the state of

Beyond the Pale

Red Action • PO Box 3355, Dublin 7



SINN FÉIN: NO LONGER 'OURSELVES ALONE'

In the Aftermath of the IRA ceasefire Red Action speaks to Michael MacDonnacha, the Editor of 'An Phoblacht /Republican News', on the future tactics of the Republican Movement.

Red Action: "In light of the Republican Movement setting the agenda of the Peace Process so far, what are Sinn Féin's expectations given Britain's past intransigence?"
Michael MacDonnacha:

"Sinn Féin would always be very conscious of Britain's role and duplicity in the past. The difference now is that we have helped to create a climate where nationalist Ireland is more united in it's approach than it has been in the last 25 years. People are also very conscious of the failures of British initiatives in that period and, as the Irish peace initiative said, we are determined that there should be no internal settlement. An internal settlement in the six counties won't work and a settlement must be based on national self determination and also on agreement between Irish

for Irish language speakers, end to discrimination. All these issues we would regard as rights rather than concessions."

RA: "Would you hope for those in the short term?"

M Mac D: "We would see them as part of an evolving process. Obviously the British government is under pressure to respond, it should be responded as a sign of it's good will in the process. But these things are rights and they should be given to



Conflicting views of the Ceasefire

There is no dilution of Republican aims."

RA: "Would the removal of the Loyalist veto be seen in that context, of an agreed Ireland, a persuasion process?"

M Mac D: "Yes, the veto has been granted to the Unionists by the British government, therefore it can be withdrawn by the British government at any time. The best guarantee of the unionist position is not a British guaranteed veto but their own position in Ireland. Because they make up a substantial section of the population. They have a role to play in negotiations and in working out an agreed Ireland. That's their best guarantee of their future. Why, you have to raise the question, if a majority of people in Britain want to see a British withdrawal and want to see an end to the veto, it is absurd to say that 1% of the population of the United Kingdom (so called), which would be the Unionists, could have a veto over that, which in theory is the position at the moment. In reality when the moment comes when the British government does decide that they'll leave it to the Irish people the veto will go by the board."

RA: "What do you see as being the time span for the release of prisoners?"

M Mac D: "It's difficult to talk about time spans. Obviously we are calling for the release of political prisoners. How soon that is going to come about is problematic to try to guess. It should be as soon as possible. There is no reason why all these issues, the prisoners, border roads, demilitarisation, should not start to be addressed now. Things can move very rapidly, as we have seen."

RA: "What strategies and activities

would you envisage Sinn Féin adopting for Britain?"

M Mac D: "It is very important that debate is opened up and it has in the last year or so. Obviously the last weeks events have created a huge opening for debate, the issue is actually being talked about and it has moved on to the agenda of British politics and that creates an opening for everybody who wants to see British withdrawal to move in and put the arguments for democracy, both in Ireland and Britain, because it is an issue of British democracy as well. I think that creates an opening for pressure for the removal of the broadcasting ban, which is on it's last legs. Once that's gone then that creates more openings. As always, and right throughout the last 25 years, even more so now, there is a need for people to mobilise and put the democratic argument for British withdrawal from Ireland, on the streets and in debates and in every other forum."

RA: "Do you think that John Major has the political capabilities to see this Peace Process through?"

M Mac D: "Obviously he is under pressure from the Tory right wing and from the unionists to a certain extent. The whole issue of Ireland and the way it is moving at the moment is of such historic importance that Major should be putting aside his political difficulties and trying to see it in the longer term as ultimately it is to the benefit of the British and Irish people that the issue is resolved. Obviously Major will act in his own interests because of the political pressures that are there. We would obviously like him to take the so called statesman-like approach but whether he is likely to do that is another question. The big question is



for democrats in Ireland and Britain to advance the situation. We must keep the pressure on."

RA: "What do you think is the Loyalist strategy for the future, both long and short term?"

M Mac D: "The loyalist paramilitaries are always sensitive, they very much react to situations, and with any perceived advance that they see for the nationalist people they tend to react to it by sectarian killings of catholics. So far one catholic has been killed since the IRA announcement. It's hard to know whether they are going to hold back for a period or what strategy they will adopt. But we must remember that they have been armed by British intelligence. A major part of demilitarisation must be an end to collusion between British forces and loyalists. That's a major part of what must happen in the next few months. The whole psychology of unionism and loyalism, is so very much attached to the unionist veto. Therefore the onus is on the British government to say to the unionists that their future lies with the rest of the Irish people, so that this psychological prop which keeps unionists in a siege mentality can be ended. They can then face the reality of the peace process which is that they must throw in their lot with the rest of the Irish people. That will start a change in thinking there. It is very hard to say what the Loyalist paramilitary strategy is going to be. There is obviously very undisciplined elements, different factions so it is extremely hard to say. Republicans won't be provoked. We have urged Nationalists to be vigilant. We are not going to allow Loyalists to derail the process."

RA: "What does Gerry Adams mean by 'bringing the protest back to the streets'?"

M Mac D: "The strategy is in a sense something that we have always had. What is needed is a broad movement for British withdrawal, especially in the 26 counties. You had so many years of censorship and marginalisation of not only Sinn Féin but of anybody with Republican or pro British withdrawal views. The fact that pro withdrawal or pro Nationalist or Republican sentiment was suppressed for so many years and it made it very difficult for people to organise in a

"Many people believe we would not want to release Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom. To be entirely honest with you, we would - with pleasure."

Paddy Mayhew, NI Minister

broader way for British withdrawal. The potential for that obviously exists now. Nationalist feeling, in a positive sense, has increased and there is a lot of potential there because people see that the solution now is possible. Movement has happened so they would feel more able to become involved and what is needed is for people to go back to the streets, to raise Republican demands, end the unionist veto, an end to partition, British withdrawal and the other issues, release of prisoners, demilitarisation, border roads. This has already started. We have had several border roads re-opened where people spontaneously went out. In the 6 Counties people have been confronting British soldiers and RUC challenging them and saying we are not going to give you our name, we challenge your right to stop us on the street, a much more up front challenge to the British forces is happening. This needs to be increased. We need to see it manifested in the streets, north and south and also in Britain."

"They have twice hit at the City of London and are poised outside the conference chambers even as we speak, because it is widely known that a third such bomb would certainly end the pre-eminence of London as the world financial centre, which it has enjoyed since the 17th century. The same technology, the same careful planning, could destroy the Channel Tunnel, the Severn Bridge or any other strategic target in Britain. They have fought a war for a quarter of a century which has cost thousands of lives, which has twice targeted the entire British cabinet, which has forced greater distortions in British foreign, economic and military policy in the past half century than any enemy save the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany."

Anti Republican Columnist Kevin Myers in the Irish Times

people. Now the British government has to respond to that, because they have failed in the past. I think that because of our experience of them, we are much better placed to actually deal with them."

RA: "What concessions do you see the British making in the short term?"

M Mac D: "Well we have pointed out at this stage what Republicans are looking for are not concessions as such but rights. We would regard the release of political prisoners, demilitarisation, the removal of the RUC and the British army from Nationalist areas, the closing of Border posts and the reopening of border roads, rights

people as of right."

RA: "In the light of stated Republican objectives, British withdrawal and the removal of the Loyalist veto, are these now long term aims or can you see them happening in the short term?"

M Mac D: "The fundamental aim of Republicans is still a 32 county Republic. We want to see an end to partition and British withdrawal as soon as is possible. The shape of the Ireland that we are going to have has to be achieved by agreement. That will take time, it will take time also to move the British to respond in a meaningful way. We want to achieve peace and justice as soon as possible."

...the bottom line...the bottom line ...the bottom line ...the bot

Stickie Story No. 1

Ex-Stickie Christy Gorman now of Democratic Left, a county councillor in Navan, Co Meath, has recently been showing the true face of his party. Not being satisfied with cheer-leading for unionists through anti-Republican groups such as New Consensus and the Peace Train, Gorman has now turned his attention to the Travelling Community in Navan. He recently led a gang of several hundred locals which evicted Travellers from a halting site in the town and has opposed plans to build an official halting site, as has a Labour Councillor. Ironically it is Democratic Left TD Liz Mc Manus who is chairperson of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, which supposedly exists to wipe out such racism.

It comes as no surprise that a party which supports Loyalism, a parochial version of fascism, in the six counties, should also exhibit blatant racism against an ethnic group in the South. No official action has been taken against Gorman which would indicate that he has the approval of Democratic Left for his lynch mob activities.



The Benneton factor? One example of a negative advertising campaign to hit Dublin recently.

Stickie Story No. 2

Chris Hudson, a trade unionist and leader of the Peace Train organisation, has been in the news for his role as self appointed contact between the Irish government and the UVF and UFF. Hudson set up the Peace Train as a Workers Party front and ousted anyone expressing anti-Loyalist opinions.

Hudson approached Labour functionary Fergus Finlay volunteering to act as go between with Loyalist paramilitaries, undoubtedly he feels at home in such company! Meanwhile what remains of the Stickies have also been claiming their place at the Peace Forum, describing themselves as in the anti-sectarian **Republican Socialist** tradition! We think not!

the wishes of the people

An analysis of the current step-by-step approach that ends

editor of the anti-semitic sheet 'Der Stürmer', began to organise a boycott committee in 'retaliation' for Jewish atrocity stories. Nazi leaders reacted to this 'public pressure' by organising an official 'Central Committee for Defence Against Jewish Atrocity and Boycott Propaganda'. All party units were to form boycott committees to implement a ban on Jewish stores; violence was officially 'forbidden', but simultaneously the police were instructed not to interfere. Attacks on Jewish businesses exploded throughout Germany. On April 4 Goebbels then announced the end of the boycott; the Nazi leadership felt that such prolonged demonstrations of this kind were still premature. Domestic and international opinion was still not wholly reconciled to such adventures. Many government agencies continued to deal with the Jews with the correctness and courtesy that had been developed during the Weimar regime. Such attitudes had to be worn away by a steady process of attritional terror. The pattern of 'spontaneous' outbursts of street action, followed by legislation that legitimised in a legal form, the original illegality of the attacks, was repeated against Jewish lawyers and judges. From March



1933 onwards, violence backed by low level administrative actions had forced hundreds of Jews from their position as judges or lawyers. Journalists, musicians and academics faced a similar onslaught. Already on March 11, the Department of Justice responded to what it called 'the wishes of the people' by reducing the numbers of Jewish legal officials. The measures were extended two weeks later. Jews would no longer be able to practice in criminal cases, nor would Jews be allowed on juries. Even when

burning and looting opponent's offices; beating, arresting and detaining 'agitators' who "continued to cause unrest" in the new concentration camp at Dachau. In April 1933, there were under 100 Jews among the 1,000 plus German citizens held there. On the other hand, the Jews were from the first the object of special acts of sadism which frequently ended in death. Many of the Nazi squads set up their own 'wild' concentration camps in whatever buildings came to hand. By July, over 26,000 Germans were in 'protective custody' in Berlin alone. From October, a new regulation stated that 'agitators' in the camps were to be hanged. Against this indispensable background of terror, and with the votes of the Centre catholic party, on 23 March Hitler bolstered his legal powers by an 'Enabling Act', giving the government the power to do as its pleased, without recourse to the Reichstag. The Nazis solemnly promised that the new authority would be used with due restraint. The constitution could henceforth be amended as Hitler decided for the next four years. Hitler later used this power to make the Enabling Act permanent. By July 1933, Germany was a one party state and the NSDAP was that party. The DNVP and the Catholics had been persuaded to dissolve themselves. 'The party has now become the state', as Hitler declared. The process of converting a bourgeois democracy to a totalitarian state with the full apparatus of terror was substantially complete within six months, and was perfectly constitutional. The spontaneous terror of the street gangs, the demonised or plebian 'nasty' fascists, was steadily becoming institutionalised in the planned and systematic terror imposed by the administrative machinery and armed bodies of the state - the 'legal', 'constitutional' fascists. As in Mussolini's Italy, there had proved to be no impermeable 'membrane' isolating the institutions and practices of the bourgeois capitalist state from those of the fascist capitalist state. The poison of fascist street violence and hatred was steadily transfused into the bloodstream of the bourgeois body politic. There was no fascist 'revolution'.

