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EDITORIAL

**At the onset of the peace process
"IRA CALL THE SHOTS!" ran the Red
Action headline. Back in August 1994 many scoffed.
Then and since the standard line of Republican dissidents
and the British Left was that the entire process was
designed to emasculate Republican resistance, and for Sinn
Fein to even countenance participation was effectively
'surrender', and an objective 'betrayal' of Republican ideals
and nationalist interests.**

At every stage of the process, the squeal of 'Sell-out!' is repeated. By far the loudest bawlers in this respect are the same organisations who for over twenty five years just as stridently denounced armed struggle as immoral. It takes considerable dissembling of reality to be wrong on both sides of a war and peace argument but the British Left have managed it somehow.

When, as now, the wheels are threatening to come off, and when in response Republicans have done precisely the opposite of what was predicted for them, trapped in their own dogma, the Left invariably opt to ride out the contradictory storm.

As SF is the only party that operates on a 32 county basis, 'big changes in the political landscape' carry with them an inescapable 32 county flavour. And as night follows day, with it the de facto, if not quite yet the de jure, ending of political partition

Of course the kind of thinking that led to the unilateral suspension by Peter Mandelson of the institutions set up under the Good Friday Agreement, continues to be hard for anyone to fathom. Ostensibly it was to save David Trimble, and with him the Agreement, from the 'No men' of Unionism. But rather than strengthening his leadership, every concession served instead, as was predicted, to further weaken his personal position. 'Moderate Unionism' so called, which steadfastly refused to prepare its own constituency for change, has inherited the lame duck leader it deserves. With the IRA withdrawing from even cursory contact with the De Chastelain decommissioning body, and the May 22 'deadline' steadily looming, the inability to rationalise, much less rectify, such a palpably anti-Machiavellian strategy, all too visibly now extends to the British administration and Mandelson himself.

That for a time there was consternation in Republican circles at such apparently aberrant British behaviour is understandable. But whatever its impact on Republican's analysis of ultimate British intentions, the theme of 'betrayal and surrender' propounded by the spooks, dissidents and their Trotskyist bedfellows, much like the Good Friday Agreement itself, lies in tatters. In simple terms if 'IRA sell-

out' was what happened in 1994, why six years later have they still not 'sold out'? If the peace process was the British strategic victory painted, can someone please explain why the institutions designed, we are told, to 'enshrine partition, imperialism and the New World Order' were unceremoniously torn down by the British Secretary of State? In truth, of all the players in the peace process, it is SF, whose agenda the peace process is, who alone have made any intelligent effort to save a it.

Only recently Adams admitted that his party's strenuous efforts in this regard saw SF go beyond their obligations. This he concedes 'might have been a mistake', as it relied on others to show equal commitment.

But if tactical 'mistake' it was, it is one unlikely in the short term to be repeated. For even in advance of the successful wounding of Trimble, SF were already 'moving forward on the basis that a new phase of struggle is now opening up'. In so doing they were turning their backs on the possibility of serious negotiations under present conditions. Instead they will be concentrating on strengthening their own hand, in line with, as was predicted in these pages nine months ago, the inevitable emergence of a 'Republican plan B'.

In opening up this new phase of struggle Adams predicts that "at some time in the future a

new agreement will be negotiated. We will have to ensure that Sinn Fein is there in a better position to negotiate a better agreement than the one which is now in tatters", and added with emphasis "we will only get as much freedom as we can take".

As things stand Republican potential and ambition to do so, is both vast and impressive in equal measure. Never better in fact.

While supplanting an ageing SDLP in the Six Counties is probable rather than possible, and sooner rather than later, SF's unmistakable ambition is to 'get in amongst' the gombeen politicians in the 26 counties. "Officially, local politicians from other parties play down the threat they pose at the next general election," according to the latest edition of current affairs magazine *Magill*, "but privately they admire their application and are bracing themselves for big changes in the political landscape". As SF is the only party that operates on a 32 county basis, 'big changes in the political landscape' carry with them an inescapable 32 county flavour. And as night follows day, with it too de facto, and undeniable, if not quite yet de jure, abolition of political partition. Prisoner releases and other 'concessions' not withstanding, prospects all round appear to be none too bad for a largely working class movement sections of the right-wing British establishment and the entire British Left, prepared eager obituaries for in August 1994. As the SF trajectory suggests, there appears to be some immutable law which ordains that the British Left like a flawed compass, must always get everything horribly wrong. Whatever the cunning in the plan, in the opposite direction lies 'Nirvana'.

Now the same Left, under the banner of the London Socialist Alliance, are feverishly preparing to put their collective theories to the electorate in a unified way for the first time. Though many of the participants, notably the SWP, were dragged into the electoral arena kicking and screaming, an almost triumphalist air, not dissimilar to the type of optimism that greeted the launch in 1995 of the now semi-defunct SLP is once again apparent. The London Assembly elections are on May 4. Given the accuracy of the 'flawed compass' thus far, it will be interesting to see, who precisely is in position to 'call the shots' come May 5?

FRONT COVER



**Newly-elected
BNP
supremo,
Nick Griffin, is
absolutely
candid in
regard to the
prospects
that the
'refugee crisis'
offers his
party politi-
cally (see *Big
Issue*,
opposite)**



THE BIG ISSUE

HARD on the heels of the Barry Hearn off the cuff comments on immigration on *Radio Five Live* came the *Sun/Daily Mail* Blitzkrieg. Of the Hearn outburst one critic noted: "it is only because the rest of us let them get away with it" that people like him see them as "self-evident truths supported by the vast majority". Nimble jumping on the passing bandwagon, a *Guardian* columnist commented that Brixton had become "a beggars' Mecca, with its heady combination of cheap crack and the infallible kindness of the indigenous church going population and middle-class Lefties". Otherwise 'liberal' Alison Pearson too felt compelled to record that 'their' children "looked drugged, or maybe just numb, a state to which their mothers - if mothers they be - appear sullenly indifferent. And they are dirty..." Her spleen vented, "the worst thing about this story" she reflected "is that it puts a smile on the face of every thin lipped fascist who thinks "refugee" is just another word for sponger."

For all the Straw/Widdiecombe bombast one political leader was at least pleased to see them. Unlike "the church going West Indians and the humble ex-Raj Asians", writes BNP supremo Nick Griffin, whose arrival the latest batch, "Albanians, Afghans, and Somalis", come from "traditionally violent bandit cultures". Adding with a smack of the lips that the new arrivals will "cause trouble not in twenty years time - but virtually immediately!"

