

Red Action

ISSUE NO.16

February
March

TEN MONTHS ON AND

STILL FIGHTING

Anyone that paid a lot of attention to the newspapers and telly lately could be forgiven for believing that the miners strike were just about finished. All the talk about the splits in the NUM, and the "surge back to work" seems to have totally ignored the fact that there are still more than twice as many miners on strike than there are working. In fact when you consider the hardships that have been suffered by the miners and their families, what is surprising is not the fact that some have gone back,

but the fact that the numbers have been so few. Imagine if when the strike had started last March, someone had told you that there would still be over 100,000 out after next Christmas, would you have believed it.

The vast majority of miners remain solid to the strike. However, it would be foolish to try and deny that most of them, and their supporters would have hoped that a strike of this length would have seen them in a stronger position than they seem to be at this time. There have as yet been no power cuts, and industry appears to be relatively unaffected. Why after all this time, has the effects not been greater.

SCABS

The most obvious answer is the 40,000 or so miner's who never went on strike at all. There is no doubt that if the strike had been solid from the start, it would have been impossible for the Government to maintain the economy and industry in the way that it has. These people bear a heavy responsibility for the suffering of those still on strike today. They are scabs and always will be.

Also heavily to blame, are those that could have helped the miners and haven't. The lorry drivers that have moved coal, the steel workers that refused to support them, the

small but significant number of train drivers who have not followed the example of those drivers that have refused to drive coal trains.

But by far the biggest factor in the government's ability to weather this strike so far, is the long and detailed preparations that they made for it, and their willingness to pay any price and go to any length to win it.

The Tories have been preparing for this strike for the last ten years, ever since the last miner's strike brought down the last Tory government. One of the first measures they brought in on being elected was to implement a system of productivity deals in the pits. This allowed miners to earn higher wages, but also—and this was the real thinking behind it—allowed for the build up of a massive stockpile of surplus coal.

STOCKPILE

Having secured this stockpile which would be necessary for them in event of any strike, they began to think about trying to implement their plans to run the coal industry and in doing so, seriously weaken



If more workers had realised this, the miners would be stronger today.

the strength of their most hated and feared enemy. The National Union of Mineworkers.

They made their first move in 1981, when the suddenly announced a plan for pit closures similar to the one that provoked this strike. On that occasion however, in the face of instant and rapidly spreading action in the pits, they lost their nerve and withdrew the plan after a few days.

Last March they tried again, and this time encouraged no doubt by the actions of the Nottinghamshire scabs they held their nerve, and have so far continued to do so.

The question that we are left asking then of course, is can they continue to just sit it out for as long as they please. Quite simply

Can the miners win

In spite of all that we have said the answer to this is YES THEY CAN. Even though the government have managed to sit it out so far they cannot do it for ever. The cost of the strike has already been astronomical and there is no way that the economy could sustain it permanently.

PRICE

Even with the amount of coal being produced by the scabs, and the conversion of so many power stations to the far more expensive process of burning oil, the government is now being forced to import three times as much coal as it was in November. The NUM have been trying to get help in stopping these imports, from European trade unionists and it appears that they

are starting to have some success. Since a meeting with Dutch trade unionists very few coal shipments have come from Rotterdam.

Secret reports that have been leaked to the Guardian newspaper show that some power stations have been far nearer to power cuts than the government has dared to admit, with stocks practically run out.

SUPPORT

We cannot say that the miners are within sight of victory but neither are they defeated. If they can stick it out long enough, they can win this strike. Whether they can stick it out that long, after all that they have been through, remains to be seen.

There is no doubt that if they were able to count upon the level of moral or financial support that they should be able to, then they would stay out for ever.

There is only one way that the miners can fail to win this strike, and that is if they are forced back through poverty. If this should happen, it is not they that are to blame, it is the rest of the working class who have not supported them in sufficient enough numbers.

ACTION

As poverty bites harder into the mining communities, it is vital that all of us re-double our efforts to raise the money that will enable them to see it through to victory. We know that we can count on them to do their bit.

Let's make sure that they can count on us to do ours.

Bloody Sunday

On Sunday the 30th January, 1972, the people of Derry City in the north of Ireland gathered in the Bogside area to march through their city. The march had been called to protest against the governments use of internment, i.e., imprisoning people without charge or trial. It was made up from a normal cross section of the community, young and old, men and women and children.

Watching the march as it moved off was the 1st battalion of the parachute regiment. This was a crack British unit that had not previously been deployed in this area. They had been specially brought in.

no firing whatsoever before the troops opened fire.

The truest words spoken by any official about were spoken by the Derry City coroner. He described it as "sheer unadulterated murder".

The crime of Bloody Sunday 1972 was no isolated or accidental incident. Throughout the long history of Britains occupation of Ireland, soldiers from this country have invaded that land to torture and shoot it's people. As long as they do so, the people of Ireland will resist this invasion by the only means open to them. The armed struggle of the IRA/INLA.

FIRING

As the march left the Bogside area suddenly and without warning the troops opened fire on the milling crowd. Young and old fled in panic and terror as the troops charged across the open ground firing rapidly. At the end of it all 13 men lay dead on the ground. One of the many injured was to die soon afterwards. Some of them were teenagers, some were middle aged, nearly all of them had been shot in the back as they tried to get away. All were unarmed.

