

Red Action

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NOT FOR TURNING?!



"THEY DON'T GIVE A F*CK..."

Though you'd hardly know it from the 'news' and gutter press, the National Dock Strike is on. The National Dock Labour Scheme has been abolished and the National Association of Port Employers has disbanded itself. Bosses will now argue that as they no longer have a national organisation they can only negotiate on a local level. This is plainly nonsense and the dockers are pledged to stay out for "as long as it takes" to get another National Dock Agreement.

It must be said that several hundred dockers (out of 9000) decided to take the sizeable carrot 'dangled' in front of them in the shape of redundancy cheques for up to £36,000. It must also be said that 8,500 of them have decided to fight for their jobs and for the future of Trade Unions in this country. Indeed one docker who had definitely not signed any redundancy form was sent a cheque for £86,000 he promptly handed it over to the Union to give back to the bosses. Strikers of that calibre will cause a few bosses' blood-pressure to rise (and keep rising).

SOLIDARITY

All Britain's ports are now unregistered. The bosses reckon those ports which were never in the scheme and are still working (although dockers have promised not to handle re-directed cargo) will eventually break the strike. However if that promise holds and if the dockers of Europe (particularly Rotterdam and Le Havre), the U.S. and Canada keep to their pledge (and tradition) of solidarity, then it may well be the bosses who crack.

As with all strikes, **SOLIDARITY IS THE KEY.** To gain that solidarity the Dockers must show other

that the bosses will sack intimidate or even imprison those who organise it, as they did when they jailed dockers and building workers in the early 70's. If they do then they bring more workers into the struggle. When the level of repression is raised then so must the level of resistance. Every push the bosses make must be met with an even more violent shove from the strikers. Eventually one will cave in. If the boss class wins, flushed with the success of victory they will inevitably launch into a further attack on our living standards that will make the last 10 years seem like a Sunday School outing and make Britain the envy of every other European Ruling Class.

CRACKING UP

Ron Todd (head of the Transport and General Workers Union) has recently talked a good fight. He says "if one single Docker is sacked you will see a strike, the like of which you have never seen before." Unfortunately he also says he wants to fight within the law, which he knows cannot be done effectively. But Todd will only have the backing of the Dockers while HE backs THEM. As soon as he decides that the going is getting too tough for him the unofficial National Port Shop Stewards Committee can step in and take on the fight. The very existence of the committee may be enough to keep Todd solid. It may also be that the employers will provoke Todd into militancy. In the 70's Terry Duffy (Engineers Union) who was more right-wing than Todd was forced into such a position and the strike that followed crippled the Government. Also Thatcher shows signs of cracking herself. She has alienated the rulers of all the EC countries, inflation is rising, interest rates soaring etc etc. In the face of this Thatcher increasingly seems to have adopted a siege mentality, she and her little cabal of "advisers" are becoming more isolated by the minute and people in isolation are prone to serious misjudgements. In the same way that the dockers will back Todd only while he backs them so will big business, the City etc only back Thatcher's stand while they see her as acting in their interests. If she fails her masters then we will inevitably witness 'bloodletting' in high places.

SNOWBALLS

Whatever happens, this strike will take a while to bite, then one of two things could happen: either the dockers will be isolated and ultimately defeated, or the bosses will be. Our rulers have decided this is the time to take on the most militant section of the largest Trade Union. Other workers have a straight choice - stand with the dockers in a United fight we can win, or bury their heads in the sand and get shafted in isolation at a later date. Surely in this situation the role of Socialists

everywhere is to provide clear, unequivocal, principled and full-scale support.

Obviously many on the left don't share our view of the importance of this dispute, or at least the way it could escalate. They seem frightened to commit themselves as they don't think the dockers can do it. A member of one group described the strike as "a last fling from a group of desperate men." This statement reflects the distance between the alleged 'revolutionaries' and the working class. If the criteria for involvement and support in the strike is solely based on its possible success, and the analysis does not take into account the feelings of confidence the workers on the ground hold, then to what extent can any such group claim to represent the vanguard of the working class. Were they already not so marginal to the real struggle it would be tragic.

Mind you, if the strike "snowballs" and becomes the "Great Dock Strike of 1989" you can bet you won't be able to see the dockers for paper sellers.

THE LEFT

You will only gain the respect of workers by standing and fighting with them and for them, and that is what we in Red Action will be trying our utmost to do. If a struggle fails Revolutionary Socialists should still be there fighting to the end. People will remember that and when the climate changes and the workers are on the offensive they will be only too aware of who it was that stood by them in the past, and equally who came, who saw, sold some papers and pissed off again. Many of the "Revolutionary left" groups have, and deserve, a terrible reputation amongst ordinary workers. Consequently, Revolutionary politics has the same bad image. Struggles such as the Dock Strike give those prepared to show proper solidarity a chance to rectify this. Respect from the working class is not the Marx-given right of every Tom, Dick or Harriet waving a copy of Das Kapital - Respect must be EARNED and the harder you are seen to work to gain it, the stronger it will be.

FUNDAMENTAL MISTAKE

Red Action believes one of the ways it can be earned is through principled work within Support Groups. Some dismiss such groups as "charity". We feel that to be a fundamental mistake. It gives you a chance to work with other committed people who may have varied slants on left-wing politics, but who are united in support of the strikers. A Support Group, through its links with strikers themselves, gives you a chance to view the strike from the inside out, rather than standing aloof on the sidelines. Already in this dispute Tilbury Stewards have expressed their appreciation, not just for the £1000 raised so far by the East London Dockers

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...THAT'S ONE OF THE PROBLEMS WITH DEMOCRACY TODAY." 29.6.89.