LEGAL TERROR

In a pattern that was to become familiar, orchestrated outbursts of street terror were followed by ostensibly 'reactive' legislation - legalising the terror. Already in March 1933, the SA thugs had been busy smashing up Jewish shops and businesses. Glass fronted shops were an obvious and tempting target. Police protection for Jewish owned concerns was generally found to be unavailable. Goering stated: "I refuse to make the police the guardians of Jewish department stores." Just as the political institutions of the bourgeois state proved receptive to fascism, so there was no 'membrane' isolating party actions from 'softer' but ultimately more lethal responses of civil society as a whole. By October, thousands of cafes, shops, towns and villages displayed placards announcing: "Jews not wanted". It was a campaign that was to gain momentum the following year, when after local outbursts of terrorism, a number of villages announced that they were now Jew free. By the end of 1933, 36 Jews had been murdered. By the end of 1934, some 50,000 of a total of 500,000 - those who could - had emigrated. This had increased to 75,000 during 1935. Thereafter, the figures fell precipitously. Already, the limits of 'humane repatriation' helped along by judicious doses of terror, were in sight. Prominent Jews who took their case to Goering showing him photographs of Jews being made to scrub streets by gangs of Nazi louts. Goering smilingly assured them that the perpetrators had "already been punished". Even at this date, certain legal forms - fictions - had to be publicly acknowledged although they could be blatantly disregarded in practice. Some confusion and hesitation still remained in the ranks of the regular bureaucracy. In Breslau, the police did intervene to prevent SA men wrecking a Jewish store. The SA then broke into the courts, seizing Jewish officials. Their aryan colleagues didn't know what to do, so they did nothing. Prompted by the Nazi hierarchy, Julius Streicher the

government. In November 1932, nearly 14 million out of 45 million voters, 33%, gave their vote to the NSDAP resulting in 196 seats - down from the 37% high of the summer. The Nazis were actually outnumbered by the socialists and communists combined. It was the last free election; in January 1933 with Hitler now agreeing to a coalition, the Nazis took power. A young Jewish boy of ten recalled: "We heard that Hitler had become Chancellor. Everybody shook. As kids of ten we shook." Even then, the NSDAP were not openly the Nazis of the concentration camps and the Gestapo: as nationalists and patriots, they still relied on the constitutional mechanisms of the bourgeois state. No more than in Britain in 1994 would the German electorate in 1933, have voted under free conditions for the totalitarianism of the permanent dictatorship, the concentration camp, the torture chamber and the death camps. Even the Jewish people themselves, in the words of one of them, "could not possibly believe that this cultured German nation, the one which was the most cultured of the peoples of the world... would resort to such iniquitous things." The implementation of the Nazi programme was cumulative, it took time; the logic of fascism was obliged to unravel by degrees.

CONSTITUTIONAL FASCISM

As with the Italian fascists in the MSI today, Hitler took power through a constitutional coalition with respectable right wing partners, the Nationalist DNVP and a number of Catholics. He was appointed Chancellor under article 48 of the Weimar constitution which, without a trace of irony, allowed the President to invoke dictatorial power to 'protect democracy'. An Emergency Decree followed. While many

To anyone who made the effort to know, the end result of the Nazi persecution was clear from the start. There was even an immediate historical precedent. In 1919, the Ukrainian nationalist movement led by Simon Petlura had murdered over 60,000 Russian Jews. Jew-baiting took place in an historical context which made it explicit that anti-semitism was coupled with the real potential for mass murder.

RISE OF NAZISM

Hitler joined the German Workers Party in 1919. The following year, it changed name to the NSDAP and with 60 members, adopted a new 25 point programme. It had a strongly anti-semitic content. Jews were to have citizenship withdrawn and would not be able to vote or to hold public office. Its practical proposals however, were mild compared to those of say, the NF today: only those Jews who had entered Germany since 1914, some 18,000, were to be repatriated. In Mein Kampf written a couple of years later, Hitler was to outline the basis of later Nazi ('Nazi') from the German word for national, 'nazional' legislation: "Rational anti-semitism must lead to a systematic legal opposition and elimination of the special privileges which Jews hold... Its final objective must unwaveringly be the removal of the Jews altogether." In what could pass as a parody of contemporary neo-Nazi utterances even down to the leader 'humour', Hitler spoke of the, "removal for 'humane repatriation' of the Jews from our nation, not because we would begrudge them their existence - we congratulate the rest of the world on their company - but because the existence of our own nation is a thousand times more important to us..." In May 1924, the Nazis introduced a



motion into the Reichstag intended to place all members of the Jewish race under special legislation. A few months later, they proposed a bill "to bring about their immediate removal from office". This was being written by a group of 'isolated fanatics' less than ten years before the actual legislation began to be passed into law. To force people to leave a country, they first have to be made non-citizens of that country. Being a non-citizen has an actual as well as a formal meaning: it means being systematically deprived of work, property and freedom. The history of even Nazi Germany shows that this occurs as a protracted legal process. From a base of 60 members in 1920, and some 3,000 at the time of the formation of the stormtroopers of the SA in the summer of 1921, the NSDAP took 800,000 votes, less than 2% - in 1923. This is rather less than the BNP or NF take in selected areas now. Jews were blamed for every failing of the economy and Jewish individuals attacked in the streets. In 1926, the membership had risen to 17,000; with the black uniformed SS ('Protection Squad') at the centre. Although street fights were common place, it was not until 1 January 1930 that the SA registered its first killings: eight Jews were murdered. Not until after the great depression began to take hold in 1929, did the Nazis break through to a mass vote of 6.5 million and 107 seats (September 1930). The breakthrough was entirely unpredicted. The SA were active in terrorising both communists and Jews during the election campaign - 78 Jews were wounded in assaults. Synagogues and Jewish cemeteries began to be desecrated On 31 July 1932, the Nazis won 230 seats with 37% of the vote. Hitler refused to form a coalition

of a blind alley into which one was manoeuvred. Once begun and institutionalised the process of liquidation attained its dominant importance and in the end did in fact evolve into a comprehensive 'programme'." (RA's emphasis) The idea is that a 'situation' arose which no-one (not Hitler, not Himmler, not Goebbels - not fascism) had foreseen or intended. There is even the implication that the situation was one, into "which one was manoeuvred" - the punning of the character or the cunning of the victims



themselves. The way is then open for the rehabilitation of Nazi ideology. The essence of the Nazi fascist state is supposed to be separable from the runaway 'accident' of the extermination camps. This clears the way for emergent neo-fascist parties to claim that 'nasty' fascism is a thing of the past, a caprice of history. Acceptable, bourgeois, legal fascism, is a possibility... Italian neo-fascist leaders of the MSI, now members of a coalition government, condemn what they call "historical" fascism.

DEMONISATION

The first point to emerge from the pre-war history of the Jewish persecution, is that the mass support for the Nazi movement did not perceive itself as an active promoter of the terror, torture and death camps that were the logical outcome of Nazi policies. The mass of people, even the people of Nazi Germany, don't begin by consciously voting for systematic terror and mass murder. For them, the core Nazi activists would have been regarded as patriots and nationalists who occasionally, when things understandably got out of hand, gave their political opponents, and especially Jews, a hard time. Even in its final phase, the extermination of the Jewish people was not referred to explicitly by even the nazified sections of the German state. The German bureaucracy developed an entire language of euphemism: mass slaughter for example, was referred to as "The final solution of the Jewish question". Every political party, even a Nazi party, will in its public proclamations, disown, disguise or distance itself from a programme of mass persecution and terror. It will seek to portray its policies as self-defence against attack. The demonisation of German society during the Nazi era as a uniquely guilty generation, should be resisted. This 'demonisation' is in practice a method of rejecting parallels with currents in contemporary societies - neo-Nazis become 'phony Nazis'. It is a way of saying, "we're different; it couldn't happen here". Most non-party supporters during the thirties would have claimed that the Nazis were a normal if extreme, constitutional party - a valid democratic choice even as democracy was being dismantled. Up to at least 1938, the Nazi leadership itself was constrained to operate a 'stop-go' policy by the absence of active participation in the persecution by its own mass support. The Nazi state apparatus was obliged to develop a strategy for periodically distancing itself from the 'excesses' of its auxiliaries on the street. Yet there is absolutely no doubt that the Nazi leadership and its special formations, preeminently the SS, was engaged in a policy of mass terror and extermination from the beginning. Hitler wrote in the final chapter of 'Mein Kampf' (written in the mid-1920s) that: "If at the beginning of the war and during the war, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas... the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain."

The current neo-Nazi movement in Britain appears to be divided into two tactical streams. One openly promotes race attacks and harassment; the street persecution of minorities, racial, sexual or political. Its emulation of Nazi tactics and ideology is open and declared. The other seeks to profit from the agenda created by terrorist street tactics - immigration as a 'problem' - and looks broadly to constitutional methods and electoral gains. An NF election leaflet will talk of "humane repatriation"; the C18 Flyer of "Zyklon B: Six million satisfied customers". This will be familiar as a variant on the nice and nasty copper routine. The nice copper does not openly participate in, or even explicitly condone the brutality of the 'street' activities, hoping to profit as a respectable party of order, from the opportunities created by his nasty colleague. Its a case of 'I don't approve of my colleague's insensitive behaviour, but if you don't cooperate with me... what do you expect?' As with the real thing, the nasty fascist may appear to take a back seat during a public relations drive by the nice guys. Or when the opposition from parties on the left is supinely weak. The first item on any fascist programme is the physical destruction of any independent organisation of the working class. Where independent organisation doesn't exist, or is weak and flabby, fascism wins this vital first phase by default. Fascism has far less dependence on the street gangs when it is not challenged or attacked. A thriving constitutional fascism without a fetishised apparatus of bodyguards, uniforms and paramilitaries, is an incontestable witness of the irresolution and disorganisation of the left. Constitutional fascism is not 'non-violent' fascism. Ultimately, any anti-democratic movement - and fascism is the supreme exponent of anti-democracy - is absolutely dependent on violence to enforce its programme. At the campaigning, ideological stage of its programme fascism will employ - as a tactic - such democratic processes as are available. If fascism can establish itself as a real political force, as in Italy, without overt violence and street clashes, then of course it will. The ideological programme can then be transformed into a practical programme - and is transformed in the process of being put into practice - by the immeasurably more powerful and rigorous forces of violence institutionalised in the state. The great danger is that 'legal' fascism, which is to say fascism that is not effectively challenged by the left, is quickly and unobtrusively absorbed into the political mainstream. Accompanied by the paraphernalia of constitutional, media and bureaucratic processes, 'fascists' become 'rightwingers', simultaneously dismantling existing boundaries of political acceptability. The concept of fascism is reserved as a marginalising and scapegoating term of abuse for the dickheads in boots, camouflage wear, and badged up flight jackets. This process has already been completed in France and Italy. It is happening here. Creatively spotlighting the same 'problem' as the terror gangs, the legal fascists appear to offer a 'softer' solution. A study of the persecution of the Jews in pre-war Germany illustrates not only the lurid history of the fascist gangs demonised in the popular consciousness of the left, but also the far more terrifying contribution of the 'legal' fascists, the constitutional administrators and the bureaucrats. It also, and just as importantly, demonstrates the extent to which the legal fascism of the state and its associated apparatus penetrated the liberal values of bourgeois democratic society. The half-baked, but often touted idea that Nazi Germany was a civilised country intimidated by a plebeian gang of demagogues, thugs and psychos - the Al Capone theory of fascism - is just as dangerous as the currently fashionable attitude of the 'revisionist' wing of establishment German historians, that it was all a bit of a cock-up really. Leading academic Martin Broszat for example, accepts David Irving's argument, which he paraphrases in the following terms: "The destruction of the Jews began... not only out of an alleged will to destruction but as a 'way out

thes he ople

careful and mostly legal
ded in the Nazis 'Final Solution'

in control of the entire political, administrative and police apparatus, the NSDAP still found it expedient to progress as if in response to 'uncontrollable' extreme elements. The NSDAP was to some extent still fettered by the power of the traditional ruling classes, who began to feel twinges of unease: after all, though the attacks on people and property were confined to Jews, the nazi squads that now constituted 'public opinion' were assuming rights over institutions that rightly belonged to them. The President, Hindenburg, for instance, protested that at least those Jews who had served in the German armies during WWI, should be exempted. Hitler re-emphasised the nazi movement's public commitment to legality: "The solution of this problem will be carried out legally, and not by capricious acts." Yet once again, the framework for the legalisation of what had previously been illegal had already been set in place by the outburst of these "capricious acts". Two days later on April 7 1933, the first anti-Jewish law of the new regime was published. It was the first of almost 400. It was called the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. Jews and political

jewish businesses in 1933, some 10,000 were eliminated in this first wave of terror. 'Aryan' owners of small businesses had found that the persecution of the Jews was a profit making concern: business could only flourish with so many competitors removed. Likewise the immediate beneficiaries of this new legislation were middle class

them as a threat to the regime they had made possible. Only the elite 'officer class' of the SS with its impeccable bourgeois credentials - were now regarded as reliable. On 30 June, 1934, around 200 of the top SA men were butchered including their leader Ernst Rohm. The attack was perversely presented by the nazi authorities as a toning down of the excesses, a reversion to due legal



professionals and bureaucrats, whose careers received an immediate shot in the arm due to the immense number of vacancies created around them. The NSDAP could increasingly count on the support of both groups. Having barred Jewish people from public life, it remained to decide who was a Jew and who was not. The nazi decided that a "non-aryan" was anyone who was "descended from non-aryan, especially Jewish, parents or grandparents." Henceforth, every civil servant had to prove aryan descent, through birth certificates, marriage certificates etc. Eventually, complicated genealogical questionnaires were required to clear up ambiguous points. In practice, difficult cases had to be referred to "the expert on racial research" appointed by the Ministry of the Interior. Sub-categories were arbitrarily invented to cope with the innumerable anomalies; later, they were to decide whether an individual was exterminated or merely performed slave labour. Later in April 1933, new laws followed, banning the Jewish ritual slaughter of animals; nazi propaganda had long depicted the practice as "inhuman". In July, the Law on the Revocation of Naturalisation and Annulment of German Citizenship" was passed cancelling the citizenship of all 'undesirables'. In September, Jews were debarred from inheriting farm property (the 'soil' being a particular object of nazi mysticism). In the wake of this stream of legislation the 'German Federation of Judges' did their bit by pledging their support for the new "uniquely German legal system". What had begun as straightforward jew-bashing in the streets had now, without effective protest, received the highest legal sanction. The intellectual establishment, in virtual unanimity, leant their prestige and good will to the new order. For good measure, the Protestant clergy gave their blessing to the project: the Catholics expressed their solidarity through the papal Concordat, signed in September 1933, signalling their determination to live in harmony with the Jew baiters of the Third Reich. In what was historically, a barely measurable span of time, the fascism of the demagogues and street gangs had become almost seamlessly integrated into the fabric of bourgeois culture and sensibility.