The British at first tried to claim that they had only fired a handful of shots. This was soon shown to be a lie by the microphones of the newsreel cameras which clearly recorded consistent and rapid fire over the course of many minutes.

MURDER

They then tried to claim that they only fired in response to being fired on first. Every independent witness there—foreign cameramen, journalists etc—claimed that they had heard

VICTIMS

An epilogue to Bloody Sunday was written seven years later when 18 soldiers of the same regiment were killed in an IRA explosion at Warrenpoint, so joining the thousands of other victims of the war between the Irish people and the British government that cares as little about the fate of it's own troops, as it does about the Irish.

How many victims do there have to be, before the British people can understand that there is only one way to stop it.

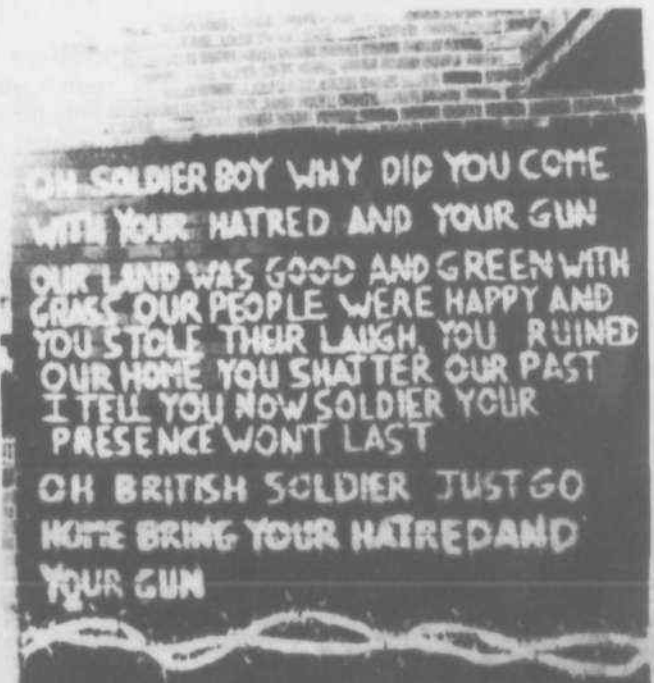
BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND



The Tories hate and fear the NUM, and will go to almost any length to defeat them.

Inside this issue: **ONE MAN'S WORD**

A special feature on the Show Trials in Ireland



ONE MAN'S WORD

A special feature on the Show Trials in Ireland

You are asleep, a lorry screeches to a halt outside, there is a crash of glass and a splinter of wood, heavy boots on the stairs, the door flies open, there are armed men in the room. They drag you down the stairs and into the back of the lorry. You are interrogated, you protest your innocence, you are put in prison. There you meet others who tell of similar experiences. After two years you are brought to trial. You have been accused of murder, conspiracy to murder and causing explosions. Your accuser, who you do not recognise, stands with his back to you and addresses the judge, (sometimes you cannot hear what he is saying), there is no jury. You have alibis, your accuser constantly contradicts himself, you sometimes feel hopeful. You are found guilty and sentenced to 20 years, the cell door slams, your life is effectively over. Are you the victim of a South America junta or some Orwellian nightmare, no just the victim of the supergrass system operated in the North East of Ireland.

The supergrass system has been applied in the North of Ireland since 1981. There have been 25 paid perjurers of which 14 have retracted. A total of 143 have been convicted and 163 others are facing charges. Bail is rarely given and one man has been on remand for over 3 years awaiting trial. The sole arbiter or justice is the judge as there are no juries. Rarely is any other evidence presented, save for the testimony of the alleged accomplice, many admitted paid informers. The number of people charged on the testimony of the sole paid informer has reached as many as 38 in one trial. As the Crown presents no other evidence the chance of conviction relies almost entirely on the creditability of the witness.

THE GILMOUR TRIAL

The most recent case was that of Raymond Gilmour. Gilmour had been a police informer since 1978 when he was given a suspended sentence for armed robbery. Since then he had been receiving regular payments of between £10 and £70 per week from the Special Branch until August 1982, when he was offered a new life and identity in England.

An early indication for the prosecution that things were not going to run exactly smoothly was when Gilmour entered the witness box at Belfast Crown Court. The first question he was asked was about his date of birth. He got it wrong. Those in the dock collapsed in laughter. At another point the defendants were again convulsed in laughter when he stated he quite fancied becoming a policeman when it was all over. The trial lasted almost 3 months, and resulted in the acquittal of all 35 Nationalist defendants with 24 being released and 9 held on the word of another informer. The judge concluded that the Gilmour evidence was "entirely unworthy of belief" and that basically summed up the quality of the Crown witness.

The Government and Unionist reaction to the collapse of this trial, was best summed up by Enoch Powell, who claimed it was the exception that proved the rule and that this acquittal proved both the integrity of the judges and the

legitimacy of the supergrass system. This might be an acceptable argument if the farce that was the Gilmour trial was unique, it is not.