"DON'T MOURN, ORGANISE"

JACK DASH the unofficial London docks leader, who died recently, aged 82, had been a personal friend of mine during the 24 years that I knew him in the docks. We had many disagreements and arguments, all of them political (at the time was a Stalinist). Jack's ideas were what is now described as "glasnost" before anyone had ever heard of Gorbachev.

It would be nearly impossible to have a personal argument with Jack because he would always be prepared to see other people's point of view and look for the best in them and not the worst. Towards the end of his life, he never complained. The last few days that I spoke to him, our conversations still centred around the coming unofficial strike in the docks.

The ideas of Jack Dash prove to be alive in our industry as on the very morning he died, dockers in some of the largest ports in Britain walked out on an unofficial strike. Jack never sold out and lived in a council tower block where he was very happy. The only thing that Jack valued were not titles and material wealth, but the respect of the people he worked with. The attendance at his funeral of dockers from all over the country proved he had that respect. I am sure Jack's last lines would have been those of Joe Hill, executed by the American government during the '20s for trade union activities:

"Don't mourn, organise."

Micky Fenn
Shop Steward,
Tilbury Docks



the west

It is remarkable that in the midst of the wringing of hands in the media over the plight of the Chinese people and the massacre in Tiananmen Square, the reaction of Her Majesty's government has been strangely muted. It amounted to the cancellation of future arms contracts which were worth ten bob anyway, and a polite diplomatic scolding. Indeed, anything more severe would have looked oddly out of place alongside the previous expressions of faith and encouragement made to the Chinese leadership by Thatcher and Foreign Secretary Howe during their visits in 1984, and the general enthusiasm in the West for Deng's pro-market reforms and receptiveness to foreign investment. The leading American magazine 'Time' made Deng their 'Man of the Year' in 1986. He is not tipped to win again this year. The basis of this sympathy and the refusal to break off relations or implement meaningful sanctions as at least some sections of the Chinese students themselves have requested, is the desperate need of the developed economies of Japan and the West for the tremendous opportunities offered by China both as a market for western commodities and as the biggest site for investment in the world, if the reforms under Deng's autocratic leadership continue to be implemented. Similar regimes have always

been acceptable to western investors providing that they co-operate in the creation of profits. Neither Thatcher or Bush, nor any of the giant corporations already investing are going to turn their backs on that. It is of course ridiculous to suppose that a government that has enforced its power through the most intense military repression over a period of twenty years as successive British governments have done in N.Ireland, will be unduly shocked at the spectacle of another "friendly" government conducting its own domestic affairs in a similarly brutal fashion. Other reactions, basing themselves on the special qualities of western civilisation range from the predictable to the contemptible. An academic from the LSE writing in the 'Independent' maintained that, "In part the Chinese authority's ruthlessness reflects a greater degree of unconcern for individual life than exists in the contemporary West." Has no one ever told him that a few years ago western civilisation in the shape of US bombers were undertaking the saturation bombing of civilian populations in the neighbouring countries of Vietnam and Cambodia with casualties an untold number of times more horrific than those inflicted in Tiananmen Square? This same creature follows this cretinous remark with another in the same pompous style: "In part, too,

it reflects the lack of an effective legal order to which troops using excessive violence could subsequently be held accountable". To whom then are the SAS assassination squads "accountable", or the officer who ordered the Bloody Sunday massacre in which 14 innocent people were shot in the back? The same officer who was decorated by the Queen for his actions? Obviously opinions related through a "learned" mouthpiece of this kind represent the general currency of establishment views, and these are from its 'liberal' wing. Another such view that has been floating around the media is that this kind of brutality is specific to communist regimes, and that the mechanism of capitalist societies somehow avoid them, at least on a domestic level. But even in recent times a scrutiny of the histories of Latin and Central America, of Indonesia (where a capitalist regime murdered an estimated 800,000 of its own citizens) or S.Africa, all illustrate the capacity of governments in the "Free World" to massacre thousands of political opponents in their own populations. But perhaps the most vicious irony of all is illustrated by the mass-protests in sympathy with the Chinese students in the British colony of Hong Kong. For there is no "Freedom and Democracy in Hong Kong. All things considered there is

probably less than in mainland China. Free and democratic elections for political office are forbidden. The colony is ruled by an autocratic Governor appointed from London. No doubt Mrs. Thatcher and Deng Xiaoping would have agreed during their talks that the Chinese people are not ready for democracy. Pro-democracy demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of people in the colony were battered and tear-gassed by the more sophisticated crowd-control techniques available to the British-run police (incidentally, widely regarded as the most corrupt in the world). Although the 3 million inhabitants of Hong Kong are British citizens, they can throw away their passports now for all the chance they have of Thatcher's government allowing them entry into this country. Foreign Secretary Howe has cheerfully admitted on the "Panorama" programme that this is because they have yellow skins and therefore do not present the same case as an Anglo-Saxon population. All of which leaves the laughable neo-imperialist rhetoric concerning the defence of British Nationals from the tyranny of dictatorships regurgitated in connection with the Falklands campaign looking sicker than ever.

the students

The events of May/June in China represent an unprecedented effort by a mass of the people to rid themselves of a domestic ruling class by broadly non-violent means. As many commentators have indicated, the events stand alongside such historical reference points as the Russian revolution of 1905, or the Paris Commune of 1871. On a more recent timescale, both the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and the mass mobilisation of various sections of the people in Iran in 1979 leading to the overthrow of the Shah, are overshadowed by the scale of the revolt in the Chinese cities.