PURGE OF THE PLEBS

Only sections of the working class held back. The socialist and communist vote combined in the free elections before the Hitlerite regime of January 1933, had almost equalled that of the NSDAP. Even in March, 1933, nazi candidates received less than 3% of the vote for the factory committees. And curiously, the most threatening expression of discontent emerged from the movement which had been in the vanguard of the entire process: the 'plebeian' stormtroopers of the SA. For all their brutality and sadism, the loyal looting and destruction they had meted out, they, unlike the middle classes, received no commensurate reward. Now numbering a potentially de-stabilising 4 million, the nazi leaders regarded

them as a threat to the regime they had made possible. Only the elite 'officer class' of the SS with its impeccable bourgeois credentials - were now regarded as reliable. On 30 June, 1934, around 200 of the top SA men were butchered including their leader Ernst Rohm. The attack was perversely presented by the nazi authorities as a toning down of the excesses, a reversion to due legal processes. The nice copper had finally triumphed over his nasty colleague. After Hitler merged the posts of Chancellor and President in August 1934, many observers imagined that the worst atrocities were over. The new state appeared to be consolidating; no new anti-semitic legislation was passed during 1934. The pause was no more than a screen for external adventures. In March 1935, nazi party branches were instructed to renew the campaign of terror and intimidation against remaining Jewish businesses. The campaign expanded into wholesale forms of social apartheid. Jews were forcibly prevented from entering cinemas, swimming pools, theatres, restaurants etc. Public transport was closed to them by local authorities following objections from members of the public. Jewish newspapers were forced to close. Most of the persecution was initiated and enforced by the gangs of hard core nazi activists; yet it met with increasing levels of passive toleration and encouragement by the mass of the German people. The social distance between the entire Jewish community and all those outside it, grew steadily. Then, just as suddenly, the party called a halt to the atrocities: the SS paper ominously announced: "The Jewish Question is one of our people's most burning problems: it will not be solved by terror in the streets." A more systematic method was in the process of formulation. The terror actions of the nazi squads could not be entirely controlled: they could be unpredictable. Even top nazi officials complained that "irresponsible jew bashing" made their jobs more difficult. The plebeian character of the 'nasty' fascists continued to disconcert the respectable, bourgeois elements even within the nazi party itself. Attacks on Jewish businesses caused considerable economic dislocation: non-aryan businesses could suffer where persecution was insufficiently systematic. Foreign businesses or governments complained. A fine balance had to be struck. Discontent went so far that an order was drafted to instruct the police to intervene in the more outrageous mob actions: but it wasn't issued. On the whole the NSDAP felt that outbursts of street violence continued to be necessary for "political-emotional and abstract ideological considerations". As before, the street violence, the mob actions, were legitimised and superseded by a rush of new legislation. Coinciding with the annual NSDAP congress at Nuremberg, the anti-jewish laws that became known as the "Nuremberg Laws" were passed. On 15 September 1935, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, "imbued with the insight that the purity of German blood is prerequisite for the continued existence of the German people", was accordingly introduced. The 'purity of German blood' now became a legal category, and Jews a legally segregated minority. Marriage and sexual relations between Germans and Jews were forbidden. Once again, this legalised a situation that had already become established

through other, direct means. Social pressures and outright violence had already effectively outlawed such relations. The hatred and bigotry of the plebeian street level fighter had metamorphosed into the full apparatus of bourgeois ideology, administration and enforcement. The Reich Citizenship Law was passed at the same time. In place of the doctrine of the equality of all men, deriving from the French Revolution, it was declared that rights and obligations derived from racial characteristics. The distinction between arbitrary actions of the mob, and the due processes of the bourgeois state based notionally on the universality and equality of rights, so vital within capitalist ideology, had been substantially eroded. Through 1937, the nazi racial state operated pretty much within the limits that would have been envisaged by the 40% or so of the population who had voted for its policies. Slogans of the type, "Germany for the Germans", with Jews as second class citizens, had been put into practice. Even at the beginning of 1938, it could still be argued that the record of Nazi Germany was still unexceptional by the standards of contemporary bourgeois democracies. The difference between the condition of the Jews as second class citizens in the nazi racial state, and the second class citizens of countries that trumpeted the rights of man, remained one of degree. The numbers of Jews in concentration camps had actually dropped. No more than 200 Jews had been killed; the Jewish community was deprived of certain political, social and economic rights but could still work and own property; tens of thousands were pushed into emigration, but still, allowed to leave. The essential and distinctive quality of the nazi racial state - the elimination as opposed to the oppression of its second class citizens - was still to be put into practice. It was at this point that the racism passed over into true fascism. In January 1938, the systematic attack on Jewish economic activity was launched. Some 40,000 Jewish firms still existed. It had proved impossible to eliminate them all haphazardly: the economic cost

squads to eat grass, clean gutters and toilets with their hands while being beaten by their tormentors, together with the rest of the perverted nazi repertoire. Several died during these activities which were termed 'happy hours'. In June, orders were issued for 200 Jews to be arrested in each police district and sent to Buchenwald. In the light of the impending war, it was planned to extend the camps functions first as forced labour camps, and then, as sources of slave labour. This eventuality had been long prepared. As far back as the constitution written for the 1923 Putsch, it was proclaimed that concentration camps were to be established to house all "persons dangerous to security and useless eaters". The re-organisation of the camps was entrusted by Himmler to Theodor Eicke. Appropriately, Eicke had been personally committed to a lunatic asylum by Himmler himself, before being released and appointed as commandant at Dachau in June 1933. In May 1934, he was appointed 'Inspector of Concentration Camps and Commander of SS Guard Units' (the 'Death's Head' units). By March 1935, there were 7 camps with a population of 10,000. The smaller camps were closed as the number of inmates fell. Then, during the summer of 1938, Buchenwald, Dachau and Sachsenhausen were enlarged to fulfil their new role

FINAL SOLUTION

The two strategies of street terror backed by administrative decree, were finally united in a massive wave of terror. On November 7, 1938 a German diplomat was killed by a Polish student whose parents had been rounded up by the Gestapo. Goebbels orchestrated the backlash. Party meetings were held in each area which assembled the local terror squads, bullies and sadists anxious for a little action. They set fire to synagogues, Jewish businesses and homes. Individual Jews were attacked and 100 killed. It was the most heavily orchestrated pogrom to date: in Hitler's words, the SA "should be allowed to have a fling." In a complementary action the police arrested as many of the wealthier Jews

"Decree on the Penalty Payment by Jews who are German Subjects" imposed a billion mark fine on the collective Jewish community for the damage caused during the Kristallnacht events. Barred from receiving any forms of state help, the entire Jewish people were now destitute, stateless, without any rights and wholly defenceless. On 14 December, Goring sent a memo to all nazi officials ordering all 'uncontrollable' actions against the Jews to stop! The amateur thugs operating the street terror were losing their former significance: the plebeian louts of the SA gave way to the better class of professional sadist in the SS. Once the state is free to perform the functions of the mob, the mob becomes redundant - counter productive in fact. The 'legal' process had run its course. No further anti-semitic legislation could make any further social or economic impression on the German Jews. Curtailment of commercial, political and social freedoms had inevitably culminated in the creation of a ghettoised, destitute, racially defined group of non-citizens whose utter powerlessness corresponded perfectly to the all powerful machinery of the SS and the concentration camp. By 1939, the SS numbered 250,000. On January 21 1939, Hitler told the Czech Foreign Minister, "We are going to destroy the Jews. They are not going to get away with what they did on 9 November 1918. The day of reckoning has come." A week later, he told the Reichstag: "I have often been a prophet in my life and was generally laughed at. During my struggle for power, the Jews received with laughter my prophecies that I would someday assume the leadership of the state and of the entire Volk and then...achieve a solution of the Jewish problem. Today I will be a prophet again: if international finance Jewry should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequence will be...the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe." The final objective of the nazi regime could hardly be stated in clearer terms. Soon after the outbreak of war in October 1939, Adolf Eichmann took control of the "Emigration and Evacuation"



had so far triumphed over ideology. Now, the plans for full blast expropriation were activated. In April a decree was issued, entitled 'Decree regarding the Reporting of Jewish Property'. Every Jew had to compile an inventory of everything they owned. In July a list of Jewish businesses that were to be liquidated by the end of the year was published. Jewish doctors were forbidden to practise. All Jews were now required to apply for identity cards, to be carried at all times. As a background to the rhythm of this legislative attack, the attacks on the remaining Jewish stores were renewed. Already in January 1938, the scope of protective custody had been extended to all "persons whose behaviour endangers the existence and security of the Volk and the state". In addition to the arrests of political and anti-socials, mass Jewish arrests began in May. Most were sent to Dachau. Grotesque street scenes of bullying and sadism were encouraged by the authorities: elderly Jews were forced by SA

as could be held in 'protective custody' - the concentration camps. Over 30,000 went to Buchenwald, Dachau and Sachsenhausen where almost a thousand were murdered. Eight thousand were evicted from Berlin, including patients in hospitals and old people's homes. The shattered plate glass of Jewish premises gave the action its name - Kristallnacht. Over 7,000 Jewish businesses were destroyed. On 12 November, Hitler wrote to Goering, "the Jewish question must now, once and for all, be coordinated and solved one way or the other." The final legislative building blocks were put into place to enforce a rigid apparatus of apartheid: Jews were forbidden entry to public places and placed under a curfew. Jewish children were finally barred from state schools. The idea of formal ghettos was aired. The "Decree on Eliminating the Jews from German Economic Life" was passed, effectively excluding Jews from any forms of employment. With typical sadistic logic, the

department. It was soon to become the department of "Jewish and Evacuation Affairs", and from its office, Eichmann was to organise the deportation of the European Jews to the death camps. Nothing could illustrate more graphically the practical implications of the policy of 'repatriation'. Emigration first became 'expulsion', a process which with irresistible logic mutated into extermination. Whereas it has been stressed that the manoeuvres of the NSDAP during the thirties would initially have been perceived by the mass of its supporters as the intensification or interruption of bourgeois 'normality', and not as a route to the totalitarian policies of mass terror and murder, in the wake of the subsequent history of the nazi state, there can no longer be any possible justification for perceptions of this kind. The left must not repeat the mistakes of Italy and France, and allow 'constitutional' fascism to integrate itself into the processes of democracy.

Photographs: from left to right

1. Nazi beer mat. Its message reads: Whoever buys from a Jew is a traitor to his people.
2. 1935 A sign outside a German village, it reads: Jews. Attention. The Road to Palestine Does Not Go Through This Locality.
3. Poland September 1939. German soldiers laugh as a Polish Jew is made to put on his prayer shawl and have his hair and beard cut off.
4. March 1938 Austria. Nazi youth watch as Viennese Jews are forced to scrub the streets.
5. Yugoslavia 1945. Six young boys photographed in a concentration camp run by local fascists.