THE KEVIN McGRADY TRIAL

The McGrady trial and its verdict was perhaps the most bizarre of all. McGrady suffered from acute religious delusions and was an absolute shambles as a witness. One of the most striking things about McGrady's evidence was when it could be tested against forensic evidence it was shown that he was lying. A defendant was charged with IRA activities when he was shown to have been in prison at the time, so instead McGrady substituted his brother and he was charged instead. The judge, summing up, said that McGrady's evidence was "contradictory, bizarre, and in some respects incredible." Yet convictions were still secured.

THE CHIEF CROWN WITNESS, JOHN GRIMLEY

He had 40 previous convictions including thefts, obtaining property by deceit, some sexual offences, assaults, perjury, possession of weapons, and even attempted murder. He was also a paid police informer. 21 people from the Nationalist community were charged on his sole evidence in 1983.

He admitted in court that he was an "exhibitionist, consistently lying, having spent 6 months in a psychiatric hospital, and being given to irrational behaviour and manipulating people to get himself out of unpleasant situations". The trial collapsed, nevertheless convictions were still obtained on the basis of "statements" made previously, with sentences from between 4 and ten years.

The John Morgan supergrass trial, who had implicated 7 Nationalists, only collapsed when Morgan admitted that he had shot dead his brother-in-law in England while he slept.

THE BLACK TRIAL

Christopher Black, on whose word 38 people from the Nationalist community were charged with various offences, was no less bizarre. A defendant was accused by Black of attending an IRA training camp in Donegal. He produced a number of witnesses to show he was somewhere else on the date stated. Black changed the dates. The defendant produced more alibi witnesses and Black changed the dates again. In the end the defendant produced more than 40 alibi witnesses. The judge solved the problem, by saying Black must have made a mistake and it must have been a bit later, a period not covered by the defendants alibis. He was convicted. Another defendant who was first mentioned by Black some 8 months after he first turned supergrass was charged with conspiracy to murder members of the British forces (with a bomb

that was never planted). He was convicted and got 15 years. In all 35 people were convicted on Black's evidence.

Joseph Bennett, UVF commander, Sandy Row, Belfast. "I knew I was in real danger of going down on a murder charge. I would be away for life. I was shocked. For me, I was inside for life or sentence of death outside. There was a strong incentive to co-operate. At the end of the day my usefulness to the police would be measured by the number of men I put away". 15 men were jailed on his evidence. (The verdict was overturned in November 1984. 14 were released).

THE JUDGES

(1) SIR ROBERT LOWRY. Presided over the McGrady trial. Lord Chief Justice, son of a Unionist MP, former Brit Major. In 1982 he acquitted an RUC detective of murder and armed robbery because the "corroborative evidence was weak and insufficient".

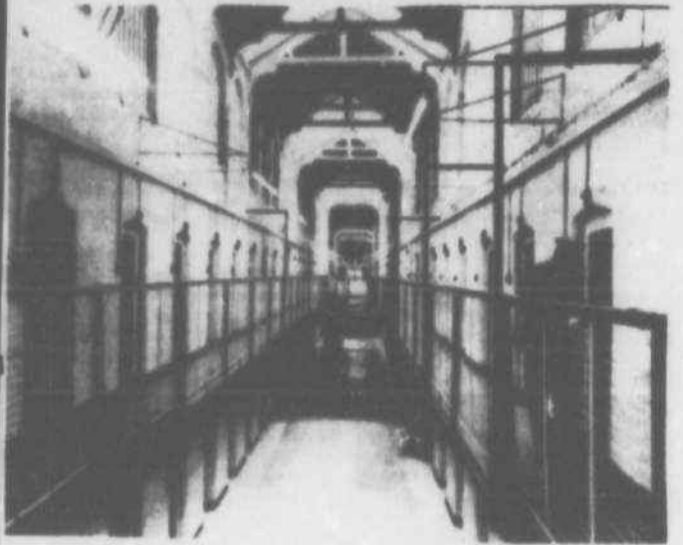
(2) BASIL KELLY— The Black trial. Unionist MP 1964-72. Accepted Black's evidence in total despite Black admitting perjuring himself at an earlier trial before the same Basil Kelly.



(3) LORD JUSTICE JONES. Unionist MP 1951-68. Former Lieutenant-Colonel in the British Army. Acquitted an RUC man for the murder of a 15 year old Nationalist youth for painting slogans on a wall. "I have lived in all parts of Ireland and can tell a disloyalist at a distance". (Belfast Newsletter 1960).

(4) ROBERT BABBINGTON. Unionist MP, late '60s and early '70s. In 1981 he fined a loyalist para-military for possessing ammunition and firearm components with the words: "I am satisfied that you felt strongly, clearly and honestly that you were behaving as a good patriot, should".

One of the more sinister aspects about the whole supergrass system is the psychological pressures that are used to try and make people become one. They select someone who may be facing years inside often on the word of a supergrass themselves and subject them to various forms of threats and inducements. If one should crack and agree to do what the RUC ask, they are immediately whisked away into "protective custody" for anything up to two years and allowed no contact with family or friends. Whilst they are subjected to all sorts of mental conditioning to try and get them to identify with the police and forget their old life and loyalties. In many cases it has been the shock of seeing family and old friends when they finally do come to court that has caused many of them to break down and refuse to go through with it.