MORAL FORCE

Protests and disorder of this kind are not novelties in China's recent history, yet nothing had prepared observers or the geriatric leadership for the scale and determination of this latest outbreak. Nor was the suddenness of its disintegration under the horrific impact of the military, anticipated by commentators of left or right. The ideology of the western bourgeoisie which dignifies and fetishises the 'power' of non-violence, and the 'moral force' of protest and appeals had clearly undermined their sense of the realities of the situation. This ideology seeps into sections of the political spectrum where the rhetoric would lead you to least expect it. The paper of the SWP for example (significantly, a student-orientated organisation) was confidently predicting in its issue of

June 3rd, (the day of the massacre) that the nature and scale of the protest would ensure that "the regime will have to move slowly at first", and that "an immediate large-scale crackdown would be difficult to enforce". Yet despite the

heroism and idealism on a mass-scale, the apparently universal detestation of the regime by all sections of the people, and the questionable reliability of certain sections of the armed forces, added to evident divisions within the virtually invisible ruling elite, despite all these favourable factors, all forms of protest were crushed by a single stroke. To understand why they did not succeed is the most crucial issue emerging from the entire sequence of events. How was it possible for such a singular revolutionary moment to be lost?

RELATIVE FREEDOM

The answer must be sought by examining the dominant social composition of the revolutionary crowds, and the kinds of action to which they were in consequence limited. The great majority directly involved, and particularly, those who formed the rudimentary leadership, were drawn from China's huge student population. The courage and integrity of the thousands involved cannot be questioned. Nor can their power to initiate a crisis posing immense problems for the ruling class. Their ultimate failure to dislodge - or apparently even dent - the bureaucracy and

corrupt leadership was due solely to their undetermined and ambivalent position within the class structure of China's society. This has a double aspect. First, an ideological one: unlike members of the working class the student body has no inherent organisation, cohesion or discipline; their antagonism to the ruling class, though often real enough, is not derived from a necessary antagonism to specific class forces, an antagonism that in the case of the working class is renewed by their conditions of work every new working day. The freedoms demanded by the students are therefore partial freedoms which would ensure their own relative autonomy within society without undermining the exploitive basis or ultimate power structure of that society itself. Freedom of the press is an example. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that as the disorder progressed, it became increasingly difficult to understand the precise nature of the students' objectives. Indeed, it became clearer each day that there were no coherent objectives of a general nature being advanced. Some sections of the press in this country have suggested that somehow the students were demonstrating in favour of a free-market economy. This suggestion has only been taken up by the regime in China itself; there is absolutely no evidence that the students want capitalism in place of the system; the reverse is true. We all remember the singing of the 'Internationale' in Tiananmen Square. The truth is that the students were themselves confused as to their aims, calling for reforms of an extremely partial or symbolic nature such as the punishment or replacement of individuals within the government. Even after the massacres the single message clearly transmitted to the western media was simply, "show the world what has happened". That is, they had, with unimaginable heroism, made themselves the passive targets of the unrestrained brutality of the hardliners. It is worth noting that accord-

ing to BBC reports, those who faced the oncoming army with petrol bombs and other missiles were local working class youth who had joined the students. The students' lack of a genuinely revolutionary position enabled a feeble leadership to consolidate its position and recover its nerve. It was inevitable that eventually the inertia of the ruling elite should overcome the ideologically inspired paralysis of the students.

LACK OF POWER

The second aspect of the situation emerges with even greater clarity. In comparison with previous protests the students' actions of May/June show a degree of development and maturity expressed as a generalised rejection of reformers that in previous bouts of disorder they had supported (Deng Xiaoping among them). It is doubtful whether their ideological position will develop much beyond this for the reasons outlined above. Yet even disregarding this deficiency in the revolutionary momentum of the students, it is apparent that the student body suffers from a simple lack of power to make their idealism practical. The students may march, camp in Squares, enter upon hunger strikes, appeal to the political conscience of the police and troops in huge numbers and for weeks on end yet never advance beyond issuing a challenge to the ruling class. Just as they can initiate a political crisis, but not resolve it in an ideological sense, so they can expose the sheer totalitarianism of the hardliners, but not remove or destroy them. There is no example in history of a ruling class voluntarily relinquishing power when requested to do so by a popular sense of justice and idealism. Being by definition situated outside the process of production however, the students have no other weapons to employ. By withdrawing their 'labour' from their colleges and universities, by not attending class and reading their books they do little to upset Mr. Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues: in simply occupying the streets, they are help-

less against a determined military force. The image of the white-shirted man momentarily halting the column of tanks is a striking and memorable one. But it could be profoundly misleading. For reflection shows that in reality it is an image of the utter helplessness of even huge crowds of individuals offering passive resistance to halt the progress of a militarily dominant ruling class. Yet there is in China as in every industrially advanced country a greater power than even that of the army. It is the power that feeds, clothes and arms the army itself and without which the army could neither exist nor move. The collective productive power of the working class - associated and disciplined by the very nature of their conditions of work - is the greatest and decisive power within any industrialised economy, against which, ultimately, even the tanks are helpless. There were hugely encouraging signs that elements of the working class had begun to attach themselves to the students' actions, and that at least some sections of the students themselves were aware of their need of the workers support. Nonetheless, in the current situation, it is the absence of an organised and confident socialist opposition within the Chinese working class that inhibits the overthrow rather than reform of the state-run machinery. Despite the uncertainty of the present situation, it is certain that the May/June events will have tremendously accelerated the processes through which such an opposition will be formed.