In head to head confrontation with the British National Party in the London Assembly elections on May 4 will be the London Socialist Alliance (LSA). In tune with the Euro-Nationalist dictum 'of putting power before principles', the BNP no longer call for 'immediate repatriation'. Putting principles before all else is, it appears, the approach favoured by the LSA. A call for an end to 'racist' immigration controls would be normal enough, but a demand for the 'scrapping of all immigration controls', outside of a distant aspiration, is unusual, in even the most flamboyant of sects. Perhaps the LSA genuinely believe 'Refugees welcome here' is a simple statement of fact. Perhaps they believe that 'the war is won and we won it' as LSA candidate and ANL activist Weyman Bennett informed an AFA audience back in October. Perhaps it is they, rather than Barry Hearn, who are speaking 'self-evident truths'. Maybe politics, like religion should be a matter of 'morality', irrespective of consequences anyway.

So when a journalist in a mixed race marriage warns in *The Observer* that "middle class whites" like them "have got to realise there are not a few bad apples out in society ruining their 'multi-cultural dream. The bad apples are in the majority and the so-called multicultural dream is actually a nightmare" has the LSA taken into account what he or anybody else thinks? Who knows? But one thing is certain. That policy on immigration will put a smile on every fascist mug, thin-lipped or otherwise, who is convinced that 'socialist' is now just another word for "loser".

BIG ISSUE PREDICTION: The Left ignores working class perspectives at their own peril.

RED ACTION annual national meeting 27-28 May 2000

It is essential that all members attend both days; so travel, childcare and work arrangements should be made accordingly. Supporting members wishing to attend should telephone national office on: 07971 784 280

red @ction website

The red @ction website address has changed. We now have our own domain name: www.redaction.org



POINT BLANK

WEST
MIDLANDS
AFA -
TIPTON
BLACK
COUNTRY

AFA stewards began pre-election work against the West Midlands BNP in mid-March. Some 2,500 leaflets delivered door to door highlighted the opportunism behind the West Mid's BNP's Tipton-based electoral experiment. A BNP member from the area phoned up the AFA national office stating that a copy of AFA's Tipton leaflet was being forwarded to the police, precociously assuming a less than lawful AFA agenda with regards to the BNP. Also a matter of concern to the caller was whether AFA itself would also be contesting the Tipton wards!

Orchestrators of the BNP campaign, Steve and Sharon Edwards, who live in the distant and largely middle class area of Wombourne, were vindicated by the caller as people whose family had lived in Tipton for four generations. Also cited was the BNP's recent orientation towards community work and three local resident's groups.

OXFORD AFA - SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

SCORES OF dissatisfied punters had to be turned away from an AFA benefit at the East Oxford Community Centre on 11.3.00. Popular local reggae band Mackating and DJ's Hady, Natty Mark and Ras James rapidly had the venue packed to its capacity, forcing stewards to lock the doors on revellers unlucky enough to have arrived late.

The atmosphere in the club was buzzing all night and the dance floor heaved until the shut down. A total of £420 was raised on the door and the AFA stall reported an enthusiastic response. Both the venue and the performers stated that they were more than happy with the success of the gig and have offered their services for future fundraising.

Oxford AFA has felt the need to raise its profile recently, in htpis part of the city, in response to a wave of reaction in the local press against asylum seekers currently residing here. AFA has drawn attention to the fact that the situation is ripe for exploitation by the far-right. It is important therefore, that through such activities as benefit gigs, using the letters page of the local press etc, AFA is in effect ensuring that any vacuum that opens up to possible fascist infiltration is promptly shored up. Guaranteeing that AFA strongholds, such as East Oxford remain well and truly in our hands.

continued on page 4



NOT WAVING...

**RED ACTION CONTINUES
IT'S REGULAR LOOK AT
THE BRITISH LEFT**

FREE KULDIP!

FOLLOWING THE J18 demonstration in central London in 1999, a member of the Workers Power youth group, Revolution, was jailed for 21 months following his conviction for violent disorder during clashes with police. In launching a solidarity campaign "demanding his release, the release of all others imprisoned and the dropping of all charges against all those and still awaiting trial", Revolution have issued a document explaining why, all of the events surrounding it were, well, 'just not fair'. To begin with, when in the morning the group sought, as part of the wider demonstration to picket "global bloodsuckers British Petroleum", police were waiting for them with an INCREDIBLE four van loads of police officers!"

Later about two o'clock after a "couple of hours partying in a carnival atmosphere, some protesters started to vent their anger against the LIFFE building - doing superficial damage to it, and a few activists burst through security guards into the building before being ROUGHLY evicted". Not bad enough, the evidence of guilt against their own member "turned out to consist of over 100 photographs, and SELECTIVE footage showing him strike a fully equipped riot policeman, with a THIN banner pole. Even more incredibly the video footage "did NOT" show the police brutality that caused the violence in the first place. Moreover "A plea of self defence was also excluded for the same reason. AMAZINGLY, self-defence is only accepted by a court if the action of defence occurs within seconds of being attacked". 'Kuldip Bajwa Political Prisoner' can be reached at: DN 7230, HMP Brixton, Jebb Avenue, SW2 5XF.

In the meantime "Build the movement against global capitalism - forward to May Day and Prague 2000"! Bless.

THE END FOR LM?

SOMETIME IN the last century, December 1998 to be precise, rival column *Word in your Ear* drew attention to the libel case being brought by ITN broadcaster against the magazine *LM*, formerly *Living Marxism*, owned by the former Revolutionary Communist Party, now too defunct. As stated, the conflict arose when *LM* claimed footage of apparently starving Bosnians in a Serbian concentration camp was 'faked'. According to *LM*'s version, 'the starving were not inside the wire trying to get out- but outside the wire possibly trying to get in!' Or to it put another way 'it had been the reporters not the starving inmates who had been enclosed by barbed wire!'

Unsurprisingly, the jury took a mere four hours to return unanimous verdicts. Furthermore ITN claimed it had previously offered to waive its right to damages in return for a simple apology but *LM* would have none of it. As editor Mick Hume said in a statement after the verdict the magazine "apologised for nothing". Its failure to 'apologise for something' on the other hand cost the magazine in the region of a gob-smacking £675,000 in costs and damages. Unsurprisingly both Mr Hume and the magazine are now bankrupt. But as was pointed out at the time 'disaster like success does not happen overnight, or by accident, but has to be diligently worked at until it becomes a habit'. Ideology apart what borders on the genuinely bizarre is why they persisted in a lie they must have known would be exposed the instant the ITN footage was introduced as evidence. Given media speculation in relation to the overall funding of *LM*, what would now be genuinely spooky is if, in one guise or another, the increasingly mysterious *LM* project actually re-appears.

LIVERPOOL AFA - FUNDRAISER THE FIRST OF MANY

**POINT
BLANK
contd**

LIVERPOOL AFA held their first benefit for five years on 11th March. 300 people packed into The Picket on Hardman Street to see Vamos, Western Avenue and Zeb play an eclectic mix of punk, hip-hop and dance grooves. The audience was a diverse mixture of dockers, Republicans, students, musicians and other odds and sods that make the Liverpool so unique. Liverpool's own Tommy 8 provided the well received poetry inbetween Western Avenue and Zeb.