"Your Reality Today is Ours Tomorrow"

On July 5th, 1994, special forces and other police units from the federal, state and Göttingen, Germany, supported by local police units simultaneously stormed the homes of seventeen people. Many of the police were wearing bullet proof vests and had removed the safety catches on their guns. Computers, sacks of files and personal items were seized. This was the culmination of investigations according to 129a (propaganda for, support of, or membership of a terrorist organisation) which had been running in Göttingen since autumn 1991.

In June 1992 the state police declared publicly that an anti-fascist organisation was the subject of its investigation. In search warrants on July the 5th, the Autonome Antifa (m) was defined "as a criminal organisation." In order to define it as a criminal organisation Autonome Antifa (m) has been charged with: "violation of the assembly law". This is a reference to the "black block comprised of up to 800 people...the impression of building a private army and violation of the ban on uniforms". The stated goal is to "collect evidence of the goals, strategy and tactics of this group as well as the individual positions of its members within the group". The political goal is the criminalisation of the Autonome Antifa (m) and its politics.

In many ways the German police statement and strategy and objectives are almost an exact echo of a process identified in **Red Action** following the collapse of a conspiracy trial involving AFA in July 1992, two years earlier. At that time we brought attention to the existence of a similar (and ongoing), though as yet less mature operation mounted by the state

against Anti-Fascist Action. "The collapse and conduct of the case was merely further confirmation of the existence of a campaign to criminalise Anti-Fascist Action and its supporters...a recognisable pattern of behaviour exists...even if the tactics vary, the objective of this harassment appears fixed. It is to: "...to isolate and criminalise Anti-Fascist Action: discover and neutralise the militants within it; through the use of selective arrests blunt the cutting edge and intimidate the periphery...bolster the reputation of a moderate or bogus rival..." (Operation Blackshirt Issue 64)

In addition to the modus operandi; agent provocateurs; collusion with fascists; 'Sting - like operations'; the rationale behind the state aggression was also outlined: "...the philosophy/formula which governs the behaviour of every modern bourgeois state, is the ability to respond to economic cycles of boom and slump, by adopting the political form compatible with its economic reality. This is capitalism's traditional safeguard. Reactionary arguments which manifest themselves in the propaganda and activities of fascist parties serve as either the impetus or the pretext that steers the capitalist state toward a suitably reactionary haven. Effective, militant anti-fascism is deemed subversive if, and when, it threatens to deny to the ruling class the opportunity to exercise this option".

On the 16th of October 1993 following a planned police ambush on a large anti-fascist demonstration in Welling London: "the biggest intelligence operation ever", according to the media was carried out to entrap anti-fascists militants. Anti-Fascist Action was identified as the object of the exercise. Associate groups were accused in

the media of being involved in 'low level terrorist activity'. 'Swoops' on the homes of the ringleaders were predicted. The 'sting' only failed because the AFA contingent on the day turned up where it was not expected. The following day the Sunday Times editorial made two very significant points.

First, it pointed out that the fascist British National Party, represents "a very real but mostly unarticulated concern about racial issues". And second that "...firm pre-emptive action is needed to stop militant troublemakers...even if this means restricting rights of free assembly in a handful of cases..." Translated; the proposition is quite simple. If 'racial issues' are to be 'articulated' they need first to be brought into the political mainstream, and to be able to bring them mainstream means that 'pre-emptive action' has to be taken against the 'troublemakers'. So it was with a certain degree of alarm, but no surprise, that we in AFA greeted the news of the dawn raids in Göttingen on July the 5th. On July 16th, at a 4000 strong demonstration in protest at the attempt to criminalise anti-fascist resistance in Göttingen London AFA sent this message of support:

"...Repression is the state's answer to the political success of Autonome Antifa (M) in Lower Saxony. The dawn raid is testimony to, and punishment for, your political influence in the area.

This is a strategy with which we in Britain are all also familiar. Here, the object of the state's strategy is to demonstrate that confrontational tactics against the far-right do not work. The expectation then is that either militant and effective tactics are abandoned and we operate after the fashion of say the

Anti Nazi League; or we become totally clandestine which would deny us any political profile and the criminalisation process started by the state is completed by ourselves!

The Autonome Antifa (M) statement to the press that it will not allow itself "...to be pushed into illegality or moroseness..." in defiance of the trap set by the state is an astute counter - measure that militant anti-fascists every where should first applaud.

and then adopt... Your reality today is ours tomorrow."

According to the State Attorney, the trials against the members and alleged members of the Autonome Antifa (m) will start either at the end of this year or the beginning of next year. The costs for lawyers until the trial starts, will be about £4000.



Donations are desperately needed. Make cheques payable to London AFA (stipulating that the donation is for AAM) or contact London AFA BM Box 1734, London WC1N 3XX.

Minimum Wage Slaves

The big 'scandal' at the recent TUC conference was the leaking of Labour's plans to scrap its agenda for a legally enforceable minimum wage. The minimum wage target - set at an initial level of half male median earnings - has been a Labour policy since being adopted by a two-thirds majority at the party's conference in 1986. The original target of £4.05 an hour is "too high" for Blair in 1994 who intends to fight the next election "committed" to a minimum wage of £3-£3.20 an hour.

The abandoning of the minimum wage target is supposed to constitute another betrayal of the working class, but the question that's never asked is how it would benefit us in the first place?

Start with the figure - £3 an hour (£4 if we're lucky). If you're on Income Support or Unemployment Benefit at £45 per week for a single male, an average wage, before tax and national insurance, of £160 a week might sound like a step forward until you add in the cost of the housing benefit, council tax benefit, free prescriptions etc which will be lost when you start work. Take away tax and national insurance as well and you're left with ...

MORE PRODUCTIVE

Under the Tories, the earning gap between bosses and workers has widened. Pay at the highest levels in the private sector has soared past £1 million. As an example, Lord Hanson was paid £1,380,000 as chair of the Hanson Conglomerate. One of Hanson's main UK companies is London Brick where the lowest rate for a manual worker is £6,832. Lord Hanson is more productive than 202 London brick workers!

The head of British Rail gets £200,000 per year, 40 times more than the lowest manual rate for BR workers of £4,969 per year. Higher profits and higher pay at the top are only sustainable by the maintenance of poverty at the bottom. Blair is well aware of this. National Executive member Clare Short has said: "It's openly known by anyone who knows the party well that we are looking again at whether we can afford that formula immediately. Everybody wants that level, but things have deteriorated so much it is whether we can realistically promise to bring it in immediately ..." In other words, Labour is only committed to a minimum wage that would have no effect on the generation of profit.

A minimum wage can act as a drag

anchor on collective bargaining; a wage freeze through the back door. A minimum wage would represent the capitalist system setting down 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work'; the 'best offer' the system could afford. Push for more and you'll be met with the threat of all those millions on the dole who would gladly do your job for the 'minimum wage'!!

One means of preserving profits at the expense of working class living standards is by the enforcement of wage controls. However, government interference in pay bargaining tends to 'politicise' even the smallest dispute - in 1974 the clash with the miners over public sector pay brought down the Heath government. The minimum wage has the same ultimate effect, setting down a 'fair' bottom line of exploitation, leaving government, as Blair puts it, to continue its "national crusade" for "national renewal" - overseeing the growth of profits on capital's behalf.

None of this is new. The argument that "economic growth" is the key to improvement in working class living standards was denounced by Marx in 1849: "To say that the most favourable condition for wage labour is the most rapid possible growth of productive capital is only to say that the more rapidly the working class increases and enlarges that power that is hostile to it, the wealth that does not belong to it, and

that rules over it, the more favourable will be the conditions under which it is allowed to labour anew at increasing bourgeois, at enlarging the power of capital, content with forging for itself the golden chains with which the bourgeoisie drags it in its train."

In other words, behind the rhetoric of 'national recovery', the best deal on offer is "...that the more rapidly the worker increases the wealth of others, the richer will be the crumbs that fall to him ..." [Marx]

In 1881, Engels wrote a series of articles for the trade union weekly, the Labour Standard. He examined the trade unions' call for "A fair day's wages for a fair day's work" and cautioned: "...the fairest day's wages under present social conditions is necessarily tantamount to the very unfair division of the workman's produce, the greater portion of that produce going into the capitalist's pocket, and the workmen having to put up with just as much as will enable him to keep himself in working order and to propagate his race."

BRICKLAYERS

Engels examined trade union organisation on London building sites, and noted that bricklayers earned twice as much as bricklayers' labourers because the latter were "disorganised and powerless". Working people are powerless because they are "owners of nothing but their own working power." [Engels].

Necessarily, they band together in trade union organisations to engage in what Marx described as "guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system."

Trade unions therefore become a means of mediating the rate of exploitation, creating a 'bargain' between employer and employee where the labourer receives his 'due' - the "full market value of his ... working power." Even mediated by the trade unions, allowing the workers "to treat with the employers as a power", the end result is, as Engels observes, "a very peculiar sort of fairness ... The workman gives as much, the capitalist gives as little, as the nature of the bargain will admit."

The problem is that the terms of bargain are accepted by the trade unions from the start; the national interest (ie. the bosses' interest),

the 'state of the economy', are all accepted as having a determining effect on what crumbs fall from the table.

Within the rules of the system the working class is trapped, "He has but wages to live upon, and therefore must take work, when, where and at what terms he can get it. The workman has no fair start. He is fearfully handicapped by hunger." [Engels]

The solution? "... it is not the highness or lowness of wages which constitutes the economical degradation of the working class; this degradation is comprised in the fact that, instead of receiving for its labour the full produce of this labour, the working class has to be satisfied with a portion of its own produce called wages. The capitalist pockets the whole product ... because he is the owner of the means of labour. And, therefore, there is no real redemption for the working class until it becomes owner of all the means of work - land, raw material, machinery etc - and thereby also the owner of the whole of the product of its own labour." [Engels]

For Blair, Martin Jaques and TUC leader, John Monks, this is the language of the past. The "culture of class, of certainty and insularity ..." which Martin Jaques and a group of graduate yuppies who act as Blair's advisors have denounced so often "...is now at last in headlong retreat."

GUERRILLA WAR

But the secretary of state for health gets an annual salary of £63,047, which makes her worth 11 NHS ancillary workers. Duncan Nichol, chief executive of the health service, does even better with an annual salary of £77,500 - 13 times that of an ancillary on £5,688. Meanwhile, Blair's supporters think a minimum wage of £4 an hour is "unaffordable".

So, should we, as the SWP have it, "Tell union leaders to turn words into action", when their words are all about "civilising capitalism"? Asking the labour leaders to "take sides" is a blind alley; they've already taken sides. But the side they've chosen isn't ours. So do we cry "Blair and Prescott - stop your betrayals" (Socialist Worker 10/9/94) or say like the "unfashionable" Marx: "They...(trade unions) fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system."

WIGAN AFA

Due to the efforts of **Red Action** members in the North-West, there is now a fifteen strong AFA branch in Wigan which has been active on a weekly basis against NF and BNP members in the area.

Despite only being in existence for a matter of months, Wigan AFA has experienced not only life at the sharp end of confrontations with local fascists, but also a vitriolic dose of lefty sectarianism.

Ironically, at the public launch meeting of Wigan AFA the greatest threat of disruption came not from the NF or BNP, but from the ANL who had spread a malicious mixture of gossip and lies causing two of our original speakers to withdraw from the meeting. Fortunately the experience of RA members enabled the meeting to be rescued, and it was a great success. Threats from the NF came to nothing, and the best they could manage was to put up a few stickers near the venue on the morning before the meeting, and goose-step around the venue several hours after the meeting was finished, when it was obvious no-one was around.

Several weeks later, RA members and Wigan AFA members came across a number of racists in a favourite watering hole. When challenged the hapless racists responded by saying that "We had to respect their point of view" and that if we didn't shake hands things might "escalate" and "get out of hand". One of them then bragged that he was a BNP member. Having spoken the magic words and let the genie out of the lamp, the fascists found that it was not so easy to put it back again. The incident ended with two of their number being helped into an ambulance nursing broken ribs and sore heads, while the other three decided that discretion was the better part of valour and clambered into the same ambulance following the arrival of yet more RA members.

The experiences of Wigan AFA mirror that of many other AFA branches forced to devote as much of their time watching for the stab in the back from the left as opposing the fascist threat from the front.



Reviews

Nor Meekly Serve My Time relates the story of the H-Block struggle between 1976, when Ciaran Nugent became the first republican prisoner to refuse to wear prison uniform, and 1981 when 10 republican and republican socialist prisoners died on hunger strike. The story of the five year struggle by hundreds of political prisoners of war struggling to win the political status due to them had to be told and who better to tell it than the very men who took part in that struggle. The torture, both physical and mental, these men were subjected to must be made known and not, as the British would have it, buried or forgotten.