the left

There are 57 varieties of left wing sects, groups and organisation in Britain, all claiming to be the "one true church" and of course the natural heirs to Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. With equal logic it follows that if there can only be one workers party and they are that party, then all other groups, by definition, must represent directly or indirectly the political interests of other classes, and so are subsequently dismissed as either pathetic heretics or contemptible "petit-bourgeois counter-revolutionaries". Not surprisingly, having been built in to their political philosophy sectarianism is inherent and rampant. Despite their largely manufactured differences they have much in common, being indistinguishable to the untutored eye from one another. They rarely agree on anything much, for the reasons outlined. So when something occurs that temporarily unites them in condemnation it deserves to be examined so rarely do they share a common enemy. The recent events in China have provoked their complete and unequivocal denunciation of the ultracolonial regime of Deng Xiaoping. Even though it might be more convenient one man alone cannot be held responsible, so the responsibility must be shared among the people who ruled. And if you ask who are these people who have hijacked the revolution? The unified response will be swift and shrill, "Stalinists and bureaucrats" of course. "Stalinism cannot be pressed to change its nature"



Eighty years of struggle

- 1911: Nationalist revolution topples imperial dynasty.
- 1919: Student and intellectual protest against foreign domination (4 May Movement) suppressed, but heralds rising tide of revolt.
- 1927: Revolutionary upsurge across China climaxes in workers taking control of Shanghai. But on orders from Stalin, Communist Party tells workers to lay down their arms. They are butchered.
- Remains of CP, led by Mao, retreat to rural areas of head of peasant guerrilla bands.
- 1937: Japan invades and conquers large part of China.
- 1948: Communist led peasant army emerges as major force in China, leading to civil war with nationalist government.
- 1949: Mao proclaims People's Republic, breaks power of feudal landlords and sets out to industrialise China.
- 1988: Great Leap Forward attempt at forced



Significantly, those who faced the oncoming army with petrol bombs and other missiles were local working-class youths who had joined the students.

CHINA

struggle

...ion ends after
... with return of
... families.
... launches Cultural
... in attempt to
... foot by failure of
... Forward. Rival
... ruling class
... and Guards.
... no on verge of civil
... unite to use army
... order. Tens of
... killed and millions
... of countryside.
... years of bitter
... brought to head by
... Deng Xiaoping
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BROME

... is a bureaucratic dictatorship and it abhors democracy." (Workers Press).

... the bloodbath was a carefully prepared slaughter designed to show the determination of the Stalinists to crush any opposition to their rule. The bureaucracy has, in fact, declared war on the people of China." (Revolutionary Communist Party).

... the demands of the students for a free press strikes at the heart of the bureaucracy." (Workers Power).

... from these few examples you are left in little doubt as to who is to blame, which begs a second question: where did all these Stalinists come from? How did this aberration manifest itself? When did it first emerge? What is a Stalinist? Was Mao Tse Tung a Stalinist? Was he always one, if not when did he become one? Significantly the answers to these questions are not mainly found in the publications of the left largely because the questions are rarely put. There are reasons for this which we will examine later. But the first, was Mao Tse Tung, the later of Chinese communism, a Stalinist? By describing Mao as a Stalinist meant that he was a follower of Stalin in the same way that an admirer of Lenin must be an admirer of Stalin and resounding NO.

... Mao and Stalin

... from the infancy of Chinese communism in the early 20's Mao's contact with Moscow was neither pleasant nor rewarding. Not trained in the Soviet Union he was never trusted or patronised by Stalin. His unorthodox method of revolution, based on peasant mobilisation in the countryside, was tolerated by Moscow as legitimate

... only because all other types of communist insurrection in China had failed. There was no rapport between them, in fact there was a hidden mutual distrust and antipathy. Mao had witnessed the ineptness of the Russian Comintern policy in the 20's and 30's and had no confidence in Moscow's judgement.

... Stalin in turn considered Mao defective in his understanding of Marxism (a bit fresh coming from him) and often referred to him as a "Margarine Marxist". In Dec 1949, shortly after the communist victory, Mao travelled to Moscow for the first time, to seek aid and alliance and to celebrate Stalin's 70th birthday. The Russians deliberately snubbed him by mispronouncing his name Mat-Sa-Doon. While Stalin ignored him for days until he threatened to leave.

... The tensions between the "communist" countries continued for decades, resulting in ideological and territorial disputes, always stopping short of actual war, with the Chinese calling the Soviets "revisionists", "social imperialists" the "new tsars" etc., and the Russians retaliating by accusing the Maoist leadership of "adventurism", "deviating from Marxism-Leninism" and worst of all being "thoroughly anti-socialist".

... The differences between the Chinese and Russian revolutionary experiences may account in part for the antagonisms, and also for many of the unique features of Chinese "communism".

Differences, Russia/China

... First of all the Chinese revolution was led to success by a group of "professional revolutionaries" who received

red action our differences

It cannot be denied that over the last 50 years throughout Europe, both east and west, socialism has lost both its mass appeal and its revolutionary character. Not surprisingly the events in post-revolutionary Russia (where 15 million were interned in 1938) greatly eroded the self-confidence of the working class, internationally leading to an almost total eclipse of the vision necessary for socialist future. Ever since the real question has been no whether capitalism can be overthrown, but what to replace it with? Is there an alternative? If so what is it?

MONTY PYTHON

At the risk of stating the obvious, it must be perfectly clear that while the various groups and sects that litter the far-left in Britain talk of "preparing for power" and have managed to convince themselves that they and they alone are the future, it has a lot more to do with Monty Python than Karl Marx. Their complete lack of influence among working class communities is borne out by the social composition of these organisations, where the leadership and a significant percentage of the membership (in some cases an overwhelming majority) are clearly recruited from outside the working class.

Workers are no longer prepared to believe middle-class intellectuals when they talk of "blind obedience today, jam tomorrow", they have been misled and betrayed too often. In any case, cynical by nature, the working class will only fight now if they know that ultimately they are in control of their own destiny.