Andy Johnson spoke on behalf of AFA, telling the audience "AFA was formed in the mid-eighties for the sole purpose of the ideological and physical confrontation of fascism in this country. It has been a very successful campaign. Britain in the year 2000 is the only country in Europe without a noticeable Far-Right presence. AFA claims the exclusive responsibility for this. But this is no time to be complacent".

All in all a very successful evening with £933 taken on the door, and this gig is sure to be the first of many.

A week later an AFA contingent was present during the St. Patrick's Day parade which had been stopped by Loyalists in 1996. The opposition failed to materialise on this occasion. Liverpool has always had one of the most respected and active branches within AFA, and this gig is the opening of a new chapter in Liverpool's anti-fascist history. An influx of new faces, along with the rebuilding of AFA's Northern Network, means that the underlying anti-fascist presence on Merseyside will become visible on the streets again.

OBITUARY

Matty 'Blag' Roberts

1964-2000

IT WAS with great sadness that Red Action members learnt of the death, in tragic circumstances, of Matty Roberts or Matty 'Blag' as he had become known to friends and the media alike. Although never formally a Red Action member and whilst having drifted out of political circles in recent years, Matty was still regarded with a great deal of affection by his former comrades.

The large turnout at Matty's memorial service, which was attended by representatives of both RA and Anti-Fascist Action, demonstrated his lasting popularity with those who had known him both inside and outside of politics.

Always a larger than life character, Matty's involvement in politics had begun not on the Left, but on the Far-Right, with membership of the British Movement during his teenage years. Whilst doing one of a number of spells in Young Offenders institutions however, Matty began to question his flirtation with fascism and left shortly after.

After coming into contact with RA and AFA, Matty became a highly valued and trusted activist, playing a notable role in many a successful stewarding operation.

At the same time as playing this covert role, Matty also developed a very public profile as spokesperson, frontman and lead singer with the band he was fundamental to setting up - agit-rockers, the Beggars ITA. The success of the Beggars meant they soon went from pub band to being signed by a major recording company, EMI. Always aware of the contradictions of becoming 'rockstars', the Beggars spent the money EMI had provided for a signing-on party for instance, on adverts in the music press highlighting the growth of fascism and the complacency of the Left in Britain.

The predictably short-lived, media love affair with the Beggars came to an abrupt end as they closed ranks, accusing Matty of being involved in a fracas with a journalist who had claimed that the ex-BM leopard had not changed his spots. For an image-based medium, often obsessed with 'keepin' it real' Matty had proved far too authentic. "You can theorise and nit-pick later. We're in your face and if it offends your middle class intellectual sensibilities then fuck you!" he told the *New Musical Express* in 1993.

Matty is fondly remembered by all of his RA comrades, who offer our heartfelt condolences to all of his family and friends.

"We're committed to this cause for life, and it's about time people stopped sitting around and joined the struggle". (Matty Blag, NME)



ELECTION FEVER

For the first time since the '70s the Trotskyist Left, led by the SWP, are to stand against Labour in a major election.

Amid the hype, Steve Potts takes a critical look at the London Socialist Alliance and examines its prospects for success.

While New Labour's control freakery looks certain to deliver a Livingstone landslide, signalling a dramatic set-back for the Blair project, there is another development taking place that, while less newsworthy, is of far greater significance for the British Left. For the first time in their history, the Trotskyist sects, including the biggest - the Socialist Workers Party, have formed an alliance to oppose Labour in a major round of elections in Britain.

On May 4th London's approximately 5 million electorate will have the opportunity to vote for the London Socialist Alliance (LSA), made up from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Communist Party of Great Britain (*Weekly Worker*), International Socialist Group, Socialist Party (formerly Militant), Socialist Workers Party and Workers Power. As well as the election for Mayor where the LSA are solidly behind Livingstone, there will be 25 members elected to the Greater London Assembly. Each constituency is made up of between 2-3 London boroughs and will be elected on a simple first past the post basis. The other 11 members will be elected from a party slate or list, according to the percentage of their party's vote London-wide. It will cost £19,000 in deposits to contest all 25 GLA seats.

Any realistic hope the LSA might have of actually getting someone elected will rely on the London-wide vote for their slate, which is being headed by journalist and leading SWPer Paul Foot. However, the irony of the likes of the ANL, Searchlight, CARF, calling for Jack Straw to get tough on the 'Nazis' is that it is they themselves that have made it significantly harder for anyone from the Left to get elected, as the quota has been raised by Labour to over 4%, to 'keep Far Right extremists out of the Assembly'. The only immediately comparable figures for London in recent times, are those for the 1999 European elections where Scargill's Socialist Labour Party was easily eclipsed by the Greens and the UKIP, finishing just 1,672 votes ahead of the BNP with 1.72%.

The LSA's task has been made even harder by the appearance of at least three other Left slates on the ballot paper. Members of the rail union, the RMT, have put forward a slate of candidates under the title of Campaign Against Tube Privatisation headed by Pat Sikorski of the obscure Fourth International Supporters Caucus, better known as a leading member of the SLP before Scargill chucked him out. The SLP, whose shrinking membership has fallen in under three years from a high point of over 2,000 to barely 250, is also putting up a slate. They will be drawn mainly from members of Harpal Brar's Stalin Society which makes up most of the SLP's two dozen or so London members. The third list is being put up by the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain.



An 800 strong rally might be a huge morale booster for participants within the LSA, but in itself 'socialist unity' means absolutely nothing anymore to anyone outside the environment of the Left.

As the LSA realise that any hope they have of getting elected lies in hitching their carriage to Livingstone's runaway train, the 'Vote Ken Vote LSA' posters have already gone up. While Livingstone has made it clear he wants nothing to do with them, the LSA are determined to become 'Ken's unofficial slate'. The New Labour selection fiasco, has meant the LSA now believe they have a very real chance of winning "more than one of the GLA list seats" (*Weekly Worker* 16.3.00) spurred on by a report in *The Observer* that "Labour has even privately admitted that veteran Leftwing journalist Paul Foot is likely to be elected to the new GLA in the Livingstone backwash" (12.3.00).

Certainly Foot will get the backing of a number of the middle class Labour Left; the 'Hampstead liberals' as Jack Straw likes to refer to them. The LSA has gained support from 'high profile' backers such as Michael Mansfield and the Lawrence family solicitor Imran Khan, who had previously backed the SLP. Film director Ken Loach has appeared on public platforms for the LSA and the author and former editor of *Labour Briefing*, Mike Marqusee is heading its press committee. Sukdev Reel and spokesperson for the National Civil Rights Movement, Suresh Grover, are also sponsors. Far more difficult for the LSA will be getting the votes of London's working classes where the Left have absolutely no support base. The *Weekly Worker* admitted "we must be brutally frank and state that you could probably count on two hands all the housing estates in Britain were the Left has any kind of base".