In writing the foreword of this book, Bernadette McAliskey says: "I have struggled to write the foreword to this book because it is written by those who shared the lives of the hunger-strikers in prison - those who struggled with them, suffered with them, starved with them, who sat and waited and watched as the clock ticked out the ebbing life of each in turn, whose pain of necessity is much deeper than mine." I know exactly how she felt.

While reading their comrades' accounts of how the hunger-strikers spent their last days, hours, minutes before dying I was filled with anger, sorrow, pride and guilt. My anger was for Thatcher and her government who, while secretly negotiating and renegeing on deals, took a "no surrender" stance and watched unmoved as 10 young men died. It was also for the screws who thought it a great feeling to taunt dying men by talking of steak, hamburgers etc. Who could steal a dying man's cigarettes or tobacco and laugh at the idea of it?

My sorrow was for the families of the hunger-strikers watching as their loved ones faded away in front of them while respecting the wishes of the dying men by not intervening. I put myself in their position and wonder if I would have the courage they showed. It was also for the comrades of the dying men who, as Bernadette put it, watched every second that ticked by knowing full well that the British could at any minute resolve the situation and stop the dying. How my heart went out to these magnificently courageous people and how my heart broke as I read of another striker dying and I shared that family's grief and torment and the great sense of loss of his comrades whose only recourse was to replace him on the strike.

The pride I felt was for every man in Long Kesh and woman in Armagh who put forward their names to join the strike knowing that

they too might have to fast to the death. Of being Irish and sharing that nationality with men and women who thought so much of their country and me that they would unselfishly sacrifice their lives for Ireland and the Irish people. My pride was also for the families who withstood pressure from politicians and churchmen who tried to prey on their emotions to force their loved ones into surrender. Also to the prisoners and their leaders who although seething with anger and frustration done nothing to detract from or malign the strikers.

The guilt I felt was because I could have done more during the initial phases of the H-Block struggle. There were times I could have been involved in campaigning for the blanket men but instead chose to go for a pint. I was happy enough to believe that because I smuggled some tobacco to my brother or to any of my friends on the blanket that I was doing my bit. If I and hundreds like me had done more would a hunger strike have been necessary? I still feel guilty when I think that it took Bobby Sands to go on hunger strike before I got on to the streets and physically gave my support to the prisoners, rather than sitting over a pint and telling people I supported them.

Irish history has always been an emotional issue and if this book does not fill the reader with emotion they should check for a pulse. It is a history of deprivation, brutality and bigotry thrust upon prisoners of war with the intent of not only criminalising but destroying physically and mentally every Republican activist unfortunate enough to fall into British hands.

Had this struggle taken place anywhere else in the world the British government would have been screaming barbarity and inhumanity. Because it was inflicted on the Irish by the British it will be dismissed as republican propaganda but hundreds of Irish men and Irish women still bear the scars, be they physical or mental, caused by the beatings dished out by screws during the forced baths, strip searches, mirror searches, wing shifts, visits, or just whenever a screw was having a bad day or had too many lunchtime pints or half-uns.

Nor Meekly Serve My Time serves as a written testament to the resilience, determination and blatant courage of the young men and women engaged in struggle from within a sadistic and brutal prison regime.

Rather than demoralise republican prisoners by depriving them of radios, books, newspapers or association by 24 hour lock-up the prison authorities only succeeded in forging a deeper sense of comradeship among republicans. As Felim O'Hagan so aptly puts it in the book: "Wherever two or more ex-Blanketmen are gathered together you will hear of *The Day I Touched For Three Ounces On A Visit*, or *The Night of the All-Block Christmas Sing Song*, or whatever other yarns happen to be the favourite on each block."

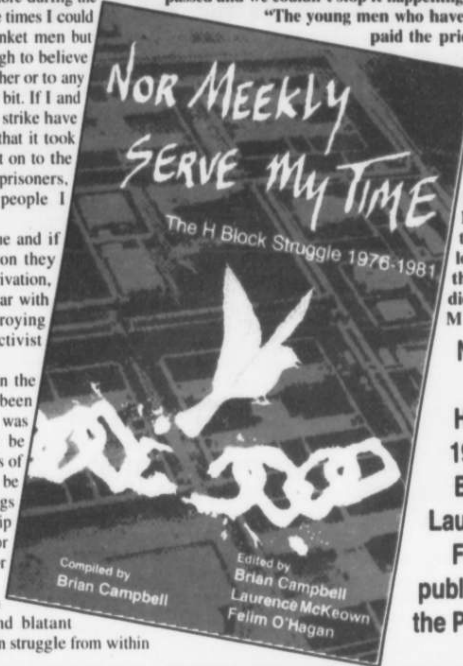
In summing up, I leave the last words to Bernadette McAliskey's foreword to the book.

"I also know that a train of events was set in motion when political status was withdrawn from the prisoners in 1976, that it was inevitably heading for a conflict that resulted in young men dying of hunger in 1981, and we couldn't stop it happening. Five years passed and we couldn't stop it happening."

"The young men who have contributed to this book paid the price of that inability. They too are indelibly marked. They are incredibly brave and mercifully forgiving of our weakness. 'Greater love than this no man hath than he lay down his life for his friends.' Maybe I'm not sure how to deal with that degree of love. Maybe I wonder why they died for us, and we didn't die for them."

M Collins, Belfast

Nor Meekly Serve My Time - the H-Block Struggle 1976-1981, edited Brian Campbell, Laurence McKeown, Felim O'Hagan, published by Beyond the Pale Publications. £9.95.



INLA - DEADLY DIVISIONS

Holland & McDonald - Published Torc 1994

This is not an objective history of the INLA. It is a partial, one-sided and distorted journalistic account. At times it reads like a film script. For the casual reader it does contain interesting information and throws some light on the history of the movement. But for the serious student of politics this is not the history of the Republican Socialist Movement. It is fatally flawed by the evident hostility towards Marxism of the authors, their contempt for theory and their gullibility towards their sources. Two of their sources on whom they leaned heavily were Jimmy Brown and Terry Harkin. Brown was a founder member of the IPLO and took part in the attempt to wipe out the IRSP/INLA. Although posing as a socialist, he was, in fact, a careerist with an unmitigated hostility to any genuine socialist movement. He was an unstable 'spoof' who, on the authors' own admission, ended up as a drug dealer before dying in the IPLO death throes. Harkin is a Walter Mitty character with little or no political understanding, untrustworthy and had

only a minor role in the IRSP. In this book he is presented as "the official voice of the IRSP," and is made to appear as an important political figure. Such is his judgement that he is quoted as comparing Gerard Steenson, another IPLO gunman, with Michael Collins!

Throughout this book there are little incidents, quotations and events which, taken together, give the impression that the Republican Socialist Movement only attracted characters like the above or ruthless gunmen settling scores. It is true that all revolutionary movements attract a wide cross-section of people including some unsavoury characters. But revolutionary movements also attract the best of their generation, comrades motivated by the highest ideals and out to change the world. There is no hint of this idealism in this book, nor is there any attempt to understand the politics of the movement.

The authors are uniformly hostile to the marxists in the movement. "The IRSP was politically irrelevant, having peddled the backwaters of 'Marxist-Leninist' politics, where the distance from reality was in direct proportion to the volume of left wing rhetoric

coming from party leaders."

Jim Lane, the party chairman, is called "bland", and a "Marxist-Leninist of the fundamentalist variety." The party was accused of going "theoretical", and the works of Marx and Engels became, "their bible - Lane's politics and those of his party were in the realms of left-wing fantasy."

The reality, of course, is that the leadership of the Party under Jim Lane was the most political and practical leadership that the Party had ever had. Elected democratically by the membership, its feet were firmly based on the ground and contained active trade unionists who had no illusions about the difficulties of trying to build a revolutionary movement. That was why it was in favour of Marxism. It saw Marxism as the only way to create a disciplined revolutionary movement based on and identifying with the Irish working class.

Its mistakes were not ideological but pragmatic and included trying to compromise with the Flynns/Roche old-guard leadership who had proved already to be both politically incompetent and militarily indisciplined. This ideologically bankrupt leadership never once politically opposed within the party the move towards marxism. Indeed, Roche had defined himself as a Leninist at a previous Ard Feis.

Key party positions were offered to the old leadership. They simply walked away from the Party. By using friendly press contacts they began a policy of denigrating the leadership in the bourgeois media. They also began a campaign of intimidation and terror against party activists. Five members of the leadership were terrorised into resignation. This is presented in the book as:

"having been urged to do so by the southern-based leadership of the faction opposed to O'Reilly."

The sticking of a sawn-off shotgun in

one's face is some urging!!

The Marxist leadership failed to overcome the internal contradictions of the movement. At the core of the problem of the Republican Socialist Movement was the key question of the relationship between army and party. It had bedevilled the movement since the party's foundation in 1974. The post-hunger strike leadership of the Party inherited a movement factionalised as army disputes spilled over into the political arena. Because there was no central political control of the INLA the whole movement became damaged. The best efforts of socialists and marxists to transform the movement failed. Too much respect was paid to the military wing and not enough to the needs of the working class in Ireland.

The attempt to wipe out the movement in 1987 was a classic case of Kitson's anti-insurgency tactics being put into operation. At one stroke it removed a dangerous left wing tendency, helped set up a pseudo-gang to be used as the British saw fit (the IPLO) and confirmed the Provisionals as the main protagonists in the struggle. Surprisingly (or maybe not) Holland and McDonald fail to explore this.

Today, as a political party, the IRSP does not exist. The INLA continues to play a minor role in the armed struggle and its campaign is no way markedly different from that of the Provisionals. The Provisionals themselves are now strong enough to ensure that if they get some commitment for the removal of British troops they can scale down armed struggle. But many of us did not engage in over 25 years of resistance in order simply to see the withdrawal of British troops (welcome and all as that will be). We struggled to overthrow the capitalist system. For a time the Republican Socialist Movement was the best hope of moving towards that goal. Its failure has left a gaping hole in the Irish left.

If you want to understand why it failed or how that gap is to be filled then don't expect to find the answers in this book.

Sean Reid
Belfast

The SS: Alibi of a Nation 1922-1945

Gerald Reitlinger, Da Capo Press, £16.95

This is Reitlinger's classic account of how Germany allowed itself to be seduced by the crank ideas of one Heinrich Himmler. This book clearly shows that Hitler was not a revolutionary, and that the SS were a Praetorian Guard against such an eventuality, not, as claimed, the defenders of any new ideals.

The book traces the origins of the SA and SS back to the Freikorps days when the German middle classes simply did not accept the Treaty of Versailles. The SA, like the current C18 organisation was simply a band of political thugs organised for stewarding fascist meetings and attacking communist ones. With little genuine politics, these nihilists provided Hitler with an ultra-loyal bodyguard. In fact, Hitler's empathy with these street fighters is indicated by the fact that the brown shirts, Hitler salute and the swastika all date from this period.

Despite his Freikorps and SA origins, however, Hitler had no choice but to extinguish the SA in 1934, using the SS to do so. SA leaders such as Roehm and Strasse were still seeking a social revolution; Hitler had no intention of changing anything. The physical removal of the SA was done with the knowledge and acquiescence of the German military and was a move that indicated that the status quo would remain under Hitler.

Proof of Hitler's non-revolutionary position is much in evidence in this sometimes harrowing book. Heinrich Muller, the head of the Gestapo throughout the Reich years, was never in the Nazi Party but, in fact, had been the head of the secret police since before the putsch.

"Thus", claims Reitlinger, "was demolished the myth that the inquisitors of the Gestapo were a new race of men, a scum brought to the surface by revolution ... rare indeed are the policemen who have sacrificed their careers for freedom of speech and opinion."

It is a point the author returns to again and again. The SS liquidation of the Polish intelligentsia, for example, was achieved with the full knowledge and acceptance of the military who did nothing to oppose it. Indeed, the small number of SS involved for such a massive task shows the fact that there was certainly collusion with other German organisations.

In fact, referring to the atrocities committed on the Russian front, Major-General Robde clearly stated that, "an energetic and unified protest by all field-marshalles would have resulted in a change in these missions and methods."

The truth was, however, that the military had a pact with the SS that allowed the latter to continue their acts of genocide. Notwithstanding their acts of butchery, the fighting record of the SS is very dubious. Hitler had never intended the SS as a military unit, but as an internal force for intimidation, discipline and coercion. It's use as a military unit, via the Waffen SS, was of no serious military consequence. These people, not of the highest intelligence, despite claims of being a super race, were capable of mass retribution and hard fighting. But, as an outfit with no genuine military standing or record, of tactics and strategy they were woefully incapable.