Dictatorship v Democracy

The pyramid type party structure with the "Great Man at the top" designed by Lenin in 1903 as a peculiar adaptation to the circumstances in Russia, regardless of any merits then it is clearly outdated and unsuitable now. Instead the structure must be designed to keep the smallest possible distance between the functioning leadership and the rank and file. Internal democracy can no longer be regarded as an option for a genuine revolutionary party, for history has demonstrated that the active conscious participation of the workers is vital to its development, for only then will the vast majority know what they are fighting for, what needs to be done to get it, and once having got it, how to keep it. In short, (when legal) the revolutionary party must aspire to be the living embodiment of the ultimate aim. Certainly at times progress may be slow and undoubtedly mistakes will be made, but we will learn more from the mistakes than to be prevented from making them by the imagined infallibility of any Central Committee.

In contrast the Socialist Workers Party, as spokesperson for the left, would claim that the revolutionary party only needs to maintain a fine and delicate balance between democracy and centralism. But in reality there can be no balance between dictatorship and democracy, it is a simple case of either/or. Invariably "intellectuals" are more comfortable with the former because they do not trust the working class, whilst from the very beginning Red Action chose the latter because we had no faith in the concept of being led by an academic 'elite'. As the Italian

communist Gramsci remarked "The trouble with workers is that they feel but do not understand, while the trouble with intellectuals is that they know but neither feel nor understand."

Ignorance itself is not a virtue and has no value, but 150 years after the production of Marx and Engels Communist Manifesto the contradictions between worker and intellectual have still not been resolved. Up to now, in recognition of the problem and in an attempt to bridge the gap, the intellectuals "pretended" to be workers, now it is high time that instead the workers actually became intellectual.

RESPECTABLE AND MIDDLE CLASS

This development, perhaps long overdue, is an important indicator in itself as Karl Marx outlined "among the conquests on the road to revolution is the development of working class intellectuals". The immediate impact would be to boost the self belief and restore the morale of the working class while simultaneously puncturing the inflated ego of the parasitic classes for here would be positive proof that if as a class we were become 'fit to rule' then equally we were no longer fit to be servants.

Due to the real confusion on the left, and in part due to our own class composition Red Actions political development has been uneven and our political theory rough hewn and instinctive. However as we now belatedly begin to flesh out and articulate our beliefs we sometimes find (mostly to our great surprise) ourselves in rather distinguished company.

Consider this quote from Frederick Engels in 1888. Socialism was in 1847 a middle class movement, Communism a working class movement. Socialism was on the continent at least respectable. Communism was the very opposite as our notion from the very beginning was that "the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself". There could be no doubt as to which of the two names we must take.

If there are only two things Red Action has never been called or even accused of then it would be 'respectable' and 'middle-class' so either history has repeated itself and if so then an admittedly generous interpretation of the above could be used as an endorsement for our existence. What is undeniably true is that, of the myriad groups struggling blindly for existence on the left Red Action stands alone slightly apart, visibly unique still regarded by many as a phenomenon. Some would no doubt say a regrettable one at that.

For our own part we are fully aware of our deficiencies as they are self-evident sharing as we do, probably in equal measure, the virtues and vices of our class. However we have never claimed to be the finished product, being merely aspiring "communists", but instinctive revolutionaries. We do not wish to rise over the working class or through the working class but WITH the working class, of course talk is cheap so all we ask is that people judge as we now judge others - NOT BY WHAT WE SAY BUT BY WHAT WE DO.

... ed wide support from the peasantry. In Russia it was the urban workers who gave decisive support to the professional revolutionaries of Lenin's Bolshevik Party. Chinese were mostly of intellectual and middle class backgrounds, those of true working class origin were few and far between. Never the less, the CCCP leadership insisted they were "spiritual". If not social members of the working class.

... Secondly, the pattern of society's development outlined by Karl Marx from feudalism to capitalism to socialism did not apply in China for as an economic system, capitalism did not really exist. Thirdly the Chinese - communist seizure of power had its base in the countryside and achieved success after a long period of struggle. The Russian revolution was characterised by strikes, sabotage and uprisings in urban centres, and won victory in a much shorter time than the Chinese.

... Fourthly, in place of the permanent Stalinist purge which accounted for the killing of 70% of the Central Committee membership elected in 1934, the Chinese elected ideological remoulding and thought reform. (Of the 1966 delegates at the 17th Congress of the Bolshevik Party in 1934, 1108 were later arrested... of the 139 members and candidates of the party Central Committee at the Congress 98, that is 70% were later arrested and shot).

... As an alternative the Chinese developed "brainwashing" to use journalistic jargon, not only to convert enemies and extract confessions but also to indoctrinate party members and transform intellectuals so that they can serve the state rather than be liquidated as in post-revolutionary Russia. (Much more humane don't you think) Through mass organisations,

secret police, mass communications media, the government succeeded in controlling and remoulding society and the people to an extent unknown in Chinese history. The whole society became in fact a laboratory of mass control.

... As we have seen there were differences but also other similarities. Like Stalin a "cult of the personality" was developed around Mao. The former was referred to in later years by slithering sycophants as our "beloved leader", "wisest and greatest" and "as radiant as the sun", while the Liberation Army Daily 1966 editorial pronounced that "the thought of Mao Tse Tung is the sun in our heart, the root of our life, and the source of all our strength. In 1970 a one-time successor to Mao uttered the immortal lines "carry out Chairman Mao's instructions whether you understand them or not".

... Thus similar grotesque distortions of socialism typified both communist regimes so that in a relatively short period of time society once again resolved itself into the age old tyranny, with the "Great Man" at the top, then the generals, ministers, administrators etc., and at the very bottom as before, the great majority with no influence and no voice. In this the inevitable result of all revolutions, if not it must be explained.