Up to three years inside just waiting for trial

One of the most outrageous things about the trials, is the way in which they effectively completely change the burden of proof. Normally in all trials it is the responsibility of the prosecution to prove their case, "beyond reasonable doubt". If there is any doubt the defendant must have the benefit. In practice in these trials the opposite is in fact the case.

Take for example the case of Jimmy Brown, the chairman of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. He has been held for nearly two years charged with conspiracy to murder. The only evidence against him is the word of informer Harry Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick alleges, that sometime between January and October, he plotted with Brown to shoot a policeman, although in the end the attempt never took place.

different informer and again remanded in custody. Power is now on his fifth informer, all of the others having retracted their statements.

RE-CHARGED

When he recently applied for bail on the basis that he had been held for so long without being convicted, the judge said that as the four previous informers had all retracted, the charges that he had been held on under their evidence had all been dismissed. Therefore the time he had spent inside on those charges did not count towards the present charges under the latest informer. Therefore he hadn't been inside for three years, just a few months and bail was refused.

In conclusion I would ask the reader if one the evidence presented (presuming he has never been a Crown witness or Unionist MP) he can reach any other conclusion than that the British government have taken in total and acted on the recommendation of Brigadier Frank Kitson, British strategist in tactics or counter-insurgency. "The law should be used as just another weapon in the government's arsenal and in this case become little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public. The activities of the legal services have to be tied in to the war effort in as discreet a way as possible".

IMPOSSIBLE

How is it possible to defend yourself from an accusation such as that. Nobody can say what they were doing all the time for such a long period, so it is impossible to provide an alibi. Yet there are already people serving substantial prison sentences on just such evidence. Brown if convicted faces a likely life sentence.

INTERMENT

Then there is the way in which the system is used as a form of interment without trial even, when a conviction is not secured. Tyrone Power was first arrested over three years ago on the word of informer Jackie Goodman. When the case eventually came to court, Goodman admitted that the statements that he had made were made under threats and inducements from the RUC and withdrew them.

Instead of being released, Power was recharged with the same offences under the evidence of a



Demonstrating against the trials

Angels with dirty faces

At a recent socialist federation conference in Bradford, a Red Action member got involved in a conversation with someone that he met there, who said to him words to the effect, that while he agreed with Red Action's politics, he didn't think that Red Action would want him as a member because he was too middle class. This sort of attitude is not an isolated one. We do from time to time, come across people who do have sympathies for our policies, but feel that somehow they could not fit in with us because of their background.

From discussions that we have with people outside of Red Action, it is clear that we do have a very macho image. It also becomes clear, that in many eyes, this image is exaggerated to say the very least. It will probably come as a surprise to some people to hear that throughout our existence we have counted among our members, teachers, social workers, community workers, students, graduates, and people from various other non macho walks of life. In fact we were until very

We have never made any secret of, or wavered on, our position on these issues. What we possibly have done, is neglected to explain fully and consistently enough our reasons for holding these positions.

REASONS

It would appear that it is the opinion of some, that our motives for taking an uncompromising line are romantic or egotistical. That we do it just to be the chaps of the left. To be the macho men.

In fact there are very few, if any Red Action members, who couldn't think of quite a few things that they would rather do, than risk their freedom, fighting street battles with the National Front. Similarly we are quite enough aware of the number of republicans in British jails at this moment who have been framed, to

have any illusions about the attendant risks in being a pro republican in this country.

We do not take the position we do on these issues because it is fun, romantic or macho. We do it because we are serious committed revolutionary socialists, and because it is our firm and THOUGHT OUT opinion that they are the correct positions for revolutionary socialists to take.

For anyone to see Red Action as nothing more than a street fighting gang, says far more about their lack of understanding of these theories, than it does about any lack of politics on our part. It is also grossly insulting, to the consistent and dedicated efforts of our members in other areas of socialist activity.

VALUED

You do not have to have spent your teens fighting in street gangs

Red Action pamphlet

We are Red Action

A SHORT HISTORY OF RED ACTION, WHERE DID IT COME FROM, AND WHY?

30p

First published two years ago, this pamphlet, although slightly out of date now, still gives a good insight into the discussions and events that lead to the formation of Red Action. Available from the box number, price 50p inclusive of postage and packing.

RED ACTION'S FLYING

Having been mentioned once or twice in the gutter press (The Times, commenting on the sparkling wit of 'Red Action in Action', and the 'Guardian') we have finally reached the pinnacle of intellectual expression—'Nationalism Today', the NF theoretical journal for their followers who can read. The mention in the Guardian was a complaint from Martin Webster in the Letters Page and had a similar theme to the extract from Nationalism Today, shown above. The allegation being that we grass them to the Old Bill, a tactic they've used against us many times, but we would never resort to, and anyway, we invariably win the physical confrontations. At the time of Webster's letter (Aug 82) two Red Action members were awaiting trial for ABH on the word of Supergrass Ian Anderson (the current chairman of the NF) after the Front were humiliated by a load of drunks at Chapel Market. Having finally decided the piece in Nationalism Today was indeed an attempt at sarcasm I pondered on a motive; a little morale booster for the rank and file, perhaps.