What makes this book relevant today, some 37 years after its first imprint, is that it clearly shows the lie of fascism being a revolutionary creed. Not only did the SS remove the more revolutionary of the SA leaders, but it continued to maintain in power an oligarchy that was dedicated to the continuation of a capitalist state. As Reitlinger states:

"...In Germany there was no revolution. Capital and the monopolistic power of German capital remained in precisely the same hands as before. The bulk of the civil service stayed in their jobs and were not even required to join the Party. Hitler used the SS not to consolidate his revolution, but to nip it in the bud."

If the working class of Europe are looking for radical change they will do well to bear this in mind. The BNP and their ilk offer nothing but misery, genocide and ... capitalism. Dan Todd.



The post-hunger strike leadership of the Party inherited a movement factionalised as army disputes spilled over into the political arena.

THE CASE OF COMRADE SERGE



Opposition in its final struggle with triumphant Stalinism. He was arrested, released and re-arrested and deported to Orenburg in 1933. Following a campaign by a group of French intellectuals he was released (crucially, Serge had refused to sign a confession), and almost uniquely, expelled from the USSR rather than executed. He moved first to Brussels, then to Paris to be vilified by the resident communist press. Serge campaigned vigorously against the Moscow trials (later writing the finest novel of the terror, 'The Case of Comrade Tulayev' based on the assassination of Kirov and the subsequent repression), and in 1931 was elected a councillor to the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista). In 1940 he left Paris in the face of the Nazi advance and, in the nick of time, obtained a visa enabling him to travel to Mexico. He lived in isolation and poverty, though continuing to write some of his best work, until his death in 1941.

CONTACT WITH TROTSKY

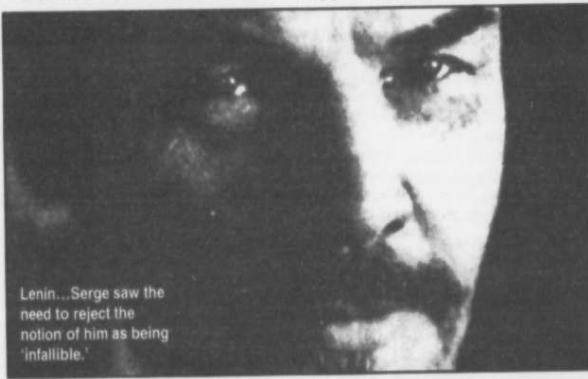
An extended correspondence between Serge and Trotsky began as soon as Serge landed in the West in April 1936. Trotsky was at first living in exile in Norway and from January 1931 in Mexico. The dimensions of the political chasm underlying the seemingly cordial relations between the two men did not take long to reveal itself. In May 1936, following the publication of a letter from Serge in an anarchist journal, Trotsky was warning Serge that "If...politically you feel closer to syndicalism than to Marxism, then there is nothing left for me but to register the profound difference between us." The issue of substance was the extent to which alliances were possible between different strands of the workers' movement. Serge promptly replied: "I am not a syndicalist... but I believe the revolutionary syndicalists are our natural allies on many occasions that amicable non-sectarian relations with them are the obvious course. Naturally, that does not exclude complete freedom of criticism..." In a subsequent letter, Serge urged, "our campaigning must avoid being sectarian. It has to address itself to the whole of the working class by putting the question of freedom of opinion for all the different shadings of the Socialist approach (including the anarchists)." In response to Trotsky's habitual reference of current issues to the template of the 1911 revolution, in this case the persecution of the Mensheviks, Serge riposted that, "there is no other question of public emergency except that of making up our minds whether we, in the midst of persecution and imprisonment, are going to deny our cell mates the rights of speech and thought which the bureaucracy is denying to us all... while recanting none of the traditions of October, we can and must engage in a practical rediscovery of what workers' democracy means, proving that we neither fear debate nor rivalry and that we are not in any way the kind of people who build an enormous prison for anyone who disagrees with us." Trotsky's own position can be inferred from his next letter, where he declares that: "If we only had the choice between the Stalinists and the Mensheviks in the USSR, we should definitely choose the former, as the Mensheviks would only serve as a stepping stone for the bourgeois who would destroy the planned economy..." In June, Trotsky wrote once again, still pressing Serge to sever all links with the syndicalists of 'La Revolution Proletarienne': "these people are incapable of struggle and don't want struggle, don't understand what struggle is." Trotsky counterposed the activities of his own group: "Only a few days ago our own comrades penetrated into the public meetings of the Stalinists, distributed appeals, raised 'scandals' during the most solemn sessions... in short caused a great deal of embarrassment for the Stalinists and their friends... it is solely through this type of revolutionary action that liberals have been able to reap a certain degree of success..." With this type of juvenilia held up to him as the paradigm of revolutionary struggle, Serge's reluctance to commit himself to the spy-ridden dogmatists of the 'Fourth International' as Trotsky demanded, is hardly surprising.

THE RIFT WIDENS

The first clash over contemporary events occurred in the context of what Trotsky termed the French Revolution of June 1936. Trotsky salivated over the prospect he perceived before him: "A massive strike like this is undoubtedly the beginning of a revolution." Once again using the template of the bolshevik revolution, he compared the leaders of the French

bourgeoisie to those of Russia in 1911, Kerensky, Tseretelli and Dan. Serge's view was incomparably more downbeat and, as it turned out, incomparably more realistic.

"The wonderful strikes in France and here show clearly that the working class is recovering after its phase of depression and extreme fatigue, and is entering a new period of struggle. In such a situation one may hope for anything so long as one does not expect an immediate all round upsurge. This is the beginning, the first step out of bed, which indicates the recovery of the patient. The full recovery may take several years." Serge emphasised how voluntaristic Trotsky's expectation of an imminent revolutionary situation actually was: "I am convinced that it is premature to talk in terms of a real party. There are no people for it." In a subsequent letter, Serge drew attention to the real state of affairs in relation to the Trotskyite groupings and their "morbid psychology". "I've been told that two small Brussels groups of Trotskyists came to a big workers' meeting with two different leaflets of identical content! It can be imagined what effect this has on the Belgian workers..." In an eloquent image which says everything you need to know about the infighting between the tiny factions of the Fourth International, he recounts how, after the GPU assassination of Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, the rival "miscellaneous groups" turned up to the funeral under different banners and refused all contact with each other! Serge attacked the "formal, factional approach" of these groups, adding, with some restraint in the circumstances, "All this strikes me as an astonishing loss of touch with reality." In a letter of July 1936, Serge began to insist that the entire structure of Trotskyite organisation had to be revolutionised. "There is an urgent need to put a stop to personal involvements and to establish a strictly collective leadership... renouncing any claim to personal dominance." The reference to personal 'involvements' is Serge's riposte to Trotsky himself: he advises, tactfully, "all questions about individuals... should in



Lenin... Serge saw the need to reject the notion of him as being 'infallible.'

principle be settled at the base, without your intervention. The comrades should be asked to give a proof of their maturity by relieving you of their concerns, and by refusing to allow the head of the movement to become embroiled in quarrels which sometimes have no possible means of resolution." Serge continued: "The new party... has to change its behaviour and eradicate all dirty procedures of a Stalinist sort. It must adopt a polite and fraternal manner in debate, except of course to riff raff and actual enemies." He advocated a number of concrete measures to achieve this: "To infuse some life into, and recruit more writers of an interesting kind, the party journal must have an open forum page in which contributions can be invited from people who may be recruited later on... Any intention to create strictly orthodox publications... will only produce sectarian rags, barely readable and without any access to the working class public." Predictably, none of this found favour in Trotsky's own analysis. He replied in a vein of subjective abuse reminiscent of an analyst-patient relationship: "Unfortunately I cannot agree with you. I am afraid your approach is

thing is not to conduct any factional work there and not aspire to lead this revolutionary organisation from outside." In a letter of January 1931, Serge reasoned that above any issues of theoretical 'purity' was the question of effective work in practice: "Whatever you may say, the POUM represents a militant unit now, which on the whole behaves very courageously and reasonably and holds out great hopes in a situation of very grave danger." Unfortunately, the handful of Trotskyists in Spain proceeded to do precisely what Serge warned against. In March Serge felt obliged to restate his alarm at the factional behaviour of the Trotskyists: "I consider the line taken by comrade sectarians to be deeply equivocal. They believe that small groups of foreigners, who possess a 'pure orthodox ideology' can implant this ideology from outside, and that they must carry on factional activities inside the POUM and direct their attention towards the creation of a separate party. It seems to me that we have to start from Spanish reality, develop and use what is there." Serge was very clear that the development of a 'correct line' by a self-conscious elite, in abstraction from real class forces

and from involvement in concrete events and practice could not, in principle, ever amount to more than a dangerous and counter-productive diversionary activity. But this was the top and bottom of Trotskyite activity in Spain and other arenas. The vanguard elite devoted themselves to the composition of a bizarrely complex and obscure siren song to the proletariat, which the masses were then expected to pick up and sing. Serge's position on the contrary was founded on the understanding that the development of siren songs in the form of the 'correct line' - ie not as historical analysis but as an alleged blueprint for action and practice - had no meaning, relevance or application outside of a direct connection with the real forces and events constituting a specific situation. Yet this is precisely what came to constitute the essence of Trotskyite political 'practice' - then as now. Whether a particular line or blueprint is 'correct' or not, as judged according to some

abstract historical/theoretical system, the analysis itself remains outside the system of real forces, and so outside history. Serge grasped that even if Trotsky's 'line', conjured up in Mexico, without connection to any real force in Spain, was impeccably 'correct' in every detail, from start to finish, it would still not have a revolutionary content. Accordingly he insisted that: "The POUM is certainly not a Bolshevik-Leninist party; there are no Bolshevik-Leninists in Spain in general. I think that Bolshevik-Leninists must learn to work with other marxist revolutionaries, to influence them, to collaborate with them, in order to become an influential current themselves, they must abandon the imposition of their hegemony... a great change of attitudes is required."

Trotsky made no reply until April of 1938, upbraiding Serge for writing for publications not controlled by the Trotskyists themselves. He refused Serge's offer to regard their disagreements as "secondary". Once again, Trotsky framed his argument in terms of the categories of the Russian Revolution: "In dozens of articles I argued that the policy of the POUM is at best the policy of Martov. You never replied to any of my arguments. Instead at the critical moment you publicly expressed your solidarity with the POUM..." Trotsky regarded this as a move on Serge's part "towards a complete rupture and implacable struggle". With a superhuman unconsciousness of the irony involved Trotsky thundered: "In perspective, all those organisations like the POUM are just the surface of history's current. The only really revolutionary factor in the near future will be the Fourth International." At this point we find in perfect focus the catastrophic weaknesses of Trotsky's entire conception of revolutionary practice and organisation. The POUM, for all the deficiencies, hesitations and failures of its leadership was the incontrovertible vehicle of the leading revolutionary forces in the Spanish class war. The Fourth International, on the other hand, throughout what can barely be termed its 'history', was never more than a figment of Trotsky's ideological imagination, a bolshevised version of Bakunin's "secret dictatorship". What Bakunin, the godfather of anarchism, wrote of his (imaginary) 'invisible dictatorship' paradoxically, fits Trotsky's conception of the Fourth International like a hand-made glove. Bakunin described his dream of an "organisation which has scattered its members in small groups over the whole territory... firmly united... an organisation which acts everywhere according to a common plan... they have no officially recognised power but they are strong in their ideal... strong also in their clearly realised purpose among a mass of people struggling without a purpose or plan."

In perfect harmony with this messianic vision, and Trotsky's bizarrely voluntaristic conception, the 'pure' ideological content of the Fourth International supposedly endowed it with a reality that superseded the mass armed struggle of the POUM!

Serge's later comments, written in March 1939 after he had moved to Paris, betray his complete disillusionment with Trotskyite dogmatism, idealism and sectarianism: "I am convinced that one cannot build an International while there are no parties... One should not play with the words... But there are no parties here. It is a dead end. Only small groups manage to hold out in this deadlock, but they have no dynamism, no influence, not even a common language with the working class movement. One cannot build an international organisation on intolerance and the Bolshevik-Leninist doctrine, for in the whole world there are no more than 200 people who are in a position to understand what Bolshevism-Leninism is. One cannot build a single-headed organisation and run it from a long way off... no one in the Fourth International thinks except through your head." Serge then asks, what should be done?