Democratic Centralism

... In 1949 a cardinal principle followed by the new government was "democratic centralism" which provided for popularly elected bodies at different levels of government. These assemblies would elect their own representative officials but pending the approval of a higher authority. Naturally communist party and government were interlocked and all important party members filled key positions in govern-

ment as well as in semi-official organisations such as trade unions, farm groups and mass organisations. As in Russia the role model for the revolutionary party became the role model for the revolutionary state: regimented, disciplined, ultra-centralist - despotic. Mao always maintained that within the national society there should be a central supreme authority, a "centre" with overwhelming decision-making power. Naturally he meant himself. In 1949 Mao held the Chairmanship of the Chinese communist party central committee, the politburo, the central secretariat, the peoples republic, the revolutionary military council and the national peoples congress. Democratic centralism as a system has very little to do with democracy and everything to do with centralised control. Under such a system it is inevitable that all power will gravitate towards the centre, ending logically in the absolute rule of one individual at the very top. The party substitutes itself for the rule of the class, the central committee for the rule of the party and finally all power is invested in the individual in control of the central committee. Responding to a gratitational pull the dictatorship of the party cannot avoid ending in a personal dictatorship. For instance, during the period between 1931-35, the period of greatest transformation in Russia, the first Five-Year-Plan took place without Stalin seeing the need to even consult the highest authority in the country, the Supreme Soviet.

The Failure of The Left

... So what finally is a Stalinist? A Stalinist is an individual who would approve or seek to defend as necessary the repressive undemocratic nature of the regimes in Russia or China, in essence to defend the indefensible,

the complete mutation of socialism which is Stalinism. On the surface then the revolutionary lefts united condemnation of the Chinese regime is both deserved and accurate, in reality it is simply a smear, an excuse rather than a real explanation, a convenient lable to put distance between themselves and the recent atrocity in Tiananmen Square. This exercise in name calling (bureaucrat/stalinist) is necessary because they have all adopted similar pyramid like "democratic centralist" party structures themselves. They are therefore hamstrung in their analysis and criticism by their very own attachment to the ideology responsible for the disasters.

... In all these organisations, which are built from the top down, the central committee is the only active element of the party, branches and regions serve simply as tools which implement its decisions. The Socialist Workers Party, the largest of the revolutionary left and the parent of many others (including Red Action) sees no alternative and claims that as "the working class faces the enemy, the ruling class, which is highly organised, disciplined and centralised, it can only defeat the enemy if it too is organised, disciplined and centralised". In other words, to defeat the enemy you must become the mirror image of that which you are trying to replace. Having achieved revolution, the easy bit, is it not obvious (and history has demonstrated this time and time again) that the party elite of the new regime would do nothing but seek to consolidate its own control, not only over the party but over the state. In defence of such a system many would claim that the end justifies the means, but the means clearly determine what the end will be. In this case the means turn against the ends.

FASCISTS?! WHAT FASCISTS?

WE ARE RED ACTION

In a major analysis, or at least a lengthy one anyway, the Revolutionary Communist Party's new glossy magazine, Living Marxism (No.7), devoted a full 10 pages to the rise of racism and fascism in Europe and Britain, 99% of which Red Action might agree with. Unfortunately it is the other 1% which is littered with errors and contradictions which deserve nothing less than to be ridiculed.

The article starts off by stating that in both France and W.Germany the far right has managed to put the question of racism on the national political agenda. All other parliamentary parties have felt obliged to respond to the race extremists, usually by making major concessions to the hardline racists, and points out that racism is more prevalent in Britain than in any other country. Straight away it trips over the first kerbstone when it claims that "the prospects for the far right are determined above all by the degree of legitimacy and authority enjoyed by the conventional right-wing parties. Where they are weak it can prosper."

Certainly it is true that the more stable and right-wing the parliamentary party the less room there is for the fascist-right, but it is still a strange analysis for a group calling itself revolutionary to make.

Surely it is clear that in the battle for the hearts and minds of the unemployed and disenfranchised the real struggle must be between the radical right and the Revolutionary left. The fascists will only have influence where the left is weak, and it is precisely those who are disillusioned with the system that can and indeed must be won over if any lasting progress is to be made. The Republican Party in W.Germany boast that their base of support lies in the bottom third of society, formerly the natural constituency of the revolutionary left, so that is where the real responsibility lies. The success of the radical right is determined above all by the absence of a left-wing alternative in, and representative of, the communities of the working class. The second point the article goes on to make is that the extremists can use the race issue because it has such a powerful influence to win a wider audience, but "there is little point in dealing with the visible symptoms while ignoring the racist growth at the heart of the body politic."

In other words there is little point in dealing with the likes of the highly visible Blood and Honour while the Tories have installed racist immigration laws. This argument is confused and contradictory, because earlier they had explained how the far-right had, at different times, in Britain(NF), France(LePen) and, more recently, W.Germany(REP), forced racism on to the national agenda. "I think there is a feeling that the big political parties have not been talking about this (immigration). In my view that is one thing that is driving people to the National Front. They do not agree with the objectives of the National Front, but they say at least they are talking about some of the problems. Now we are a big political party, if we do not want people to go to extremes, and I do not, we must show that we are prepared to deal with it." (Margaret Thatcher, January 1978)

They are able to do this because the European contemporaries of the RCP, successfully ignored them until they were too big for them to handle. The main point is that it is not a case of either/or, either street fascism or state racism, they compliment each other, being component parts of the same animal, as the fascists grow stronger in the streets it influences, encourages or indeed justifies the introduction of the bureaucratic measures in response to such expressions of popular support. If groups like the NF or Blood and Honour are not confronted how can they be beaten? If you cannot beat them when they are weak then how can you hope to defeat them when they are strong. If the left is not strong and determined enough to defeat them, how is it possible to even talk of confronting the State? Later in the article it suggests that anti-fascism "implies toleration of more conventional forms of routine racism". Are we expected to believe that a genuine racist could also be an active anti-fascist? In theory perhaps it is possible, but I have never witnessed Tory MPs getting stuck into the Front, so we'll leave that line of argument due to lack of space and general magnanimity.