The real significance however, lies in the Left's break with Auto Labourism which had seen them call for a Blair victory less than three years ago. Forcing the Left, especially the SWP, out of their insular environment and into the big bad world where their arrogant boast of being THE Left will count for nothing, is bound to come as a shock for their members, forcing them to question cherished beliefs for the first time. And while they have steadfastly refused to publicly acknowledge the other members of the Alliance in *Socialist Worker*, the fact that they have shared platforms with the rest of the Left will make it extremely difficult for them to retreat back into a closet. The Alliance, whether they care to admit it or not, has emerged from the Left's weakness, something that will become all too apparent when faced with confronting both the establishment and indeed Far Right parties at the ballot box. In addition the SWP's new-found friends would do well to remember that they never do anything for the 'common good'. More likely they view the Alliance as an opportunity to conduct a mopping-up operation within the Left.

Whatever the result in May, one thing is sure. Life for the British Left will never quite be the same again.

DIRTY BUSINESS

In exploring the controversy surrounding social cleansing in East Berlin, Joe Reilly discovers that while Stalinism is officially dead, the fear and loathing of working class independence is alive and kicking.

Politics is a dirty business. It is a hard business. It can be a demoralising business. But more than anything it is a confusing business. Facing one way and rowing in the opposite direction is more or less common practice. Consequently, a movement can only be judged on the difference it makes en route to its eventual destination. It is not therefore what it appears to be doing, or what it may think it is doing, but only what it is actually doing that counts.

In all of it, the greatest contradictions most regularly appear in the division between practice and theory, between the general and the particular, between the macro and the micro. Or, the choice between 'head down community politics' set against the overriding need for a 'world vision' as a critic of the IWCA once described it.

Approximately twenty years ago, I found myself drawn into a struggle between the NF and the local ANL branch for control of a sales pitch near a market in Islington in north London. It was a conflict that had already been ongoing, on a weekly basis, for five or six years. Islington NF was the biggest, and had a greater capacity for violence than any other NF branch in the entire country at the time. Armed robbery, was, without exaggeration, considered a favoured method of fund raising. In the summer of 1981 things were beginning to hot up with the fascists scenting victory. The SWP leadership, having some time previously decided that the NF had indeed 'gone away you know', were considerably put out by the failure of the entire membership at a local level to appreciate their genius. So when they decided to intervene it was to bring things to a head. Distilled, their reasoning was as follows: if the ANL in Islington did not exist then neither, in all probability, would the NF in Islington.

So in order to achieve the desired accord between the micro and macro, a moratorium on any further party support for an already seriously beleaguered ANL branch was imposed from the top. It should, as intended, have proved a crippling blow. But the branch appealed to the membership over the heads of the leadership. By far the most positive response was from some elements who had cut their teeth in the 'squads', and who immediately offered political and all importantly physical back-up. Under the circumstances, it was understandably they who now assumed operational control on the ground. This decisive tilting of the balance meant that within a matter of literally weeks it was the turn of the NF to appeal for allies. The turning of the tables in Islington had a domino effect on the morale of the other NF branches in the vicinity sucked into the conflict. The upshot being that within exactly twelve calendar months, not only the Islington branch but the NF in the whole of north London called a cessation on all street operations in exactly twelve months. On its own it was a quite stunning victory.

However it was not really until after the purges within the SWP that the wider strategical and political significance of the 'Battle for Chapel Market' came to light.

Certainly key to my personal enlightenment was a small pamphlet in defence of physical force anti-fascism written by Trotsky in 1935, in which he launched a blistering attack on the opponents of the anti-fascist militias. In doing so, he exposed not only the weasel words of his Stalinist opponents in the French Communist Party, but drew attention to the identical line of argument being pursued at the time (and ever since) by his supposed disciples within the SWP!

It is now broadly accepted that the Chapel Market experience was, with some refinements, the m.o. which would eventually see the Far-Right concede 'the battle for control of the streets' on a national basis. And yet this vindication from the grave, in authenticating an admittedly 'rough hewn but instinctive communism', may yet leave the more lasting legacy. The impact of the Trotsky revelation was this. If on such a black and white issue, we who supposedly knew nothing, could be so tactically, historically, and yes even morally right, and they the intellectuals in turn so wrong, what else had they bastardised? (Almost all of it, as we would eventually discover.)

Though a Damascene awakening of sorts, in truth it would take over a decade and a half before a scheme to fill the political vacuum created in Islington in 1982 was even to be attempted. Once again the operational plan was designed to cater to the specific needs of Islington IWCA - only. In a further coincidence it would be to be on the estate at the exact opposite end of the same Chapel Market, where AFA strategists cut their teeth in 1981, that the IWCA would first alert tenants to the twin dynamic of gentrification and "social cleansing" some seventeen years later. Soon however, both the phrase and the campaign would find resonance not only on other estates, but in other boroughs, and even the national press. The half formed suspicions within Islington IWCA of some wider conspiracy, became Gradgrind fact in January, with John Prescott's announcement of government plans 'to end all council housing by 2010'. Quickly followed in February by leaks from a government 'green paper' which expressed the intention to establish a symmetry between the public and private sector rents.

Coupled to this, an adjustment to housing benefit provision, which would, as *The Sunday Telegraph* casually acknowledged, see the less wealthy forced out of what it described as "good areas". Although evidence from other anti-privatisation campaigns elsewhere in the country had already begun to indicate the existence of some form of nation wide privatisation blue print, the notion that it might have had a European antecedent has only recently surfaced. In the same way we are working toward a strategy from the bottom up, working toward a theory from practice, the practice of the privateers is it appears being guided by a theory drawn up at a pan European level. The main focus of

this theory is, needless to say, how best the lower orders can be manipulated, brow beaten, and coerced into abandoning both "good areas", and effectively their rights as citizens.

Consequently the "social cleansing" currently being attempted in inner London is very much on the agenda in Berlin and inner Amsterdam as well.

The rationale for the policy of displacement being practiced in Germany and Holland with such gusto is, when articulated, helpfully blunt. For example in outlining the need for greater living space for 'middle Holland' a member of the liberal VVD party, quoted in the Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool* on January 26 this year, explained his proposal as follows: "Every year 40,000 people are forced to leave Amsterdam because there are so few attractive houses available. Usually they are replaced in each neighbourhood by people with low incomes". "What is needed he insisted was "a more balanced population structure". Toward this objective the council should "take the initiative in developing PRIVATE [our emphasis] housing in the neighbourhoods and sectors with the highest concentration of low incomes." In turn as he explained only "the councils AROUND the city should build more social housing." And ultimately in his opinion in order "to create better opportunities for people with low incomes... it is necessary to reduce the percentage of low-income people."

