

# Red Action

Issue No. 24 July 1986 20p

## THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

### TRIP TO BELFAST

On the second weekend of August, Red Action members and supporters will be travelling to take part in the annual anti internment demonstration. This is held every year, to commemorate the events of the 9th of August 1971, when thousands of British soldiers descended upon nationalist areas in the North of Ireland, smashed their way into hundreds of homes, and arrested and interned without charges or trial 342 men.

Whilst these men were interned, some of them for as long as two years, many of them were subjected to various forms of torture. These included, being hooded and subjected to hours of white noise - a constant high pitched whining noise designed to disorientate the brain, being deprived of food and water for days at a time, and being hooded and taken up into helicopters which they were made to believe were high above the ground, and then pushed out when they were only in fact a few feet up.

Few people that have ever visited the Nationalist areas of the North of Ireland, have failed to be moved and inspired by it. Both the level of British repression, and the spirit of resistance to it, are almost impossible to appreciate unless you actually witness it at first hand. If these sound like strong words, then we can only suggest that you go and see for yourself.

The Nationalist people of the North of Ireland bear the full brunt of the weight of British state repression. In this situation it is the duty of all British socialists, to show our support for their struggle, and we urge all of our readers and supporters, to take this opportunity to do so.

#### HIGHLIGHT

For us in Red Action, the trip to Belfast is always the highlight of the political calendar. For those who like to think of themselves as political revolutionaries, nothing can be as informative and as educative as actually seeing at first hand, a revolutionary struggle, which is exactly what the Republican struggle in Ireland is.

The fare is not cheap, being in the region of 50 pounds. However if you let us know that you are going soon enough, there is a good chance that we may be able to arrange it considerably cheaper. So don't delay write today to PO BOX 158, Hatfield, Herts



BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE ON THE MARCH TO FREEDOM

The continuing struggle of the Black South African people to break free from the apartheid regime continues. It represents what is surely one of the most courageous stories ever told. Against all the might of one of the most repressive and heavily armed state machines in the world the fight continues, in spite of arrests without trial, the denial of the most basic rights and numerous state murders.

It now seems clear that many black people sense that they may now be entering the last stage of their long struggle for freedom. Those who have been out to South Africa and returned talk of a new mood of determination amongst black militants, not to give up the

struggle until they have finally toppled the regime.

There can be no doubt whatsoever, that the appliance of sanctions by Western government would speed up this process and save many lives

Some countries have indeed already begun to apply

sanctions but still the British government flatly refuse to do so. The pious excuses of Margaret Thatcher who tries to justify not imposing sanctions by claiming that it would only make things worse for the blacks bears no truth whatsoever. It is the black people themselves who are calling for sanctions

The real reason why Thatcher and her friends don't want to impose sanctions is quite simple. It is because they don't want to do anything that might seriously damage the South African economy, because there are billions of pounds of British money invested in it.

By refusing to apply sanctions and continuing to trade with South Africa, the British government is helping to prop up and bolster the South African regime. Therefore they share the responsibility for that regimes murderous activities.

As for ourselves there is

not a great deal that we can do at this stage to assist the blacks in S. Africa other than try to put as much pressure as possible on the government to start imposing sanctions, and perhaps try to organise pickets of shops which stock S. African goods. With the present level of publicity given to S. Africa it might get some response.

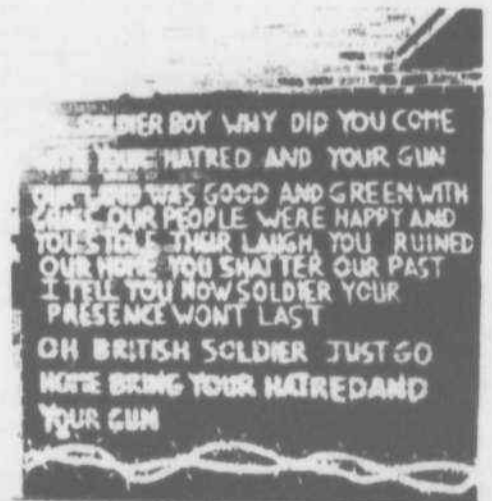
The Black South African people have suffered much for a long long time. They are going to go on suffering for some time yet, but at long last it does seem as if the end may at least be in sight, if not yet near enough to touch.