Throwing out a murder charge against UDR Corporal Baird for shooting dead an 18 year old Nationalist youth, Martin Malone, in Belfast, the trial judge said he could not be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the corporal had the requisite intent to murder. The uncontested evidence was that Malone was shot in the back by a high powered rifle from six yards, after a row!

Quote from the News of the World: "Mrs Thatcher almost takes it for granted that sex appeal is one of her big advantages".

The Duke of Devonshire told youngsters that he felt uncomfortable launching their work training scheme: "It's because I think it's probably fair to say I have never done a day's work in my life". (Daily Mirror).

Recently Patrick Harrington, of North London Poly fame, was elected to the National Directorate of the NF and awarded the "Albert Mariner Award for Courage" (Albert was the NF tosser who croaked during a demo in Tottenham). Life, nowever, has not been all a bed of roses and there have been a few disturbing incidents.

First, there was the incident at the Cenotaph during the Remembrance Day Parade where he accosted some old boy with the words, "Why don't you old bastards fuck off, tomorrow belongs to us." He got a good shot in the mouth for that and ended up on his back in the road. The second incident could have more far-reaching implications for his career. Aggressively challenging a friend of "Pinky" Webster at Brick Lane, he was again up-ended in the gutter with the remark: "That's where you belong you little poof". Attacking veterans on Poppy Day isn't exactly politically astute even in those circles, but being publically accused of having sexual preferences outside the norm can be disastrous—look at poor old "Pinky". The chaps are very sensitive about their self-image, you know.

Anyway, we in Red Action hope he soon achieves the ultimate tribute, a nice commemorative medal in his name, to be awarded posthumously of course, just like Albert's.

Revolutionary socialists are on occasion told that they have a habit of being too dramatic, that they exaggerate too much. They are too prone to talking about crises, and using words like racist and fascist. Maybe this is sometimes the case, but on the other hand there are occasions when those sort of descriptions are the only suitable ones.

Recently a 44-year-old Oxford man who needs kidney dialysis treatment to stay alive was taken off of it because "the quality of his life was not good enough. In the words of the 'doctor' treating him:

"He is mentally defective, schizophrenic, and abusive".

Now remember what used to happen to mentally handicapped people in Nazi, Germany and think of a word.

The recent Bob Geldof/Band Aid exercise seems to have provoked different extremes of reaction from observers. On one hand you have the press and media going into the classic, what a wonderful marvelous human gesture it all is approach, while on the other you have the more cynical view that they were only in it for the publicity.

Speaking as a socialist I am quite willing to accept that the intentions

behind it were genuine. I wouldn't slag them down for doing it, because when all is said and done they have at least put a bit of food in some hungry mouths which is more than I have actually done.

At the same time I would remind them that if they think that they have actually changed anything forget it. As we showed in the last issue of Red Action, famines such as the one in Ethiopia, are not sudden, unavoidable calamities. They can be and are, predicted well in advance, and could easily be avoided if Western governments diverted just a tiny fraction of the resources they have available.

By all means praise Bob Geldof for having a bit of compassion, but at the same time he is kidding himself, if he thinks that he is doing anything else but pissing in the wind. Is he going to do it all over again for the next famine in one or two years time, and the one after that, and the one after that.

The only way to eradicate the sort of disaster occurring right now in Ethiopia, is to eradicate the system that causes it, and allows it to happen, i.e. international capitalism.

Perhaps revolutionary socialists cannot offer as much hope to the victims of today's famine as the Bob Geldofs of this world, but the cause of socialism is the ONLY HOPE for the millions of victims of the future famines, that lay in wait, for as long as the capitalist system lasts.

COLUMN



Punk band the Newtown Neurotics at a recent Red Action miners benefit

Rebel rockers

In order to help raise funds for the NUM in the present strike, Red Action has been organising a series of gigs with all the profits going to the miners. So far over £1,000 has been raised. With more gigs to come this figure looks set to rise.

An excellent response has come from a wide variety of bands eager to support the miners in their fight to protect jobs. Red Action has had mainly punk and skinhead bands playing; bands like the Newtown Neurotics, Redskins, Action Pact, and Red London have always been left wing to some degree, so these bands knew where they stood regarding the strike at the outset. It was encouraging, though, to see newer and less well known bands like Accident and Burial prepared to play. Another band to have played a lot is the manic band The Men They Couldn't Hang. Famous Beergut Attila the Stockbroker was quick to add his weight in support of the picket lines.

MORE GIGS

'Red Action in Action' has given a more detailed account of the gigs and I can say that men and my mates, who've been to practically all the gigs, haven't seen a bad night yet. All the gigs have been advertised in the music press under the 'Victory to the Miners' heading, and there's more to come so keep your eyes peeled.

RECORDS

Most of the bands have records, so to give you a taste, check some of these—Accident have a fast and punchy album 'A Clockwork Legion' out, along with a number of singles. The best probably being the aptly titled 'Fight to Win'. The crowd favourite at gigs, however, was a fast and furious version of the Oxo TV advert. Red London, who, along with Accident, come from the North East, have an album 'This is England' and the 'Sten Guns in Sunderland' EP out. Their sound is reminiscent of the early Clash/Upstarts and comes out a bit weak on record. To my one of the best live sounds,

though. Also, Scarborough's Burial have 2 tracks on the recent 'Oi of Sex' compilation. Barney Burial's muscular torso was on view at their L.S.E. gig and brought gasps from many a lass. Another member of the band (who will remain nameless if the weekly payments continue) was seen after the gig at Red Action's luxury guest house sitting in a cupboard with a pile of very "political" magazines—gurgling.

The Men They Couldn't Hang have recently released the old Irish ballad 'Green Fields of France' as a single and I'm told is worth getting. The Newtown Neurotics and Action Pact have an extensive number of releases and the Neurotics have done a large number of miner's benefits outside of those organised by Red Action and will hopefully be doing more gigs with us soon.

VICTORY

Any band wishing to play or people wanting to organise gigs, write to the P.O. Box number in this paper.

VICTORY TO THE MINERS

Red Action National Meeting

Red Action national meetings are where all Red Action members come together to discuss our development, and formulate our policies and political positions. Only paid up members are allowed to vote, but friends, sympathisers and contacts are welcome to come and contribute to the discussion. The next one takes place on SATURDAY, 23rd FEBRUARY at CAXTON HOUSE, ST JOHNS WAY, LONDON N19 (nearest tube, Archway). The meeting will be followed by an evening Social. Creche facilities will be available and accommodation is available if needed. The meeting starts at 10.30am.

Who needs it

No one would ever accuse Red Action of being the greatest fans of the police. In fact you may have noticed that our opinion of them is somewhat less than high and we are not the only ones. There are many people who are not very keen on the police in this country. However, for quite a lot of these people they are a necessary evil. "I don't like the police all that much, but you have to have them" is a common view. How true is it?

If you were to answer this question by saying "yes, there's always been police and there always will be" you would in fact be wrong. Throughout history and today, there have been and are, many examples of societies that have existed, without finding it necessary to have some of it's members act as watchdogs over others.

The tribal societies of Africa, Guinea and South America today, and recently the Red Indian tribes of North America, are all good examples of this.

The reason for this is not very difficult to find. In all of these societies all of it's members get their living by working in co-operation with each other. No one gets more than anyone else. If there is a good crop or hunt then everyone is rich. If it is bad, all go short.

In this sort of environment where all are equal, the idea of taking some of the people away from the task of hunting or growing the community crops just to watch over others would be thought absolutely absurd. There is no need. In these sort of societies where all are dependent on each other, the idea of stealing off each other just doesn't exist.

ARMED FORCE,

The need for Police forces only exists in societies which are divided up into classes, and where one of those classes takes a greater share of what is produced than the other.

Whether we talk about the robber barons of medieval times who plundered with naked violence, or whether we look at today's capitalists who plunder the working class with far greater subtlety, we find that they need some sort of armed force to protect their booty from those that they have taken it off, and in the final analysis that is the purpose of a police force.

Is it being utopian then, to suggest that when class society is overturned and we build a new society based on equality and co-operation, the need for policing will become obsolete.

BETTER,

Even if this does appear to be unreasonable, even if you think that there will be a need for some sort of social control agency, think how much better organised it could be than at present. Think if all high ranking police officers and judges were elected and subject to dismissal how much differently they might behave. If complaints against the police were investigated by community groups with the power to discipline policemen. If all of the people voted on what the law itself should be and had the power to change it.

FUTURE

You can perhaps argue about whether or not there will be a need for a police force in the future, but I can tell you something for certain. There are plenty of ways that we could have a much better one right here and now.



SUPPORT RED ACTION



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

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

- 1 A free subscription to the newspaper.
- 2 A regular internal newsletter that will keep you informed of all discussions and debates within the organisation.

Notification of all Red Action activities in your area.

The cost for this is £10 for one year.

Subscriptions to the paper are still available separately. The cost is £3 pounds for ten issues. Please remember that producing a paper is a very uneconomic business and we are always very grateful for any donations, and especially grateful to anyone who can take extra copies to sell.

PO box 158
Hatfield
Herts

RED ACTION IN ACTION

HARVEY CAR BANGER

Recently a Red Action member in Coventry went of the local college to hear the views of Harvey Procter MP (Conservative), who has connections with known nazis. He was shocked by the intolerance displayed by the students who barricaded the hall and shouted slogans. Trying to disassociate himself from their antics he became involved in an unfortunate scuffle with one of Mr Procter's party. He chased the MP to his car to explain and kicked the door repeatedly in an effort to attract his attention. He totally refutes suggestions that it was these incidents that stimulated the near-riot that the local paper described. We accept his explanation.

UNITED WE STAND

The opening scene. A pub in Kings Cross. Enter from the left some jubilant "Cockney Reds". Exit a disgruntled bonehead minus fascist insignia. Half-hour later he reappears with a dozen mates. Three go into the pub too sort it out. Two emerge almost immediately, one stooped and pigeon-toed, the other unnerved having interrupted with his head the flight of a greasy kebab cunningly camouflaged by a pint glass. The final unfortunate miscreant underwent oral lobotomy (a medical term for having your brain bitten out) without the benefit of an anaesthetic. The curtain drops.

motions

A Manchester student delegate, elected on a Red Action platform, once again thoroughly enjoyed/disgraced himself at the national student conference. Because of his repeated attacks on Tory students he was threatened with expulsion, which was gleefully reported in the gutter press (The Guardian). His claim that they were neo-fascist and he was provoked by their "Hang Nelson Mandela" badges is of course hysterical. He is well aware that his loutish behaviour does our media image, and electoral chances, untold damage. Apparently the "renegade" is unrepentant.

"SOMEBODY GOT MURDERED"

Full of Christmas cheer (I was going to say "Spirit" but that would only give the wrong impression) some Red Action carol singers went to the Clash's Scargill's Xmas Party" at the Academy in Brixton. Despite the Clash's obvious political persuasions there still seemed to be plenty of punters who had about as much intelligence as a Crossroads scriptwriter. Assaulting girls on the tube, sporting nazi badges, and supporting scabs in the miners' strike are all very dodgy things to do at the best of times—and we think the above mentioned offenders will agree they couldn't have picked a worse time. 3-0!

CHEERS...CLINK CLINK

Red Action's Xmas Beano took place at a highly secret London location (at least I think it was secret because a lot of people never found it). Not to worry though, the assembled masses strutted their funky stuff, consumed the equivalent of several sizeable breweries, and raised about £100 for the miners. A word of advice to the two young ladies who staggered out in the early hours—if you want to write political slogans on walls, it's best not to start with the local police station. Nick, nick!

MARCHING ON

Several Red Action armoured divisions were despatched to Manchester in November for the Manchester Martyr's march (commemorating the execution of 3 Irish Republicans in 1867). There were several hundred people on the march and we had the pleasure of a 100-strong loyalist/fascist escort for most of the route. A rather half-hearted attempt to attack the march failed miserably, although it did give young ***** (sorry no names, but for all your Special Branch informers he has the same first name as a member of the Royal Family, and no, it isn't "Shithead") the opportunity to display his famous "Houdini" technique for avoiding arrest by four of Manchester's bravest bobbies.

BOTTLE JOB

The entire might of the Soviet war machine, cunningly disguised as ten Red Action boot boys, went to see the Angelic Upstarts in early December. News of our arrival seemed to travel fast than a Zola Budd passport application and sure enough within minutes a nazi "mole" (and if you'd seen the size of the one on his face you'd know what we mean) was trying to find out what we were up to. We sincerely hope non of his racial comrades heard him admit too being a 'red' because, honest, WE all believed you. The fascists launched an attack at the gig and we were pleased that Mensi (of the Upstarts) and several others, came to stand with the anti-fascists. Reprisals for the original attack were carried out and word has reached us that our dear friend the 'Mole' looks like the 5.15 from Paddington just went over his head. Get well soon, scumbag.

A writer and a fighter

In January 1919 a young man arrived at Petrograd in Russia. It was the end of a journey that had taken him two years to complete. He had come to join the great socialist revolution two years old. Behind him lay a history of revolutionary struggle that had seen him imprisoned in more than one country. Seventeen years later, he was to leave this country in exactly the same manner as he had entered it. As a persecuted revolutionary. His name was Victor Serge, and it is experiences in those years that form the bulk of his book "Memoirs of a Revolutionary".

Serge arrived to find a revolution that had started out with such high hopes for the future literally starving and freezing to death. Industry, disrupted by the first world war had ground to a halt. Without industry, nothing could be produced to take to the countryside in exchange for surplus grain. No grain came and the towns starved. What scant resources there were, were stretched to the limit, to equip and supply an army to fight against the counter revolutionary "white" army. Disease famine and death stalked the whole country.

given that one had to counter them with the spirit of freedom and freedom of the spirit, it had to be with them and among them. Possibly after all, these evils had been impelled by civil war was blockade and famine and if we survived the remedy would come of itself".

They did survive but the remedy did not come. The civil war ended in 1921 but the "intolerance" of the Bolsheviks towards their political opponents did not. Anarchists, socialists of a different persuasion, anyone who voiced the mildest criticism of the regime, were all hounded and imprisoned.

Within the party things were changing. By 1927 over 90% of those in the party had joined in the years after the revolution. Many of these people were not true revolutionaries. There were all sorts of careerists and beauracrats who had joined the winning side. Slowly but surely they had filled many of the beauracrat positions to which they were well suited and pushed out many of the old guard.

DIFFERENT COURSE

The positions that these newer members were occupying and the techniques of government that they were applying, had all been laid down and supported in the past by nearly all of the long-standing party members. However it was no becoming apparent that these structures were being used to put the party on a different course to that which it had been intended they should.

Eventually many of the groups that had been becoming increasingly concerned with the way the party was acting came together to form a "united opposition" to the path it was taking. They called for an end to authoritarian methods and a return to democratic ones. But it was too late. It was an easy thing for the new beauracraty to turn the secret police and all the other methods or repression against this new "enemy".

The opposition now found themselves the victims of the very institutions that so many of them had set up and supported when they were in the driving seat.

All of the oppositionists were jailed. Serge was eventually released and allowed to leave Russia due to the efforts of French Socialists who's ceaseless campaigning on his behalf proved to be a great embarrassment to the regime. He got out just in time. Just a few months after his release came the first of the great purge trials, in which the whole of the revolutionary old guard was to perish.

A whole generation of thousands of dedicated revolutionaries were devoured by their own creation.

LEARN

Now this is all very interesting you may say but what relevance does it have today? In fact quite a bit. If today we are trying to build a movement that will one day change the system, then it's obvious that we have to look at it, and learn from the experiences of those that have tried before.

Anyone that is familiar with the revolutionary left in this country and reads "Memoirs of a revolutionary" may well come to the conclusion that most of them seem to have learnt very little from the Bolshevik experience. Most of the revolutionary organisations of today, like to think of themselves as the Bolsheviks of today. For them the Bolshevik party was a correct and virtuous model that only ended up as it did because of the impossible circumstances they found themselves in. Their own form of organisation was not in any way to blame and is something that we should seek to emulate today.

Unlike those that support this view today, Victor Serge actually participated in the events, and his observations of them show quite clearly that the nature of the Bolshevik Party did indeed play a role in it's own eventual downfall.

INTOLERANCE

He shows how already in 1920 long before the new beauracraty took over the party, the Bolsheviks were resorting to methods of force and repression, not only when there was no other choice, but when there were other options open to them. How shows blind and often foolish authoritarianism, ruled in the name of discipline. He show how the intolerance of Bolshevik politics led to a kind of "natural selection" whereby the intolerant rose up the ladder of the party structure, at the expense of the more tolerant.



Lenin. to many, a Faultless messiah
Serge questions this view

Serge's greatest achievement is to show quite clearly the futility of trying to build socialism by using methods that are against socialist principle. As he says "far from the ends justifying the means, the means command their own ends".

In Britain today there are several organisations like Red Action, who have been founded by those who have found out for themselves that those organisations which claim the Bolshevik tradition, have certainly claimed many of their faults.

What the writings of Victor Serge show, is that we have an historical tradition. That there have been others in the past who have fought for socialism without admitting that a party has the right to own it's members thoughts as well as actions. Who believed that freedom of thought and criticism are infinitely superior to blind part discipline for it's own sake. Who'd have believed that principle is far more important than expediency.

The reason we hear so little about our tradition is because practically everyone of its defenders perished. Victor Serge was the only one who lived to tell of it.

Victor Serge left Russia in 1936. He settled in France but soon had to flee the advancing Nazis. Narrowly escaping he eventually settled in Mexico and it was there he died penniless in 1947.

His whole life is a testament to the ability of one man to refuse to conform and to speak out against injustice, whatever the cost. "Memoirs of a Revolutionary" is the story of that struggle and is indispensable reading for all those who believe in socialism and the spirit of freedom. Its last words are: "may the passion the experience and even the faults of my fighting generation have some small power to illuminate the way forward".

INDEED THEY DO.

WE ARE RED ACTION

Red Action was formed in 1981 when a number of working class socialists were expelled from the organisation that they had belonged to. Various reasons were given for this, but it all seemed to boil down to the intellectual leadership showing their distaste for the raucous manners, and undisciplined behaviour of their working class members. We believe that we can organise ourselves as red workers on our own, without any interference from middle class intellectuals. We intend to avoid at all costs, becoming like so many other left groups, with their patronizing attitude towards the working class. We reject the idea that a socialist organisation, has the right to demand unquestioning obedience from its members at all times. Discipline when necessary must be based on respect for, and trust in, those making the decisions, and not blind servile obedience. We believe that socialism belongs to the working class, and that a socialist organisation, while it must be able to give a lead to the class, must also be able to reflect the spirit and consciousness of the class. We in Red Action will strive to this end. To justify our existence before the most cynical audience of all — the working class — and present socialist politics in a way that they can identify with, in their life, their work, and their leisure. We draw great inspiration from the Republican movement in Ireland, from the courageous and principled manner in which they conduct their struggle, and from the way that they have integrated class and cultural expression into their political movement. We unconditionally support the right of their revolutionary armies, the Irish Republican Army, and the Irish National Liberation Army, to engage in armed struggle to free their country from British Rule. We will work in co-operation with all and any groups that support the same aims as us. We do not reject any ideas tactics or strategies just because we did not think of them ourselves.

WE ARE FOR

1. A working class organisation inspired and directed by working class people
2. United action between socialist groups FOR THE CLASS NOT THE PARTY
3. The Irish National liberation struggle against our own British ruling class
4. Total opposition to fascist organisations
5. Union strength — we support any picket line — in defence of workers living standards.
6. Opposition to all prejudice which divides workers, white against black, men against women.
7. Killing the lie that the "Communist states" are socialist.
8. Young peoples fight to determine their own future.

RED ACTION IS AGAINST

1. Anything read in

THE Sun



Red Army troops in the civil war

Serge had grave misgivings about many of the measures the Bolsheviks were taking but this did not stop him joining them.

"Certainly on several essential points they were mistaken, in their intolerance... in their leaning towards centralism and administrative technique. But