They go on to suggest "that when the extreme right represents a physical threat to immigrant communities anti-racist should organise the left and the working class to fight.....The tradition which used to be called "introducing them to the pavement" drove the fascists off the streets of East London in the Thirties, it will do so again when necessary".

Oh well, that's alright then, we can all relax, it's in safe hands. What complete bollocks. Apart from the fact that they omitted to mention the Anti Nazi League in the 70's at all. How can an organisation numbered in hundreds and populated largely by fashionable students talk so confidently about introducing anybody to the pavement when fascists recruit and propagate without challenge, where racists operate with impunity in many white working class communities throughout Britain. It is estimated that race attacks

are currently running at 70,000 a year, so no doubt the victims of these attacks will be gratified to learn that the RCP intends to intervene when they are under physical threat, but only "when necessary".

It finally winds up with this classic cop-out conclusion. "The disturbing thing today is that no matter how obscure the fascists become, many of the left will waste time and energy chasing them at a time when the truly powerful racists in Whitehall are stepping up their campaign of deportations and police harassment against black communities. We ought to leave the miniscule right to rot and get on with the job of opposing the government which has rendered it redundant for a decade."

In the final analysis the "puny left" insist that it is both disturbing and counter productive to do anything but let the "miniscule right" rot. As any student of history will tell you ignoring fascism doesn't cause it to rot, but to FASTER AND SPREAD.

Quite apart from the fact that all the recent lessons from France and W.Germany are ignored, apart from the fact that they acknowledge that racism is more prevalent in Britain than either France or W.Germany so the potential for growth, should the Tories or the economy collapse, is enormous. Apart from the fact that groups like the BNP, Blood and Honour and the National Front would at the moment like nothing better than to be allowed to re-structure their organisations undisturbed. Apart from all of that, should the cloistered cadres of the RCP go to any football ground, pub or building site, they will find that reactionary ideas have a considerable influence and it is not restricted to expressions of anti-black/anti-immigrant sentiment, but in relation to the aspirations of working class women, the war in Ireland, Clause 28. Similar neo-fascist views already have currency among the very people a real revolutionary left must contain and win over if any effective challenge is ever to be mounted against the state - the working class.

But what about the "powerful racists" in Whitehall? The mandarins in Whitehall are not motivated by racism, the policies they implement operate on a free-market basis of supply and demand, if, as in the 50's, they need cheap labour they encourage immigration, if not, they will impose barriers to entry. In other words, they do whatever is politically and socially expedient, but always and only in the interests of the class they serve. It seems obvious that if you cannot change things at the bottom what possible hope have you of changing things at the top.

As is often the case with the left wing, having presented the scenario as a case of either/or, either street fascism or state racism, rejecting the former as bad and dangerous and celebrating the other as good and true, they somehow neglect to outline how their strategy might possibly be implemented. An oversight perhaps, more likely the analysis should be seen as a long-winded justification for their own inactivity.

Apart from one or two small groups, the RCP clearly speaks for what passes for the "revolutionary left" in this country. Their complacency is both irresponsible and characteristic, their indifference predictable, until they themselves become the victims.

By then of course, who or why should anybody else care, at least of all the current victims whose misery the left can still afford to regard with an attitude of stoic impassivity.

At the time of writing three black men died in police custody in London over one weekend, the local news reported that in Stepney, E.London, over 100 Asian kids aged from 5 upwards cannot travel the half mile to school for fear of racist attacks; in Camden Town the council invited mounted police to invade local estates to suppress a recent escalation in clashes between white and Asian youth. An anti-racist meeting in Welling, Kent organised by the local Labour Party was broken up by the British National Party. Nine were hospitalised.

In recognition of the need for a co-ordinated response to the immediate issue of race attacks, Red Action has been campaigning within Anti-Fascist Action for a new structure to be set up to accommodate the recruits necessary, to implement effective counter-measures, in essence to deal with the problems at source.

Racism is not a moral or a social issue, it is a class issue, so ultimately the only solution is a class solution. If the opportunity is not taken now, and in anticipation that it can only degenerate, then it is obvious that in the Britain of the 90's it is the new-fascists who will be making all the "introductions", with the conventional left unable to respond except by making feeble and probably horizontal protests.

RED ACTION IS AN ORGANISATION FOUNDED TO WORK TOWARDS THE ENDING OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SOCIALIST ONE

CAPITALISM The need of capital and labour cannot ever be reconciled. In other words the quest by the employing classes for greater profit, is in eternal conflict with the demands of the working class for higher wages, shorter hours etc. It is in the obvious interest of the employer to keep wages down as low as possible while it is equally obvious that this does not serve the interests of the majority. The two systems capitalism and socialism cannot co-exist, as they are in constant struggle pulling in opposite directions, each in pursuit of its own goals. A victory for one is necessarily a defeat for the other. This is the major source of conflict in the world today. Capitalism is a system which is based on the private ownership of the means of production. This means that the factories, workplaces, natural resources etc, on which we all depend to produce the necessities of life are the private property of a few individuals, who use them to produce not what is most socially necessary, but whatever will make them the most profit. When it suits them, they are able to close down those productive resources, even though there may be great social need for what could be produced on them. Regardless of how rich a country may be in natural resources, capitalism can never provide equality of wealth due to its own inherent limitations. It is obviously impossible for everybody to become a capitalist (employer) and so to function, the system demands the creation and maintenance of an employing class and a working class, or if you like an upper class and lower class. Propping up this system, are the forces of social control—army, police force, civil service etc—all controlled by totally unselected and un-accountable representatives of the capitalist class.