It may well be that the day is not that far off when that vile creed which teaches that one person is superior to another, simply because of the colour of their skins is swept away into the cess-pit where it belongs.

VICTORY TO THE ANC AND THE BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE.



BY REFUSING TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS THATCHER'S GOVERNMENT HELPS TO PROP UP THE APARTHEID REGIME



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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how the British left talks a good revolution

TWENTY THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE SUN

# REBELS WITHIN THE LAW

## Or how the British left talks a good revolution

Recently I found myself, as socialists often do, involved in a political discussion with a member of a different left wing organisation. He was telling me how he had recently been talking to some of the sacked printers down on the Wapping picket line, and how they had been saying that seeing as how the strike didn't seem to be advancing, it was time to start looking at other more direct tactics as well as the pickets. The sort of thing that they had in mind was smashing the windows of newsagents who stocked News International papers. He found this sort of talk greatly disturbing. For him this was most definitely not the way forward.

I agreed with him that it was certainly hardly worthwhile a few people going out and smashing a few windows as it would obviously have absolutely no effect on the dispute, and wasn't therefore worth taking the risk of getting caught for.

### WORTHWHILE

What was needed to make that sort of activity worthwhile I said, was to have a nationwide movement of people willing to engage in it. In that way you could go into it in a systematic and co-ordinated manner - hitting targets regularly arranging alibis for those involved etc - In this way you may well convince considerable numbers of newsagents around the country, that it wasn't worth stocking News International products while the dispute was on, and this would at least bring some pressure to bear. It may not win the dispute on its own but it's all power to the elbow.

### ACTION

However, my colleague was not at all impressed by my reasoning. As far as he was concerned, such activities were incorrect under any circumstances. If you can get people out for that sort of activity he said, why can't you get 20,000 people down to the picket line and shut the place down.

Because for a start I said, it would take considerably more people to close down Wapping than it would to carry out the sort of activity I was talking about. And even if you did get enough people there to close it on one night, could you keep it closed indefinitely. Of course not. And anyway what about those people who live far away and can't get down to the picket line very often. What would be wrong in trying to organise some sort of alternative activity for them. I wasn't in any way trying to suggest that the pickets weren't important, merely that there might also be other ways in which the dispute could be supported. He was however, still unimpressed, and with a final comment about something to do with not slipping into criminality, he terminated the discussion.

In fact arguments such as this one, are quite common when Red Action members discuss politics with the

members of some other left groups, and they usually centre around the point that was under discussion here. Red Action's support for certain illegal and subversive political activities. A good example of this, was seen during the miner's strike in the groups of miners who organised sabotage raids on coal lorries, a move which many revolutionary left groups condemned.

You may well think that this sort of condemnation of violent or illegal actions, would be more becoming to someone like Neil Kinnock than to those who describe themselves as revolutionaries. But Ah they tell us, it is not the illegality of these activities but the nature of how they are organised which they object to.

### SUBVERSIVE

Secretive subversive acts, are not the way forward for the working class they tell us. The way forward is through what they describe as "Mass workers action".

Basically what they mean by this is industrial action - pickets strikes etc - and demonstrations. These are the correct tactics they say for both, fighting individual disputes and building individual campaigns, and for the long term aim of building a mass revolutionary movement in the working class.

### MAXIMUM

This is because these sort of activities attempt to involve the maximum number of people possible in the dispute or campaign. Experience has shown time and time again that people's first taste of political activity can and often does have a massive effect on them, even if their involvement was only half hearted or even reluctant. It can help to increase their class consciousness, making them much more susceptible to revolutionary ideas. Therefore, by involving as many people as possible in a dispute or campaign through "mass action" even if that the dispute or campaign fails, the experience will have been a worthwhile one for many of those who became involved, and may well have won some of them over to socialist ideas.

Secretive illegal activities do not achieve this it is

argued. By their very nature you have to be selective about who is involved, and thus they cut themselves off from the most important task of all. That of involving as many as possible in your activities. Therefore such actions cannot be described as "mass workers action" at all. They are in fact, so they tell us, elitist, or to use their favourite expression "squadist" activities, which make no real contribution to the struggle to build a mass revolutionary movement in the working class. They are nothing more than the grand romantic gestures of those who do not have the necessary commitment to apply themselves to the more mundane tasks which have to be carried out if we are to succeed in building a mass revolutionary working class. Red Action by supporting "squadist" activities INSTEAD of mass activities, prove that they do not have that commitment.

Well that's how the argument runs. There is however one very serious flaw in it, and we can sum that flaw up in one word. INSTEAD. The fact of the matter is, at no time anywhere have Red Action ever called for or supported any sort of illegal or secretive activity INSTEAD of open activities such as pickets or demonstrations. When we have supported them, we have always supported them AS WELL as all the other activities.

### COMMITTED

Red Action fully recognises the need for and the value of activities such as picket lines and demonstrations, both in terms of winning disputes and building campaigns and in terms of the political effect such activities can often have on those involved.

**WE ARE TOTALLY COMMITTED TO GIVING OUR FULL SUPPORT TO SUCH ACTIVITIES WHENEVER WE CAN.**

Red Action members have nothing to apologise for to anyone in this respect. Our track record for attending picket lines and demonstrations is as good as anyone's

### REASON

But we see absolutely no reason why being involved in such action, should in any way prevent us from being involved at times in political activity which may for a number of reasons have a less public face.

We support both forms of activity when they are applicable. We do not seek to counterpose one against the other. In fact the only ones

who do that are those who accuse us of doing it.

The reason that they do this is because they seek to discredit any form of specialised activity, and they way in which they set about doing so is by claiming falsely that those who support these activities automatically reject "mass activities". The aim of the whole charade is to somehow try and create the illusion that somehow for some reason, it has to be one or the other.

### SIMPLE

The reason that they do this is quite simple. It is because they know as well as we do that if they were to look at the principle of selective operations, purely on its own merit, without trying to counterpose it to other forms of activity, then they would find it very difficult to argue against the view that Red Action holds on such activities, which is basically that while selective operations admittedly do not achieve a lot of the things that open activities such as pickets and demonstrations do, they can on some occasions achieve gains which more open forms of activity cannot.

This is so obvious really it hardly needs stating. To try and claim that no sort of secretive, or if you like squadist, type activity can ever achieve any sort of gain or progress is quite obviously rubbish. You only have to think about the nature of the anti fascist struggle to realise this.

### CONCLUSION

However this conclusion does have certain implications. If it is indeed true that secretive or squadist type activities are in certain circumstances a correct and justifiable tactic for the revolutionary socialist movement, then it follows that those who like to consider themselves revolutionary socialists should be willing to enter into such activities.

But the real truth of the matter is that the vast majority of those who claim to be revolutionaries are not willing to consider entering into these sort of activities at any time. In reality this is not because of the reasons which they give, which as we have seen are a load of rubbish anyway. Rather it is the other way around.

They come up with these theories in order to try and justify what is basically no more than plain fear of being involved in risky enterprises. Now there is nothing wrong in being afraid. We all get afraid sometimes, but there is something very distasteful about people who instead of facing up to their fear and coming to terms with it, try to justify that fear, especially when they do it by slandering those who do not share that fear.

### NOTHING

Red Action's efforts in areas which are ignored by so many other left groups may not rock the world, but at least they are something. Those that sit on the sidelines calling out "Mass workers action or nothing" most usually mean exactly that. They do nothing.



LEON TROTSKY

## WELL RED

### A Red Action Book review

It is not very often that you will hear mention of people such as Marx Lenin or Trotsky in the pages of Red Action. This is not because we necessarily disagree with everything that these people wrote or said - although we most certainly disagree with the habit that some socialists seem to have, of diving for a quote from one of them, for the answer to every question that we face today - but more because most of what these people wrote was pretty deep stuff and requires a great deal of pre-knowledge about the subject, to be able to understand. There is however at least one very definite exception to this, and that is a pamphlet entitled "Fascism What is it?" by Leon Trotsky.

The pamphlet is a collection of articles and essays written by Trotsky during the 1930s when fascism was on the rise all over Europe. One of the factors which assisted this rise was the hopelessly mistaken and incorrect tactics which the various Socialist and Communist Parties in Europe had applied in the fight against it.

Several sections of the pamphlet are taken up by examinations of these incorrect tactics, and suggestions for more correct ones.

What I found quite amazing reading this pamphlet for the first time, was to see just how many of the arguments over tactics which Trotsky examines in this pamphlet, are still dividing the socialist movement - if not in exactly the same circumstances - and being argued over today.

### EXAMPLE

A perfect example of this, is shown in a chapter entitled, "The Worker's Militia and its opponents" in which Trotsky argues against those socialists who are against forming an armed workers force, to engage in physical opposition to the fascists.

Trotsky begins one paragraph by quoting one of the most common arguments used by opponents of the militia. We are told that we need "Mass self defence instead of the militia" he writes (I told you it was going to sound a bit familiar didn't I) But what is this "Mass self defence" without combat organisations without specialised cadres, without arms.

He goes on later to dispose of another argument that is often today used against supporters of direct action, that their actions will only provoke either a reaction from the other side or repression from the state. As Trotsky points out, "Liberalism has always said to

the workers, that by their class struggle they "provoke" the reaction".

When dealing with the arguments of those that claim that revolutionary methods should only be used in a revolutionary situation, he replies "Let the workers despite the absence of a revolutionary situation occasionally correct the papa's son patriots in their own way, and the recruitment of new fascist bands will become incomparably more difficult."

### REMARKABLE

For me, the most remarkable thing about the whole pamphlet was to see how, at least on certain issues, Trotsky's arguments didn't seem that far away from my own. They certainly seemed a lot nearer than those of those people who today describe themselves as Trotskyists. There's a point there somewhere.

Leon Trotsky, was one of the leading figures in the Russian revolution of 1917 which overthrew the regime of the Tsar, and attempted to establish a socialist state. During the 1920s, as the new regime moved further and further away from the original aims of the revolution, and under the leadership of J. Stalin became more and more repressive Trotsky led an opposition movement which attempted to bring the regime back onto a less repressive path. Defeated in the political battle, he was eventually exiled from Russia in 1929. After much wandering around Europe, being expelled from several countries, he was eventually allowed to settle in Mexico where in 1940, he was murdered by one of Stalin's agents.



MASS ACTION ? SQUADISM ? OR BOTH ?

# THE Sun

## LIES DAMNED LIES

Inspired by the great quality journalism in the Sun newspaper's "Twenty things you never knew articles" Red Action inspired by the great quality of the journalism in the "Twenty things you never knew" articles in the Sun newspaper, Red Action proudly presents its own version. So here you are folks. Twenty things you never knew about the Sun. The only problem was trying to decide which twenty things to use out of the hundreds that we could of.

1. The Sun carried a "World exclusive" interview, with Marcia McKay, a Falklands war widow, The Press Council - which investigates complaints against newspapers discovered that journalist John Kay had asked secretaries at the Sun offices, what they thought a war widow would say, and had reported their comments as Mrs McKay's comments. At the time in which the interview was supposed to have taken place at Mrs McKay's home in Rotherham, she was in fact in London as a guest of the Mirror. The Press Council described the "interview" as a "deplorable insensitive deception."

2. Soon after the Marcia McKay "interview" the Sun exposed the Daily Star for inventing an interview with Mick Jagger and advised, "Stick with the real thing folks."

3. When Elton John was to be married, the Sun could not procure a picture of his bride. So they merged a photograph of an unknown woman of similar age with

one of Elton, and pushed it as a picture of the happy couple.

4. Reporting a strike on a John Cleese/Monty Python film set, the Sun's George Forbes wrote "The black warriors downed spears, the heavens opened and Cleese leapt about shouting "which of you bastards did a rain dance?" Cleese offered the Sun editor £10,000 to prove the truth of the story. No evidence was produced and the press council judged that Cleese said nothing of the kind.

5. When Princess Diana wore a low cut dress, consequently receiving much attention in the press, the Sun touched up their photo by adding nipples.

6. A peace movement delegation which met Russian peace campaigners in Moscow, which was organised by the Quaker religious group and which included amongst its delegates Lord Brockway and catholic priest Owen Hardwick, was described by the Sun as "part

of a campaign orchestrated and financed by the Soviet Union." The Press Council found that the assertion was "Unsubstantiated and should not have been made."

7. The Sun's Jean Ritchie, infiltrated the Greenham Common Peace Camp and wrote that "Greenham is a lesbian community. Four out of five are lesbians, united in their hatred of men." The Mirror's Ann Robinson reported "I didn't find myself among lesbian subversives. What Greenham women suffer from is a distorted public image."

8. Sun astrologer Suzie Elliot, was sacked for recycling her "predictions". Something under Taurus one week, would appear under Leo the next. One of her favourite pieces of advice was "avoid repeating yourself."

9. Suzie Elliot's replacement was professional astrology lecturer June Baker Howard. However her predictions for 1984 were deemed to be too boring. So they were discarded and replaced by gems from the fertile imagination of the Sun newsdesk.

10. A Sun reporter call upon young actress Christabel Finch - Tracey Barlow in Coronation Street. No-one was at home, which prompted the Sun to run a headline "Tracey is missing". As

it happened, "Tracey" was spending the night away from home with her parents. Next day the family returned and the Sun claimed "The Sun finds Tracey".

11. Still with the street, the Sun reported that actress Doris Speed who used to play Annie Walker, had collapsed and been rushed to hospital with a "mystery illness". The Sun had asked friends and colleagues of Doris Speed about her illness. As she was actually in perfect health at the time, they were unable to supply any details of any illness. The Sun therefore concluded that it was a mystery illness, and invented the collapse and rush to hospital to prove it.

12. The Mirror once carried an editorial entitled "Lies damned lies and Sun exclusives."

13. Following a poor performance by England's cricket bowlers, sports page headlines in the Sun's Northern edition demanded "Bring back Ward". Ward was a bowler in the Derbyshire team. The same day, Southern editions demanded "Bring back Snow", in support of a bowler from the Sussex team.

14. During a case in the Appeal Court, a witness claimed that he could not read English. A lawyer claimed to the Judge that the witness bought the Sun. The Judge John Donaldson replied "From what I know of the Sun, it does not follow that he can read English"

15. One Sun story read "Women who vote SDP and Liberal are red hot in bed. They not only have sex more often, but enjoy it more than their men."

16. Former Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam once said "Anyone who works for Rupert Murdoch knows how odious his control is."

17. During a series of reported UFO sightings, the Sun printed 8 tips on how to tell if your neighbour is from outer space. These included those who work unusual hours, those who like reading and those who own computer equipment.

18. When Rupert Murdoch took over Time's newspapers he signed agreements which included guarantees that editors would have freedom from his interference, and that there would be balanced news and opinions in the papers. Former Times editor Harold Evans says in his book "In my years as editor Murdoch broke all of these guarantees". Murdoch himself said of guarantees "They are not worth the paper they are written on."

19. When young members of the Community Service volunteers attended a Bucking-

ham Palace reception the Sun reported "A rave up with punks skinheads and ex borstal kids" who "slid down bannisters, pocketed flowers and ashtrays and fought each other". One youngster was allegedly "sick in the courtyard. A Palace spokesman less excitable description was "The odd guest may have taken the odd flower for his or her buttonhole, but it was a very successful evening. The Queen stayed to the end."

20. When the Hitler Diaries published in the Sunday Times were found to be forgeries, Rupert Murdoch did not seem to be too concerned. "After all we are in the entertainment business" he responded.

The information for this article was gathered from the following sources. The Daily Mirror, The Foul Book of Soccer, Good Times Bad Times by Harold Evans, Sanity (CND newspaper), Lies Damned Lies by Henry Potter, The Daily Telegraph and of course The super soaraway Sun.

### 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.

## FIXING THE FACTS

Even without the rush of publicity that accompanied the death of a Tory Minister's daughter Cynthia Channon from a heroin overdose, nobody could have failed to notice the massive recent campaign centred around the dangers of drugs to society. From such diverse figures as the government to Grange Hill kids, from Princess Diana to Esther Rantzen, the message has been flowing through the media thick and clear. Drugs are a major menace.

Given that we have a government which has never in the past seemed to show too much concern about the lives and living standards of most young people, the sudden hysteria of the past year should be viewed with some suspicion. WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE TORIES.

Obviously drug abuse is not a good thing. The misuse of hard drugs causes several hundred deaths a year, of

which Ms Channon's was merely the most publicised, but why should a government quite happy to cause deaths through the closure of hospitals and other cut-backs in the Health service, be so intent on turning illegal drugs into an issue of popular concern.

When you think of the hundreds of millions of pounds that they rake off

every year from the nicotine addiction industry which is directly responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands every year, their hypocrisy becomes even more transparent.

In fact the drugs hysteria we see around us today is no more than another one of the massive witch hunt type diversions, that governments engage in to try and distract peoples attention away from the real causes of the problems that they face in life.

### ALCOHOL

They've always done it. A hundred years ago, working class people were told that it was their fondness for alcohol (another of today's legalised drugs which kills far more than heroin, and provides the government with millions in revenue) which was the main cause of their miserable existence.

Working class people's living standards have certainly risen since then, but due to the political action of several generations of working class activists, rather than abstaining from the drink.

Today in the 1980s, the government is trying to convince everybody that drugs are THE problem. First they create this problem that no-one was really aware of, and then try and gain credit for themselves by pretending to deal with it.

THUS THE TORY BARONS REMAIN INTACT.

More sinisterly there may be other motives behind the drugs scare. It may be the build up to a campaign to give the police more powers to the police or for tighter controls at immigration and customs. The police already have great powers when it comes to searching for drugs although they do tend to use them far more in working class areas than they do in "respectable" society or on American airbases.

The anti drug atmosphere is also used as an excuse to step up the repression and harassment of black people in the inner cities, and to split up families at immigration control.

Can we expect more tales of drug abuse amongst the unemployed? Left wing groups? Active trade unionists? That the National Front are so keen to jump on the anti drugs bandwagon should perhaps give us some indication of who it is aimed at.

### EXCUSE

Last spring in the House of Commons, after MPs of all sides had convinced themselves that the drugs trade was "The greatest post-war threat to Britain" there were calls for the crackdown on drugs to involve the army Navy and Airforce. The source of the traffic was identified as "abroad".

Let's just hope that they're not going to use it as an excuse to start a war.



Happiness is a cigar called Hamlet.

IAN BOTHAM COCKS A WELL DESERVED TWO FINGERS AT THE CRICKETING ESTABLISHMENT AND THE DRUGS SCARE

## 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 what is going on in the organisation.
3. Notification of any 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.

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