"The solution I believe, lies in an alliance with all the left wing currents of the workers' movement...in free, comradely discussion of every issue...to work towards concrete goals: one must abandon the idea of Bolshevik-Leninist hegemony in the left-wing workers' movement and create an international alliance, which would reflect the real ideological tendencies of the most advanced sections of the working class." Trotsky's riposte arrived the following month: it was unequivocal. Serge henceforth was "individualistic...adventuristic...an adversary, and a hostile one at that."

THE FINAL SPLIT

In an article entitled 'Marxism in our time', Serge gave his summing-up of the Bolshevik revolution: "The Marxism of the first great revolutionary crisis of the modern world...has not dared to take a libertarian position...it was libertarian in words and only for a short time, during the brief period of Soviet democracy which extended from October 1911, to the summer of 1918. Then it pulled itself together and resolutely entered on the path of the old 'statism' - authoritarian and soon totalitarian. It lacked the sense of liberty." Serge points out that, "the contrast is striking between the Bolshevik programme of 1911 and the political structure created by Bolshevism in 1919." By the time Trotsky and Lenin realised the danger they no longer dared apply the remedy: "the greatest reach of boldness of the Left Opposition in the Bolshevik party was to demand the restoration of inner-party democracy, and it never dared dispute the theory of single party government...The fear of liberty, which is the fear of the masses, marks almost the whole course of the Russian Revolution." For Serge, the solution for 'revitalising' Marxism was simple: "Socialism is essentially democratic - the word 'democratic' being here used in its libertarian sense".

The rift, personal and theoretical, between the two most significant communist 'opponents' was complete and irreversible.

Serge makes the point, which may at first seem secondary but which even today can be seen from a quick flick through the standard publications of the left, to be the crucial issue. Socialists face:

"the task of renewing the tradition of socialist thought by assimilating the immense range of experiences which is demanded by a rigorous and unfettered critique of Bolshevism, by the rise of new ideas and a new language..." [RA's emphasis] Serge's experiences as a participant in the 1911 revolution, as a functionary of the Comintern, his arrest as an oppositionist, his re-arrest and internal exile as an enemy of the people, his contacts and activity within the revolutionary circuits of pre-war Europe, and finally, his last creative period in exile in the New World, distilled themselves into this final conclusion: that the fulcrum of revolutionary theory and practice lay in the working class as the exponent and guarantor of unconditional democracy. Serge never lost faith in the possibility of a socialist society and the value of marxism; but perhaps before anyone else he saw the necessity of freeing marxist thought and practice from the "pollution of the vices of Bolshevism in decay, in other words, of the totalitarian mentality".

HOMAGE TO CATATONIA...

In the first half of a review of the Trotsky-Serge correspondence tucked away at the back of 'Socialist Review', the SWP offer their overview of the argument:-

"Serge and Trotsky did not join in agreement and common work, despite the fact that Serge had rallied to the Left Opposition as early as 1923 and refused to capitulate when many others did so...Who was right?...On the face of it Serge's case was strong...The tiny groups adhering to the Fourth International were marginal to the working class and seemed to spend more time feuding with one another than directing their energies outwards...Intolerance to other tendencies on the left was replacing fraternal debate...An unquestioning defence of everything that happened in revolutionary Russia while Lenin and Trotsky were at the helm was becoming a new orthodoxy to rival the Stalinist orthodoxy...Serge appears open minded and Trotsky impervious to debate...It is easy to find evidence to back this up."

All in all, a fair and wide-awake summary of the debate and its circumstances. But then, flip, the second half kicks off with the familiar catatonic sleepwalk through the knee-jerk responses of the trotskyite left:

"But Serge's case is overall a weak one...Serge's assessment of the Fourth International was unsatisfactory. He could have used his immense talents and his experience to work to overcome its sectarianism. Instead he frittered them on keeping in with centrist forces which although larger and more working class stood the test of the struggle less well than the Fourth International...the implicit claim, that Serge's criticism of Trotsky has real weight, is unsustainable." [RA's emphasis]

There is a real schizophrenia here, typical of the Trotskyite/Leninist left. First, the parade of the historical evidence, recognisable as the work of a sane mind. It even identifies the characteristic "unquestioning defence of everything that happened...while Lenin and Trotsky were at the helm". Then - spot the join - comes the clunk as the catatonic ideological apparatus switches in to draw a perfectly incredible 'moral' - or, to put it another way, an "unquestioning defence". Serge's analysis of the original trotskyite left is, regrettably, just as valid today as it was half a century ago.



Posture?

I am an Irish immigrant living in East London. Having come to England seven years ago, I was appalled at the state of the so-called left. Groups like Socialist Worker seemed to consist of spotty-faced students who turned up on estates, patronised residents and got told to "fuck off" by anyone with sense.

About two years ago I was introduced to AFA by a friend. Here at last was an organisation that did more than posture. I was proud to be part of a broad-based coalition which put political differences aside to 'do the business' against fascist scum. I was at great victories like Waterloo and several less publicised ones. I wish I could continue in this vein but sadly I can't.

Over the past year or so I think AFA has gone seriously downhill. Internal splits first with Workers Power and then with the DAM has, in effect, reduced AFA to RA and a few independents. The fascists must be over the fucking moon. The only people they feared are now splintered and bickering with each other.

You now have two choices - you can 1) publish this letter and pick it apart which I am sure you are capable of, or 2) take on board some constructive criticism and try to salvage the situation before it is too late.

Well, here it comes - like it or lump it.

1) While it is entertaining to shout down middle class trots at AFA meetings it doesn't really accomplish anything.

2) Yes, anarchists do like to criticise without being prepared to take responsibility. Have a laugh at them but keep them on board. The Glasgow situation was needless and destructive and resulted in a damaging London split.

3) Why not attend ANL demos and pick up the 'cream' of this organisation. We all know the SWP are shitters but ordinary working class people do turn up at demos and aren't content to wave lollipops.

4) Getting pissed up and kicking it off with lefties is ridiculous. If RA is to become a posturing drinking club a la Class War then it would be better off disbanding.

5) I have no illusions about Labour, but did turning up in Millwall with that leaflet really accomplish anything. The working class were not putting up their own candidates and the choice open to electors was simple: Labour with all their wars; Tory bastards; openly racist Liberals and the BNP.

6) Learn from the ANL about publicity. They are good at getting this if nothing else. Remember: mass movement - 'armed' wing is a proven formula.

Well, now it's down to you. I hope you will take this letter in the spirit it was meant. I really do want to see a strong, re-united AFA doing what it does best. It will mean RA working and negotiating with other groups. Don't send them a policy statement. If I wanted to wind someone up I would ask RA to send them a statement. Meet face to face with an unbiased go-between with these groups. Believe me, I have no axe to grind against your group and whatever you decide to do I salute the bravery of the comrades in RA, one of the few truly working class organisations around.

Steve, E. London.

RA Reply: As you can see, we took the first option: to publish and pick it apart. The reason being that though we disagree with your analysis the idea that London AFA has split and that the primary responsibility lies with Red Action has currency in some circles. Your letter has provided us with the opportunity to set the record straight. While it is true Workers Power have left AFA this was not primarily over disagreement with Red Action. It was in fact a disagreement

with the continued existence of AFA as a political and operationally independent national organisation. They argued that AFA was an obstacle to the

united front because it refused to support the initiatives and strategy of the ANL. They have since followed the logic of their own arguments and joined the ANL, calling at the same time for AFA branches to disband and join them. It should be pointed out that in our defence of AFA we were always supported by the DAM. The reason the DAM are no longer in London AFA is because, as we understand, they have disbanded. However a number of the key activists are still involved on an individual basis. The same applies throughout the country. They are still 'on board'. So in effect the withdrawal of Workers Power hasn't diminished AFA at all, quite the reverse. For the last year to eighteen months they did little genuine anti-fascist work; concerned as they were with trying to pack meetings to out-vote the militants, they had little time for anything else. Moreover, their continued existence within AFA during this period acted like a moth to a flame for even less committed and shabby Trot outfits who were attracted to the idea of AFA being reduced to a talking shop - THEIR talking shop. Groups like this are not a benign influence. While their membership of AFA might well advance the concept of a united front on paper; in reality they confuse and demoralise, and add nothing to the balances of forces which it counts, on the streets. As for attending ANL demos 'to pick off the cream' as you advise there are two points to make. One, the ANL is very much milk and water and the elements that come over do so not because AFA has trailed the ANL around like Workers Power, but because we have the operational ability to set our own agenda. Two, the reason we maintain our distance from the ANL initiatives generally is that (a) they are proven failures and (b) statistics over the last two years have shown that in many areas they have a negative influence on working class perceptions of the motives behind the anti-fascist movement.

Their support for Labour in the local elections is driving the working class into the arms of the BNP. To quote from an AFA leaflet: 'It is not AFA's role to argue that change is not needed. The function of militant anti-fascism is not to see the far-right beaten back, so that Labour and the middle class Left can, as happened between '82 and '92 turn their backs on both the social causes and their own collaboration in the political betrayals that gave rise to the NF and the BNP in the first place. The BNP's attack on Labour is from the right...our role is to guarantee that a successful challenge to Labour comes only from the Left.' While the ANL campaign on the Isle of Dogs increased the Labour vote, this increase was not at the expense of the BNP. What future the anti-fascist organisation that ties itself to Labour, when Labour again reneges on its promises? The answer; none. That was the reason for the Red Action leaflet on the Isle of Dogs. Simply because 'the working class are not putting up their own candidates' now, does not mean that completely breaking with Labour is not the long term solution. In many ways it is inevitable. Either that, or large tracts of the inner cities will become the constituency of the BNP. Finally, AFA has learnt from the ANL about the value of publicity. There is now an office in Manchester, which allows the media and the public direct access to the organisation.

AFA PHONE: 061-232 0813

Early and Often

I am currently in Mexico giving lectures on Marxist economics. I arrived here on the night before the elections. The following day my hosts decided to show me around the place which is reputed to be the world's largest city with some 18 million inhabitants. They took me to a museum - supposedly one of the sights of the town! Unfortunately, since it was election day in Mexico it transpired that federal law prohibited all public buildings from opening as well as prohibiting the sale of alcohol. And, sure enough, queues of people deprived of beer and culture could be seen outside polling stations throughout the country!

The outcome of the elections was a matter of considerable contention. Officially, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) had won again - just as it has won every election for the last 70 years. It was hailed by the media as a great triumph for democracy.

Re: Black Propaganda and "Black Flag"

As a supporter of Black Flag, I found this article to be a collection of the sort of distortions it claimed to address amongst anarchists.

I have no connection to the ACF, disagree with their politics and make no claim to speak for them. If what RA says is true, they are wrong. But you are equally wrong to tar all anarchists with the same brush. What would you say if we linked you with the RCP? I did not agree with the analysis in the Black Flag article referred to, but RA have misunderstood it, at least in part. Clearly a military solution to the British problem in the 6 Counties could be achieved but it would be unacceptable not just to the Americans but to a large section of the British working class. As it is, the ruling class have attempted a police solution which has clearly been unsuccessful, however they measure it. And as for the provos being fascists/psychotic killers? Where was that, or is that more RA-style disinformation a la Frank Kitson? If you want to enter into a polemic on Ireland, fair enough, but bear in mind anarchists have as much variety of opinion on the subject as socialists. And, at least try to get right what it is you disagree with us on.

In Solidarity, MW, SE London.

RA reply: We will deal with your points in the order they present themselves in your letter.

First of all, let's deal with what you call the 'distortions' within our article. This obviously calls into question the accuracy of the information and the points raised.

As regards the ACF what we say is true, quite simply because we relied on the use of direct quotes from their own magazine, *Organise*, issue no.20, and from the *Irish News*, dated 5.4.94. The same applies to the *Bolton Evening Noose* as the material used was lifted directly from issue no.5. As for *Black Flag* (issue no.203), let's deal first with what you suggest might be RA disinformation.

First of all, "Provos as fascists". Black Flag states: "Lefties abroad swallow the fiction of it being a national and working class struggle when in every single other country irredentism (a racial or religious minority in a country separated and wanting reunion with the motherland) is dismissed by them as fascist (like the Volksdeutsch in Eastern Europe) whether it is so or not."

Now, you may be correct and we may have misunderstood this section, but to us the innuendo is quite clear. Secondly, "Provos as psychotic killers"

BERMONDSEY BLUES

Southwark and Bermondsey, in South London, is a working class area where a strong sense of community identity, pride and unity still survives. Many locals despise the police and the rich and have little time for politicians. Therefore it is tragic that reactionary racist and fascist ideas are so widespread in the area among local white working class people.

Bermondsey became notorious when, in August 1991, almost a thousand people turned out from local estates (like the Silwood Estate) to oppose a march through the area by the middle class National Black Caucus (soon to become the Anti-Racist Alliance or ARA). The locals opposed the anti-racist march under the leadership of the British National Party.