No acknowledgement of the need to 'reduce the numbers on low incomes' through progressive taxation you notice. No, our Dutch friend simply wants them to be physically removed from areas of Amsterdam coveted by his middle income constituents. 40,000 year on year would be a start. Middle Holland like middle England is set on re-conquering the inner city for itself. To emphasise the point he stresses that only councils around, meaning OUTSIDE, the city should build the social housing he claims "works as a magnet" for the dispossessed. It requires little imagination to envisage what, considering the primary motivation, is in store following this 'dispersal' to the city outskirts.

It is on the face of it hard to imagine anyone on the Left taking a position other than full blooded support for the working class tenants. But then politics is a confusing business, and more often than not, it is the so-called Left that does most of the confusing.

In the fog of class war, what is therefore more than a little useful, what can greatly clarify things for the activists on the ground, is access to any viewpoint, sympathetic (or other wise) other than their own. In this field of struggle as in any other, a journalistic, academic, or as mentioned even historic perspective, can be critical to fully understanding the bigger picture. Possibly even better, if only in a neighbouring borough, is the opportunity to study an account of a concurrent struggle fought over similar terrain by similar people, involving a recognisable enemy. An advantage all the richer, if as here, the lessons can be drawn from the state of play on working class estates in another country.

Wir Bleiben Alle: We're All Staying drawn up in 1998 by activists in east Berlin is a case study which allows the rival strategies to be judged on a broader canvass.

It is to begin with it a familiar tale of the "running down the conditions of the blocks, a climate of uncertainty and psychological pressure to move, sometimes 'premiums' to convince residents to leave, hired thugs demolishing the flats around [the remaining] tenants, in some cases even physical attacks, fire bombings and sabotaging gas pipes in order to compel the original residents to leave". It is also a tale of the "the co-opting and formalising of local protest" and last but not least the complimentary intervention "of an ignorant and arrogant Berlin Left". The area concerned Prenzlauer Berg, (or as it has been retitled by colonisers 'Prenseberg') is

Though the involvement of the Berlin Left was belated, having previously "either ignored or demonised" the struggle against expulsions it was nonetheless the final nail in the resistance coffin

subject to a media hype that will be familiar to anybody involved on the ground, in Islington in particular. Prenzlauer Berg is trendy, it's "in". "Almost all of the national papers - and even the *New York Village Voice* - have published reports about the area."

Initially the 'social cleansing operation' began in 1992, when the government ordered 200% rise in rents in east Berlin in order, it said, to achieve 'parity' with rents in the more prosperous west Berlin. This led to a wave of protests, sometimes up to 20,000 strong, and the setting up of the Weir Bliebin Alle (WBA) alliance. However six years on there would be nothing of this 'fighting spirit left'. As proof of their total victory rent rises of 30% were introduced two years ago. So what happened in Prenzlauer Berg is a salutary lesson and worth studying in some detail.

There was to begin with, the all too visible by-products of gentrification to be confronted. "While one yuppie shop after another opened up all the shops used by the working class residents were forced to close because they couldn't afford the rising rents. The pensioners rooms, Post office, fruit and veg, and the local children's library were all replaced with restaurants,



The typeface on the placards is not the only thing that's familiar as the Left fulfill much the same anti-working class role all over Europe.

cafes and health food/delicatessens."

With the destruction of the traditional shops went as well the prospect "of payment on account or credit" but also the "places where people could meet". Quite quickly the 'hardware' of the local 'network' was emasculated. Not only did the posh shops "act as a magnet" for the wealthy outside the area, but as living proof of the "shift in population", the now undeniable evidence of a "yuppie infrastructure" helped make Prenzlauer Berg still more attractive to the more timid "pioneer".

Initially this proliferation of new cafe/bars led to working class demands that due to noise and disturbance "serving booze in the open air after 10 pm be banned". The response from "the media", but also instructively "from leftists" to the problems working class residents and their families who had to get up early, was immediately caricatured as "philistinism".

Along side the extensive propaganda offensive, the co-opting of the WBA into consultative committees proved even more devastating to community resistance. From a position of demanding "everyone staying" co-option meant everything being immediately limited to the "do-able" - within the "project". Within the limits of the project meant the localisation of protest, and over night the political scope of activists was restricted to 'putting pressure on the regeneration authorities to act against SPECIFIC [eg the most crass] speculators, saving old chestnut trees from demolition squads" and such like. 'One problem at a time' was the project mantra. Coupled to 'non statutory rent guarantees after modernisation' purely for the "function of pacification", the co-option/consultative strategem also served to "depoliticise conflict over the future of the borough". It led in addition to a tendency among activists to becoming "anti-specu-

continued on page 9

Community Resistance

GLASGOW The Gorbals clashing with the SWP

AFTER news of Glasgow City Council's plans to make the Gorbals area the latest inner-city working class area to be the subject of 'stock transfer' (ie privatisation) and possible demolition was leaked, *The Local News* reported that "a Gorbals Independent Working Class Association has been created as a result of the revelations". A local activist sent the following report: "The Gorbals IWCA distributed over 2,000 leaflets in one evening, leading to the Chairman of Gorbals Against Sell-off (GAS), who had already attempted to get residents groups to campaign against the proposed sale, making contact. The IWCA was invited to their next meeting in order to coordinate work as a united group.

The IWCA also leafleted an open day called by the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP). This proved useful as it meant we had the opportunity to talk to a number of people who had received our leaflet previously. During the day we were approached by SNP representative, Jim Byrne, asking who, why and what the IWCA was. Questions were also asked by the local Labour MSP and councillor. Interestingly the SIP open day put on display the divisions placed on each group within the hall and the voting for community services on an either/or basis, with the day shortened by two and a half hours, but still including a one hour lunch break.

The IWCA attended the next GAS meeting, chaired by Owen Meharry (GAS) and Sean Clerkin representing Glasgow Campaign Against Housing Stock Transfer (GCAHST). The meeting was highly charged with IWCA representatives regularly clashing with members of the SWP, especially as we argued against a small committee and for the meetings to remain fully open, reluctantly, the SWP agreed for names to be taken.

The SWP-influenced GCAHST also gave incorrect details to members of the IWCA for a conference on the sell-offs called by the *Big Issue*. This was their first deliberate attempt to prevent the IWCA getting into positions of usefulness.

Subsequent GCAHST meetings have seen the SWP becoming ever more strident in pushing their own programme, their usual mix of lobbying parliament, inviting trade union speakers and leafletting for their May Day rallies.

The IWCA, as well as attending these meetings and challenging the SWP, have also held a meeting with contacts, widening our area of influence and information (who ran residents

groups, who opposed sell-offs, etc) and drawing-up proposals to occupy areas listed for demolition. As a footnote, it is worth mentioning that our leafletters were harassed by the police, who claimed that they had received a complaint that we had been selling drugs! Clearly our arrival on the political scene in the Gorbals has not gone unnoticed".

GREENOCK Gibshill

"This is ethnic cleansing"

COUNCIL TENANTS in Gibshill are outraged by the news that their homes, which give a "breathtaking view of the Clyde", are to be demolished and replaced with a private development. The scheme had been put together by the Government agency, Scottish Homes, as a joint venture with the council and the Cloch Housing Association.

The council's director of housing, Tom Keenan, has denied the allegations stating that, "there is no policy to force people out of Gibshill". "However" he admitted, "a number of people have already chosen to leave the area and potentially other people will be offered the opportunity to leave". A council insider, quoted in the *Daily Record* (30.3.00), was more forthright, "If some really attractive housing starts to pop up, then who knows what sort of people might want to move in? Remember, it's only 20 minutes up the motorway to Glasgow".

Andy Best, Chairman of the Gibshill Housing Action Group, said: "Someone somewhere obviously wants to see a lot of barren land in Gibshill which will be attractive to the big private builders. People will be systematically moved out of the place we love and were brought up in because our faces don't fit in with the grand plan. This is ethnic cleansing".

S. LONDON Southwark

concrete plans or sterile slogans

SOUTHWARK tenants have mobilised to put a temporary halt to the Council's plans to sell off all of it's remaining housing stock (at 60,000 homes it is the highest in London) to Housing Associations. Around twenty tenants attended a lively meeting in February to discuss ways the plans could be opposed. It was agreed that all Southwark tenants needed to have the implications of transfer explained and, as a result, several large estates have already been targeted by leaflets and canvassers opposed to the sell-offs.

The Council's Strategic Committee met to discuss the plans in March and were met by an angry lobby of tenants. The Labour council is already vulnerable, with the Lib-Dems, who already control most of the northern part of the borough, breathing down their necks. Following the Committee meeting, the Lib-Dem press release proclaimed that their opposition had been responsible for the "victory", whereby a decision was put off until the next full council meeting. However, the Lib-

Now

We must be brutally frank and state that you could probably count on two hands all the housing estates in Britain where the Left has any kind of base. Therefore if comrades want to start picking and choosing where they feel 'safe' enough to stand we might as well all bugger off and retire into private life.

Sooner or later someone, at some time, is going to have to show a lead in beginning the work of re-implanting working class ideas in local politics - why not NWSA (North West Socialist Alliance) in 2000?

Phil Watson, *Weekly Worker*, 24.2.00

& Then

In Britain today no 'revolutionary group' has a visible base in any working class community. There are no 'red areas'; pockets of radicalism that do exist are based on racial rather than class lines. The white and black working class youth have no allegiance to any party or ideology. The Labour Party offers no guidance or leadership, either locally or nationally and people are left to fend for themselves. They have turned their back on the class at local and national level, destroying a large part of its social base in the process, and more importantly this retreat has left a political vacuum, leaving large sections of the working class frustrated, impotent, alienated from the process of parliamentary democracy but ignorant of their own history. This alienation is not in itself something to cry over, it is not a bad thing, but if this void is not filled, or partially filled, by the revolutionary left, it will inevitably be exploited by the far-right.

'Where you sow you reap',
The Making of Red Action 1988

Dems only want "all" the options to be put to Southwark tenants.

While some good work has gone on, the 'Defend Council Housing in Southwark' campaign is still largely dominated by the SWP. Their influence creates the danger that the campaign will become another vehicle for sterile and irrelevant sloganeering. Already the East Dulwich Estate TA (controlled by the SWP) has produced a leaflet condemning New Labour for having "forgotten that working people fought to get the right to council housing... They would rather spend the money on bombing Serbia and Iraq". Furthermore, the campaign is now asking all supporters to travel on their coach to Birmingham on 1st April to demonstrate to save Rover! Tenants and activists will need to come up with far more concrete plans if we really hope to worry the Council over the strength of opposition.

DIRTY BUSINESS

continued from page 7

lators fire-fighters, running around from action to action" without even pausing to develop "a generalised critique of the praxis of regeneration." This was of course precisely what was intended. The model of 'consultative regeneration' followed here to the letter, had some years earlier, after a similar 'experiment', been exposed by Berlin academic Karl Homouth. It was a strategem, which he explained consciously "incorporates the potential for protest into its structure, vis a vis co-option. It brings groups previously not participating into the consensus model for urban restructuring. "In this way it was able to transform" heterogeneous demands, interests and needs of 'interest groups' into manageable problems and actions". Put another way it encouraged opponents to see the world through the eyes of their erstwhile opponents; their problems became your problems and you helped them solve them. When eventually the contradictions cannot be papered over, when the penny drops, the former activists retreat, demoralised and burnt out. Round one to the colonisers.

'Burnt-out' is also a by word on the Left, and the processing method there is not too dissimilar. Though in Prenzlauer Berg, the involvement of the Radical Left was belated, having previously "either ignored or demonised" the struggle against expulsions it was nonetheless the final nail in the resistance coffin. Having lost the propaganda war, been seduced through co-option, this ideological battering from ostensibly the opposite end of the political spectrum was decisive. The attack from the Left came from two points simultaneously: "first" the residents were told, "the initiatives were 'reformist' ("we want more than low rents don't we?"). Secondly, the warning/allegation, constantly repeated, that "false neighbourhood identities were being established" which meant "that to defend the imaginary homogeneous neighbourhood, it would be necessary to attack marginalised members". Not long after the WBA was itself caricatured as representative of "a closed white community, which opposes immigrants, as NIMBYs, as a territorialist against... every sort

In the fog of class war, what is there-fore more than a little useful; what can greatly clarify things for the activists on the ground, is access to any viewpoint, sympathetic (or otherwise) other than their own

depicting their critics as 'crass Stalinists', they were, without a trace of irony, accused of being 'pro-state', and of 'making radical politics impossible in the area'. With the resistance movement against social cleansing in tatters, the Radical Left returned to the sanctuary of the entirely 'false identity' of their own neighbourhoods. Mission accomplished? Well, it's certainly hard to regard their intervention in

of cultural social and political 'other'. Amidst the suddenly endless discussions, a leaflet from the autonomen scene headlined "Against a left Nationalist position of the 'poor German tenants'", so successfully pigeonholed the neighbourhood initiatives as "nationalist v internationalist", it was thereafter "repeated dozens of times". Completely taken aback by the visceral nature of the condemnation, the WBA spent 'valuable weeks' discussing how to repair its image with the Berlin Left. When eventually it counter-attacked, correctly

anything but the most cynical terms. At best it is the type of 'we know best' self-opinionated, self regarding nonsense, that as Engels once observed caused the 'working class to feel only disgust at learning even the best things from them'. At worst it is a semi-conscious expression of middle class nationalism; a determination to monopolise debate; a striving to represent both sides of the argument, from an instinctive understanding that any vestige of working class self-organisation is not to be trusted; is in effect a challenge to, as they see it, those best suited to political discourse. As the WBA activists themselves put it: "When the criticism against the nationalist perspective of the neighbourhood movements, though impossible to sustain, is nonetheless so stubbornly held, the basis for the critique should be looked for in the homes of their critics rather than their targets."

In applying the lessons of Prenzlauer Berg domestically there are obvious conclusions:

1. The propaganda arm of the social cleansing operation which conditions locals to accept the inevitable must be countered right from the outset.
2. Co-option, and any inter-relationship at the behest of the colonisers is designed to ensnare, and must be approached, if at all, with appropriate caution.
3. There must be a generalised critique of what they are doing in order to understand what we are doing: we too must develop a 'praxis' a unity between theory and practice.
4. To avoid localisation and de-politicisation the campaign must of course be fought issue by issue, and estate by estate, while never forgetting for a moment that ultimately both our politics and theirs will be tested in the electoral arena. (There is no point in protesting about pro-privatisation parties if the intention is not to replace them.)
5. As the radical wing of middle class nationalism the left will often function as 'fifth columnists' within working class ranks. A term 'fifth columnist' appears harsh, only when individuals are judged by motivation alone; by what they think they are doing rather than by the entirely negative political impact of their efforts.

No doubt when in 1981 the 'squadists' were expunged for inadvertently exposing what was in effect a Stalinist mindset within the Trotskyist psyche, the soubriquets 'racist, homophobic, misogynist' were attached with the intention of greasing their exit. The leadership were clearly aware that any awkward questions would be best avoided by tapping into, and confirming, the innate snobbery within its own membership. A membership who in turn fully appreciated that deep down, unless constantly tutored and supervised by their social betters 'this is what THEY were all really like'.

Far better in the circumstances any unpleasantness be avoided by denying a pointless debate, and instead with as little fuss as possible, concretely remove the politically unassimilable from within 'the party'. Today when the gentrifiers make the argument for deporting the culturally unassimilable from the community, they are in merely taking a leaf from the Lefty hand-book on conflict resolution.

On a broader scale this praxis of 'social deportation' is widespread within the European Left. Hence the concern, now openly being expressed within the Socialist Alliance, that it should only stand in 'safe areas'. That its politics might not 'translate' across the class divide. That their policies on anti-racism for instance might in some cases even inflame 'xenophobia within sections of the working class' and so on. What the hand wringing vividly illustrates is that while out of expediency the socialist Left can, practically overnight, erase its own sectarianism in the form of an 'alliance', the 'world vision', so jealously constructed by them, is as a result exclusive to them too. Or put another way, the 'immediate interests' of working class communities, and the political priorities of a middle class Left, are as unbridgeable here as they were in Prenzlauer Berg - and the Left after years of denial know it. In truth to be presented with the opportunity to begin at the point where recriminations in Prenzlauer Berg ENDED, would register a step forward, in the vast majority of cases where such fraternisation exists.

Meanwhile as the various 'pilot schemes' continue to prove, when as a matter of routine all contradictions no matter how intractable or ticklish are addressed from a working class perspective; when 'working class self-emancipation' is taken literally the accord between the micro and the macro becomes free and easy.

And so while politics remains a fabulously dirty business, and an immensely difficult business, it is for those of us involved in the IWCA at least, happily no longer an entirely confusing business.

LESS RACE, PLEASE

Leading intellectual Michael Ignatieff, explains the dangers and pitfalls in constantly responding to the interests of a 'mythical' black community, and why ultimately class counts

For days no one could talk of anything else. The papers were full of editorials saying "Never Again." The Lawrence inquiry was, we were told, a turning point in attitudes towards race in Britain. What is most dismaying, looking back on Lawrence, is that it became a story about just one thing - race. But the central issue was not race, it was justice.

Why were we talking about institutionalised racism, when the issue was institutionalised incompetence? Why were we talking about "race awareness," when the issue was equal justice before the law?

Everyone talked as if the Lawrence family and a larger fiction called "the black community" had been "let down". The "black community" is no more of a reality than the "white community". To suppose this is to believe that skin trumps all other identities, that we are only our surfaces. In reality the Lawrence family were denied justice, and because they were denied justice, all of us have good reason to feel anger and shame that we cared so little about institutions which operate in our name.

Looking forward, justice is what is needed, not race awareness training. Blacks and whites surely want to live in a society less aware of race, not more. What conceivable good is served by Macpherson's definition of a "racist" incident? He says it is "any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person". If racism is in the eye of the beholder, we will never be finished with it. The Macpherson definition will "racialise" every encounter between the police and non-white public to the benefit of neither, while the white public, often badly treated by the police too, will feel that they have no recourse for the indignities they suffer - and will resent the perceived "positive discrimination" towards non-whites.

Macpherson will "racialise" every encounter between the police and non-white public to the benefit of neither, while the white public, often badly treated by the police too, will feel that they have no recourse for the indignities they suffer

Do we seriously suppose that only black people face injustice at the hand of the police? Are we so naive as to forget that class can count just as much as race in denying people equal protection? Again, there is no way around the simple injunction: all persons, whether rich or poor, black or white, are entitled to the full protection of the law.

I see no useful purpose in trying to change the class or racial attitudes of ordinary policemen. I see every reason to insist, on pain of dismissal, that they understand the meaning of justice. A police recruit needs to understand that the morality of law enforcement turns on the idea of citizenship, not on the idea of group identity. This isn't complicated. It doesn't require advanced sophistication, compassion or understanding, merely the simple awareness that the

purpose of the police is to provide equal protection under the law.

To the degree that the police treat people as individuals, their personal opinions about the religion, dietary habits or sexual orientation of the citizens they deal with are strictly irrelevant. They will rightly object to attempts to change their personal opinions. In reality, all they need to change is their behaviour on the beat.

Training the police is a matter of teaching them to treat individuals as individuals, and not as genders, races or classes. The point is to make them less "sensitive," less aware of difference, and more aware of one single identity: that the people they police are their equals, with rights and recourse.

Are we so balkanised into our racial and other group identities that we cannot see this? After Lawrence commentators talked about their shame, as if it was appropriate for white people to feel shame at what was done to a member of the black community. The shame is for what happened to a fellow citizen, at the hands of a police force supposed to be accountable to us all.

We need a dose of liberal realism. Borrowing from Isaiah Berlin, let us distinguish between positive and negative tolerance.

Negative tolerance is the minimum we require in a liberal society. It means protecting minorities from abuse and attack, it means equal treatment by public agencies, level playing fields for employment and so on. But we do not need to love each other, reach out to each other, or even particularly value our different cultures. A minority will practice such positive tolerance and, as time passes, that minority might become a majority. But for now most of us do not live together. We live in the same neighbourhoods, watch the same television programmes and visit the same shops, but the various class and ethnic groups often inhabit unfathomably different universes.

What is desperately needed, and still a generation away, is a happy indifference towards those collective identities and a genuine conviction that the differences that matter most are those between individuals. We do not need to police each other's thoughts and attitudes towards our differences. We simply need to master violence, to punish the kind of attack that occurred at that bus stop in south London, with all the determination we can muster. And insist - before another courageous mother has to remind us - that justice is indivisible.

If racism is in the eye of the beholder - as the Lawrence inquiry proposed - we will never be finished with it

This article by leading liberal and author, Michael Ignatieff, first appeared in the April 1999 issue of Prospect magazine.

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A Word In Your Ear...



MANDY PLAYS HARD BALL

UNDERSTANDABLY given the unique stance adopted by Red Action at the outset of the initial cease-fire in 1994, there was much head scratching at an editorial level, (as no doubt there was in Army Council circles) in an effort to figure out what precisely Mandelson thought he was doing when he unilaterally undermined the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) apparently on a whim? Was he authentically Machiavellian, or simply off his chump? Was it an arbitrary decision or part of some wider Brit cunning? Was he his own man, or a somewhat exotic creature of the securocracy? Dangerously shrewd or dangerously simple?

As a career move playing 'hard ball' with the IRA is hardly to be recommended. So on what basis did he, Peter Mandelson,

even imagine he would get them to cry uncle? These are after all the same men who tried to blow up the British Cabinet and assassinate the Prime Minister, not once, but twice since Labour had last been in office. Sinn Fein chief negotiator Martin McGuinness was himself, it is reputed, (have to be careful of the libel laws here: see *LM*, Ed) to have even been IRA Chief of Staff when the Grand Hotel extravaganza was sanctioned in 1984. "Rising up through the ranks of the IRA in the face of the military onslaught of the British State is" as the author Kevin Toolis observed "a wholly different political contest from charming a few old trade unionists at your selection committee." Charming is of course how Mandelson likes to think of himself, but he will have few genuine admirers within the trade unions. Trade unions are anathema to a man who once famously asked for 'glacoumola' (sorry, not entirely sure what it is actually) instead of mushy peas, in some chippy up north.

In point of fact Mandy built his C.V. through opposing union influence within the Labour Party. Is it even faintly realistic, given his apparent success then, it could have formed the basis for his strategem to



outflank the Republican Movement now? To think so would of course imply an almost incredible shallowness on his part would it not? Shallow or not, steadiness under fire so to speak is not in any case a characteristic. Shortly after arriving in 'the Province' he was confronted by a baying Loyalist mob, who made among other things their tacit endorsement of 'The Save Ulster from Sodomy' campaign fairly plain. "Mandelson looked absolutely terrified" commented one reporter. On another occasion, when braving a picket from the other end of the political spectrum, and though this time not even baying, caused nonetheless further

quivers in the upper lip. Even when safely inside the hall, Mandy still 'fidgeted nervously' as an unseemly scrum developed at the door between those who *Republican News* referred to neutrally as 'RUC mutton heads' and four SF councillors seemingly intent on gate-crashing.

What follows is a verbatim account of events inside: "Who are those people" Mandy asked. "Sinn Fein councillors who want to come in," he was told. "Why?" Mandy asked. Because they're local reps and they've been invited. Mandy, decidedly not at home with this, asked: "Are they going to be rowdy? Do they want to protest?" Perhaps I'll ask them offered a local community figure. "Do you trust them?" Mandy asked apprehensively. All right so maybe he's not exactly officer material, you wouldn't want him at Roarkes Drift, or rush to put a fiver on him in a 'straightener' with Gerry Kelly say, but none of that in itself proves him intellectually vacuous. Or does it? On February 20 *The Sunday Telegraph*, arch opponent of the GFA, but just as confused by the turn in events as the rest of us, opted for a little detective work on the man behind the 'Prince of Darkness' legend. Oddly, Mandy is rarely quoted. But any suspicions that his understanding of the subtleties might have been fatally 'overrated' were batted away by 'friends'. Explaining a particularly undiplomatic row with SF negotiators, who publicly accused Mandelson of having come over all colonial, of being 'arrogant and patronising', the friend remarked: 'he [Mandy] **KNEW** they would do something like that', stressing that "anyone versed in Labour politics can see miles ahead, and take it in his stride."

Returning to the damning analogy a little later he offered: "This whole crisis has been littered by crises followed by successes, the idea of three steps forward two steps back is not that different to modernising Labour during the last 15 years." 'Not that different!' Too jaw-droppingly unbelievable maybe. But then as Sherlock Homes oft repeated: "when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." And however improbable it might still appear, if Mandy, in addition to being all round a bit of a big girls blouse, is also just short of being 'dolly dimple' strategically, the wider implications for the party he helped shape in his own image speak eloquently for themselves. Who after all would take seriously the advice of someone, who, as must now be suspected actually coined the nickname 'Prince of Darkness' - for himself!

Something We Said??

New Labour represents a set of politics that says the best thing that can be done for the lower orders is to give them a good slapping. Get them to shape up. Get them to be like us, stop drinking and eat Italian food! We live in an age where racial hatred is persona non grata, so is hatred of women and hatred of gays, but the one thing that's flourishing is class hatred."

Nick Cohen, *Observer* columnist and author. *Black Flag* issue 218.

In the past they'd look to the Left, where do they go now? So we're faced with two possible and equally depressing scenarios. 1) we become like America, with a massive underclass, which is politically passive and you lock up huge amounts of people or 2) we become like parts of Europe with a quasi FN on the rise.

Nick Cohen, same *Black Flag* interview.

You know there are two racisms. There is the racism that discriminates and the racism that kills. Middle-class black people, they have the CRE's community relations councils, pundits, the whole bloody works, there's an infrastructure for them. But the racism that kills - the Stephen Lawrences, Ricky Reels, Michael Mensons - they don't have anyone. Veteran anti-racist campaigner - A. Sivanandan. *The Guardian*, 4.99.

We are now in an odd situation. For the first time in a hundred years the working class can no longer be said to have its own political party.

Linda Grant, *The Guardian*, 2.2.00.

The need for greater diversity - the rallying cry of my university years - is now not only accepted by the culture industries, is the mantra of global capital.

Naomi Klein, author of the Book *No Logo*. *The Observer*, 23.1.00.

We need to show by example and not just by polemics that if you really want to fight the State, the police, the fascists, then the best place to be is with the communists, because we are the ones that really mean business. Red Action and AFA actually did this to a limited extent, and it was effective particularly within the field of the struggle with the BNP. The combination of Leninist discipline and organisation with the street presence of AFA would be dynamite.

Socialist Labour Party, internet site: Youth list.