SOCIALISM It is impossible for us today to say exactly what a socialist system will be like, as when it happens there will be millions of others involved in shaping it. However there are some features that would have to be present in any society, before we would be willing to consider it as socialist.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP Only when all of the major productive resources and industry are taken into public ownership, will it be possible for the democratic will of the majority to ensure that they are at all times employed in the most socially useful manner. This will result in a massive increase in production and wealth.

CONTROL OF SOCIETY All those who occupy positions of power and authority will be elected by those they represent and subject to recall.

FREEDOM AND EQUALITY All will be expected to contribute to production and all will receive equal reward and have equal rights, irrespective of sex, race or creed. The state will provide adequate facilities to cater for the needs of the elderly, sick, handicapped, nursing mothers etc, who will all receive a full wage. All questions or personal morality will be free from state interference. Abortion and contraception will be legal and provided by the state. There will be freedom or worship for all religion, but no church will be allowed to interfere in state matters.

INTERNATIONALISM The capitalist economic system is linked up internationally, therefore the struggle to overthrow it is a worldwide one. All workers everywhere have the same interests. It is impossible for socialism to exist in isolation in one country, as the power of international capitalism would crush it.

NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM Socialism cannot be achieved through the parliamentary system, because the real power in society lies not with elected MPs but with rich industrialists and the leaders of the armed forces, police judiciary etc. The present structures cannot be reformed they must be overthrown. The Labour Party does not try to end capitalism, but merely give the workers a better deal within it.

UNION STRENGTH. WE SUPPORT ANY PICKET LINE IN DEFENCE OF WORKERS LIVING STANDARDS. We support a strong organised rank and file movement within the unions. Union officials should be supported as long as they represent their members correctly. But rank and file unionists must reserve the right to take action independent of the officials when necessary.

TOTAL OPPOSITION TO RACISM AND FASCISM We opposed any movement or ideology which attempts to divide the working class on grounds of race, sex, or creed. We recognise the need to oppose fascist organisations, both ideologically and physically on the streets.

THE IRISH NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE AGAINST OUR OWN RULING CLASS We support the right of oppressed people the world over to fight back. We unconditionally support the right of the 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 draw great inspiration from the principled and courageous manner in which they conduct their struggle, and from the way in which they have integrated cultural and class expression into their political movement.

THE "COMMUNIST" STATES The regimes in countries such as Russia, China Cuba etc, are used as examples to try and prove socialism undesirable. In our view, although these countries have planned economies, they cannot be described as socialist. We contend that socialism cannot be implemented from above by an unaccountable ruling elite. Public ownership, freedom and democracy are all essential features of socialism and in their absence it cannot exist. We support the right of the people in these states to overthrow the leadership and implement socialist policies. At the same time however, we recognise the difficulties that states such as Nicaragua—and others past and present—face, from capitalist backed mercenary armies, military intervention, and economic sabotage, which make immediate transition to a socialist system impossible. While these states remain progressive, we will continue to support them.

THE ORGANISATION Traditionally, the structure of revolutionary socialist groups in this country, has been one where the leadership is made up of a small group of self selected academics and intellectual, who would absolute authority over the membership. Such a structure fails, firstly because there can be no true democracy in such a set up, and corruption soon sets in, and secondly because those leading the organisation are so far removed from the realities of working class life, it cannot relate properly to that class. A revolutionary socialist organisation must be composed of and led by working class people. It must recognise that no leadership is immune from corruption and be truly democratic in its internal structures. It must be ready to work in a non sectarian manner with other socialist and progressive groups. It must present socialist policies in a manner in which working class people can identify with in their life and their work and their leisure. It must be consistent, principled and above all honest in its politics. Only then will it begin to be able to relate to the working class, most of whom today are cynical if not hostile towards the revolutionary left. We recognise that a revolutionary working class party is necessary if capitalism is to be overthrown. We are not that party, neither are those groups which claim to be it. We will work to keep alive a tradition of working class militancy, until such time as enough militants can be brought together to form that party.

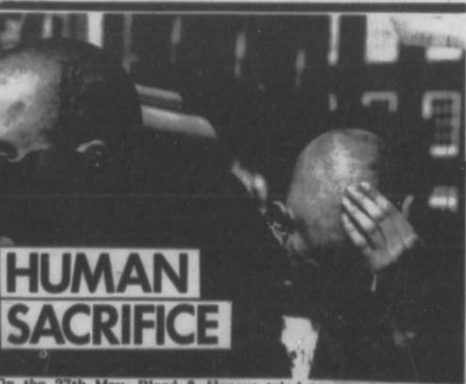
NOT FOR TURNING out

Support Group, but also for the psychological boost that knowing that they are not on their own but have the backing of other workers. Backing them as members of our class not as a party political front. The Bosses have always looked after their own class, we must now start to look after ours.

Dockers Support Groups have already been set up in S.E. London, N.London, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, Manchester, Brighton and Liverpool.

Red Action are involved as a priority and would urge all our readers to follow suit. These groups contain Rank and File Trade Unionists, Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, young, old, gay, straight all working as a part OF the class FOR the class.

If you would like to know details of your local group, or advice on how to set one up in your area, info can be had from John Laing of the Solidarity Network on 01-241 6930.



HUMAN SACRIFICE

On the 27th May, Blood & Honour tried to organise a massive gig (1200 capacity) in Central London. The gig was cancelled. The organisers abandoned hundreds, many of them foreign and left them to the not so tender mercies of Anti-Fascist Action. The shop "Cut-Down" a distribution point for neo-nazi propaganda was that night attacked by a large group, some masked, wielding sledge-hammers. Stock destroyed. "CUT-DOWN" SHUT-DOWN.