Southwark and Bermondsey is regarded as the BNP's second strongest area of support outside of Tower Hamlets in East London. The fact is that the 'anti-racist' politics of the politically-correct middle class left are usually 'anti-white working class' politics that only serve to alienate white working class people and play into the BNP's hands.

We are against racism because it causes the poor to turn on the poor instead of our real enemy - the rich and their government. Racism divides and weakens the working class when the government is on the offensive against working class people.

We don't support the rubbish peddled by the politically-correct middle class left. For example, a leading ARA spokesman once said: "Racism is in white people's genes." Rubbish like this is as harmful to working class unity as the "Rights for Whites" filth peddled by the BNP. Both brands of ideology are enemies of the working class. Both must be opposed and fought in our estates and communities.

But the BNP is the main enemy. White working class ignore the politically-correct middle class left but in some areas like Bermondsey and Tower Hamlets they listen to the BNP.

MT, Ilford, Essex.

couple of people who came in and photographed me. I assumed that they were from my hosts but they were apparently unknown to them and, when challenged, refused to give any identification.

I understand that while I was here a convention was held in the jungle by the Zapatistas with hundreds of delegates attending from all over the country comprising a broad spectrum of progressive groups and social movements. I have enclosed a couple of documents which the Zapatistas feel are the most important to have translated and published in Britain if we want to give an account of the struggle for democracy here. They realise that it is increasingly necessary to organise international solidarity with their struggle. I hope that extracts from these documents will be published in a future edition of Red Action.

Comradely,
P. (Mexico -via Glasgow RA)

IS IT SOMETHING WE SAID?

The vigilance of MI5 and the security services in relation to the far right appears to allow an organisation calling itself **Red Action**; in effect a criminal conspiracy which has a policy of employing physical violence against those of whose politics it disagrees and which has two members currently serving jail sentences for an IRA bombing campaign in London. The total failure of the authorities to take any measures against this group, or others involved in attacks on BNP members during the May election campaign suggests that the state security agencies which are supposed to act in defence of democracy are not doing their job very efficiently.

BNP leader John Tyndall
British Nationalist No 305 July 1994

It is fine to get the militants to take on the fascists in a few spectacular events like the 'Battle of Waterloo', but though such events are correct they are not enough. That means, unfortunately for some, getting their hands dirty and arguing with reformist workers and other anti-fascist groups.

Birmingham Anti-Fascist Alliance Bulletin, outlining its priorities.

Unity in action MUST exist...Birmingham Anti-Fascist Alliance therefore is resolved to break all political ties to London AFA and regional supporters. We will be called Birmingham Anti-Fascist Alliance from now on, and declare Birmingham AFA to no longer exist: passed unanimously Birmingham Anti-fascist Alliance Executive Committee-and others.

Public statement issued 12 July 1994 explaining the difference between theory and practice.

Our campaign has also exposed the reds in the public eye as being nothing but petty thugs and deadbeats. Scruffy, shambling gangs took to the streets in a vain attempt to stop our momentum...Lastly the reds descended to the world of political terrorism. The attacks on Alf Waite, Michael Davidson and Michael Newland were only the most well known occurrences. Undoubtedly, the reds have been taught their tactics by their friends in the IRA. Whereas the BNP emerged from these elections with clean hands, the reds were exposed as political gangsters.

Spearhead July 1994

Most people who have been involved in the struggle for a few years will be aware of this tiny group of mugs, misfits and cowards who call themselves Red Action. We at C18 who have monitored this bunch of no good fucking queers just regard them as one big joke which gets funnier everytime we hear it. The image they try and put over is that of a mob who've had enough and just want it with the fascists at every opportunity. In reality they are a bunch of 40-50 wankers who would never make it in any football firm in this country. Their 'claim to fame' is that they've beaten up a few skinheads, pensioners and women on the way to right-wing events. Anytime they have ventured near a large number of racists they always bring a bigger mob of police who they can stand behind and call us names... So there you have it lads Red Action, the left's so called hardmen have bottled it on every occasion they've had the chance to prove themselves, but have shown themselves to be a bunch of tossers. They give it the big one when they're being protected by the old bill but wouldn't dare venture near our mob and stand!

Part of a five page 'morale booster' in Issue No 1 of Combat 18

The only problem with retaliation is that it has got to be organised. Killing innocent people doesn't achieve anything. You have to do what AFA do: find the nazis and sort them out. We're not talking about looking for any white person in the street. That's cowardice. But we are going to slap the fascists... AFA are the only organisation that goes out there and does something. They make it physically hard for the Nazis to move in this country...This is the only European country where the Nazis don't have a firm foothold, and that's because of AFA.

Rappers Kaliphz, NME September 1994

As an Independent candidate for election to Kilkenny Corporation I am the victim of a smear campaign. On Saturday afternoon last the city centre of Kilkenny was taken over, fly posted from one end to the other by a group with a PO box in Dublin...on Saturday they advanced on Kilkenny. Apparently, they tried similar tactics on a local election candidate in Carlow a few years ago and destroyed the good man. This...**RED ACTION FRONT** have an inside contact in Kilkenny who is out to destroy my election and that is how they landed here. On Sunday morning I met with Superintendent Vincent Duffe in person and the Superintendent expressed his concern about a meeting they propose to hold at a venue in Kilkenny city...I am also concerned that this meeting may get out of hand...such conduct must never be tolerated in Ireland...what happened on Saturday last must be condemned by all decent right thinking people...it must never happen again.

Apparently John Tyndall is not the only one to believe that Red Action are out to get him. Letter from Michael J McGrath in the Kilkenny People

Reports of skinheads running riot in Carnaby Street in the West End came as no surprise. Shopkeepers were injured and premises damaged during disturbances in which the nazi strength was put at about 50.

On June the 4th 1994 at 4.30 pm a group of visiting French fashion models were chastised by AFA stewards in Carnaby St; at least two needing the help of a wheel chair and stretcher to get to the ambulance. The anti-fascist magazine Searchlight no 229 July 1994 saw things differently.

"...if they could the IRA would drive the protestant working-class into the sea...we will have no truck with any IRA bombing campaign..."

Sean (Boom Boom) Docherty, explaining DUP - sorry that should read SWP policy at a public meeting in Stoke Newington, 9.20 pm, 21/4/94. 'No truck' geddit?



Now, it would be fair to say that **Red Action** gets its fair share of crank letters. Some are printed, some are binned, and some are handed over to The VOR. In early September a letter arrived which began: "I am eighteen years old, and have been accepted as a student at a Scottish university." This student it appears is a regular reader of **Red Action**. He goes on to describe a chance encounter with a man at a bus station in Glasgow. He provides a graphic description. "He was a heavy built man with close cropped grey hair. I thought he was about forty five but turned out to be sixty, he wore glasses and had two hearing aids behind his ears. On his lapel he wore a couple of badges... a union jack the other with the letters BNP inside". He had met his first nazi. Surprisingly, he describes him as "intelligent...quite dispassionate and pleasant in manner." When he smiled; which he did often, he had, our student noticed "nice white teeth". It appears, he, the nazi, was an honours graduate in politics and economic history but could not get a job because of a left-wing blacklist: "he quivered

WHEN HARRY MET ...HARRY

with rage as he talked about his poverty...according to him **Red Action** and the left in general were the 'bootboys of Zionism'...he hated them and wanted them totally destroyed". Understandably our student felt a little uneasy at this turn of events "as this guy was quite massive, with big powerful shoulders." Despite his powerful build and the occasional quiver; "he never raised his voice, he was very courteous and seemed a kindly man...quite gentle". Anyway he informed our student that "General Frank Kitson had written a book called 'Bunch Of Fives'. This called for the setting up of gangs to oppose national movements, and that **Red Action** showed all the signs of being such a movement...I told him that I was going to write to your paper...he looked very grave then and advised me not to put my name and address. 'You'll go on a blacklist young fella'. He told me he often carried a sign saying 'What about us unemployed white workers' and the left all

Jews just been "manufacturing our emotions to manufacture political capital for themselves" (his words)? It would be a contemptible thing and I would despise them for it." MY GOD! WHAT INSIDIOUS PROPAGANDA! This kid meets an old fascist by accident, and the next thing you know he despise...Hold on a minute. Where did we read that before? Ah yes, here it is. A letter from Harry Mullin of Glasgow BNP which contains the line: "underneath all their rhetoric they quite manifestly hate and DESPISE us". So that must mean old Harry is the nice man with the kindly teeth. Funny that we always thought he was a nutter. Just goes to show how you can be wrong about people. Just the other day...STOP!...INTELLIGENT? POWERFUL? PLEASANT?...DESPISE! This isn't a letter from a student about Harry at all - Harry IS the f***ing student! Hey! That's pretty sick. You need help, Harry.



Glasgow 1990; Fourteen year old BNP organiser Harry Mullin with placard.

THE TRACKS OF MICHAEL'S TEARS

Michael Robert Stoneman, Regional Organiser of the NF (a part time job surely) recently appeared at St Albans Crown Court charged with Violent Disorder arising out of events surrounding an NF election meeting in Hemel Hempstead. The attentive audience was divided into a fascist contingent at the front and a vociferous anti-fascist contingent at the back. Stoneman, who has a string of petty convictions for making a nuisance of himself (threatening words and behaviour x 4) could count himself unlucky to be in court at all. He was acting as an NF 'steward' in the meeting along with two other dickheads and, true to form, was mouthing off and performing the odd gesture, safe in the knowledge that the 57 (fifty-seven) riot police inside the hall would protect him from any harm that might otherwise befall him. How, it might be asked, did a man with no known bottle end up on a violent disorder charge? Stoneman's miscalculation was to position himself in front of the only black copper in the hall. It happened that in the course of the meeting, a remark was passed, and mayhem ensued. The copper, who turned out to be none other than Inspector Thomas, senior officer inside the hall, took the opportunity to tear into the astonished Stoneman, battering him to the floor and kicking him in the head, resulting in what Stoneman himself later described as "a dirty great black eye". Stoneman was then lead, crying, out of the hall. In accordance with the Police Manual, pp 448-9, section 6, para. (ii), Stoneman was then charged with the most serious public order offence available, Violent Disorder (maximum sentence 10 years). Sad to say, Stoneman was found not guilty of failing to resist being battered by a police officer in the course of his duty, and left the court a free man. A black day for law and order in this country.

Stoneman's interview, played to the court, added a certain comic touch. He told the police that when he arrived in Hemel, he and his mates were confronted by "two different groups of what we call reds". At the station itself, where the ragbag of frontiers collected, they first met the ANL. Stoneman continued that so far as he was concerned the ANL were entitled to their opinions and they didn't bother him: "the ANL are basically a bunch of schoolteachers and mad professors who go around waving lollipops and shouting slogans. They're harmless." Stoneman added "The ANL were kept at the station, we didn't see them again". The other group, AFA, he regarded in quite a different light. In a tone of outrage, he told the officers, "They were actually allowed into the room [meeting]" and that "when they got in, only one thing could have happened, and it did". AFA he believed, go round "smashing up meetings...they go for violence and violence happens". The coppers asked him how he knew they were AFA. "We know who they are, they don't wave lollipops, they throw chairs".

Red Action V The Red Hand



Since the start of the season **Red Action** have been holding regular paper sales outside Celtic Park. Perhaps a little more surprising is the fact that a **Red Action** sale was initiated recently by a - lone seller - outside Rangers' ground, Ibrox! A feat akin to selling an Phoblacht outside Windsor Park! Of course it needs to be pointed out that, on the day, Celtic were the visitors, and the paper made its brief appearance at the Celtic end and when we say lone seller we mean only one was actually selling. He was flanked on either side by the usual disreputable looking characters while no less than twenty Shamrock Rovers fans covered his back! So there was no trouble then? Not exactly. Interrupted by the arrival of an ICF raiding party the sale ended in what the police would refer to these days as a riot...with our hero once again taking C-H-A-R-G-E! All's well that ends well.

Apparently, the characteristic throwing of chairs was repeated on this occasion. According to Stoneman: "we started singing the National Anthem, which they're dead against, and throwing chairs was their way of letting us know they were there." So there you have it. A senior AFA source was unable to confirm speculation that the new corporate logo for AFA would feature an airborne chair.

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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.

Sectionalism on the left continues to be a comfort to a system which socialism promised to replace. Factions, whose innumerate 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 capitalists - 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.

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BM BOX 37, LONDON WC1N 3XX

PO BOX 3355, DUBLIN 7,

PO BOX 83, SOUTH WEST DO,

MANCHESTER M15 5NJ

PO BOX 266, GLASGOW, G42 8EA

Name.....

Address.....

Tel: