

Red Action

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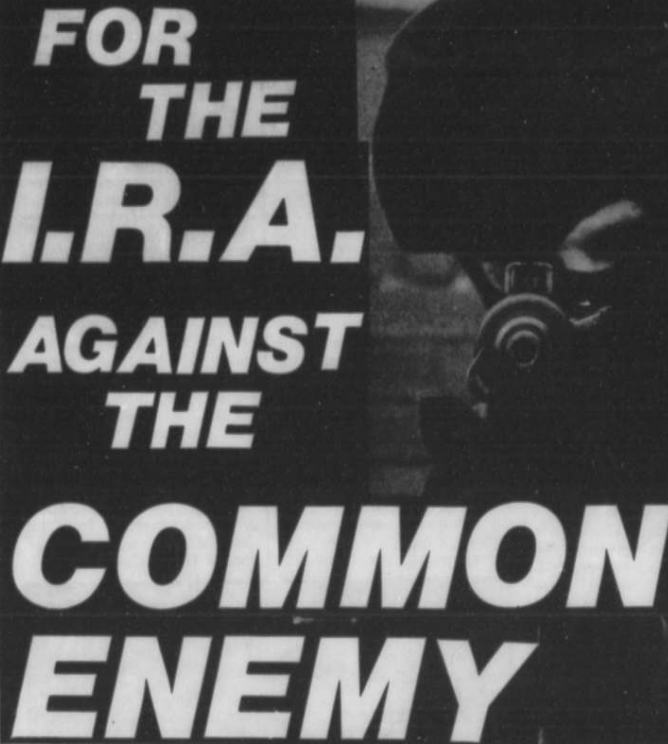
In 1971 British Home Secretary Reginald Maudling claimed they had "the IRA on the run". In 1978 Roy Mason claimed to be "squeezing the IRA like a tube of tooth-paste". And in 1981 Mrs Thatcher claimed that the H-block hunger-strike was "the IRA's last card". However, the claim made in a secret stolen document in 1979 by the then Commander of Land Forces in the six counties, Brigadier James Glover that "the Provisionals campaign of violence is likely to continue while the British remain in Northern Ireland" has proved to be the most accurate.

Faced by Internment, torture, criminalisation, super-grasses, shoot-to-kill, extradition, censorship, the presence of 30,000 troops, paramilitary police, SAS and local auxiliaries in an area the size of Yorkshire, with a population less than that of Birmingham, backed by the entire technological and financial resources of one of the world's leading capitalist countries; the fact that the IRA exists at all is an enormous achievement. Far from merely existing though, the IRA has in the last couple of years, due to the tenacity, ingenuity and tremendous courage of their volunteers, stepped up its military campaign.

From impact grenade attacks in the streets of Belfast, which have destroyed heavily armoured vehicles, to shooting down an army helicopter in the countryside of South Armagh, to successful attacks on military personnel in Britain, Holland, Belgium and West Germany, the 'cutting edge' of Irish resistance is far from being blunted. At the end of 1988 the number of British soldiers (excluding the UDR) killed, stood at 25, the highest annual figure since 1979.

Of course, the IRA would not exist except for the fact that, as it says in a piece of graffiti, "the people are the provos, the provos are the people" and no amount of hysterical blustering from British MP's about 'psychopaths, godfathers, criminals, gangsters etc, etc,' can alter the fact that the IRA still enjoys widespread support, throughout Ireland and especially in the Nationalist ghettos and poorer rural areas of the six counties. And it is that support from male and female young and old, that has provided the backbone of the last twenty years of struggle. Surely a tremendous inspiration to all of those who call themselves revolutionaries in this country. But is it?

You would have thought that 'revolutionary socialists' such as the SWP would have recognised the importance of Britain's fight to retain her last colony, of a revolution virtually on our doorstep, not in some far-off steamy central American jungle, but in the very heart of the capitalist west; evidently not. The establishment certainly has, as Tory MP Sir John Biggs-Davidson was kind enough to point out, "if we lose in Belfast, we may have to fight in Brixton or Birmingham." Instead of the revolutionary fervour they seem to generate for conveniently far-off struggles in places like South Africa and Palestine being applied to the struggle in Ireland,



**FOR
THE
I.R.A.
AGAINST
THE
COMMON
ENEMY**

the SWP and their like talk about the IRA and INLA 'alienating the loyalist community' and blindly call for the 'working-class to unite'.

The facts, however distasteful to their vision of the proletariat, are that the loyalist working class will never see the long term advantages of uniting with the nationalist working class while they enjoy the privileges, however small, guaranteed by the presence of the British in the six counties. Until that presence is removed, the chances of winning over of anything other than minute sections of loyalists to the idea of a thirty-two county socialist republic remain firmly at zero.

What the SWP and their like, seem to forget is that it was not even the IRA who started the present period of hostilities. The IRA (who were all but non-existent at the time) were only resurrected as a result of the loyalist programs, when catholic families were being murdered and burnt out of their houses en masse.

It was the realisation by the nationalist people that, as their peaceful civil-rights demonstrations were being brutally broken up by both loyalists, local militia's and police force, and the British Army (who, far from acting as 'peacekeepers', were there actually to suppress nationalist resistance) that they would only gain those civil rights if they were to first remove the British presence, and in turn the loyalist institutions from Ireland. It was as a result of this realisation, that the IRA re-emerged as a force to be reckoned with, both as liberators and protectors of the nationalist community. To fail to distinguish between the violence of the IRA and INLA and the violence of the British security forces and loyalist paramilitaries; is to fail to distinguish between the violence of the oppressed and the violence of the oppressor.

That the SWP fail to dis-

tinguish between the two is shown in their active support for the recent 'Time to GO' initiative. From the very start the title TTG (set up by a group of Labour MP's who favour withdrawal) implies that there was once a 'time to be there'. The fact of the matter is, that British Imperialism had, and still has, no progressive role to play in Ireland, Britain or any other part of the world for that matter. For a so-called 'rev-socialist group' to campaign under slogans like 'twenty wasted years' and that 'TTG does not pick sides in the conflict in N.Ireland' is bad enough, but to align themselves with an organisation that presumably believes that the election of a future Labour government will herald a new dawn of British policy in Ireland is, at the very best, naive.

Far from bringing about a powerful lobby within the Labour movement for British withdrawal from Ireland, the MP's calling for this position have, instead, become increasingly marginalised and isolated in a party that under the leadership of Neil Kinnock has swung increasingly to the right. Even the vaguest hint of 'socialism' which once existed amongst Labour policies has been all but eliminated as they set about convincing the Tory media and electorate that they can manage capitalism better than the Tories themselves.

To imply that a party which refused to support the miners, the cream of the trade union movement, during their strike, and conducts a witchhunt amongst its own ranks of those suspected of being 'militants', might voluntarily bring about the upset of eight hundred years of status-quo, is nothing other than absurd. Red Action

has no illusions about the party which has so often been the leading light when it comes to introducing repressive measures in Ireland. So what of the other Withdrawal/Solidarity movements which exist in this country at the moment? The Troops Out Movement has totally failed to build any influence amongst the working class, and no amount of liberal posturing will convince British people that any march or demonstration in this country call for 'troops out' and 'self-determination' is anything other than pro-IRA. In Ireland, there is a war, and in a war there is no middle ground, you must take side; to do otherwise only confuses people, and inevitably weakens your own position.

With regards to HOI the mistakes of the past seem deemed to be repeated. So what of RA's record on Ireland? Clearly, especially when compared to the rest of the left in this country, we have much to be proud of. We have consistently promoted the politics of Irish liberation in our paper, we have both supported and stewarded Irish marches, demonstrations and pickets, we have organised trips to Belfast so people are able to see for themselves the full extent of British oppression there, we have set-up six POW support groups (soon to be seven), we took a principled stand during the attacks on the Republican Socialist movement by the counter-revolutionaries of the IPLO, refusing, unlike most of the left to echo 'parrot-like' Sinn Fein's calls for them to disband, and have also taken a leading

THE ROAD TO HELL

The 'Time to Go Campaign' was launched last year amid a fanfare of publicity. The organizers promised that a march and rally would be the biggest demonstration of support for the Troops out of Ireland lobby in 20 years. It was sponsored by sections of the Labour Party, some minor celebrities and the Socialist Workers Party. AS the title 'Time to Go' suggests, they believed that there was a time to stay, but that the British should pull out as it no longer played a positive role in Ireland.

'Hands Off Ireland' was set up by a small group called The Leninist as a rival and alternative. The intention was to campaign to build a visible militant anti-imperialist contingent on the Time To Go march, and in so doing expose the contradictions and hypocrisy behind the project. In its initial stages last October there were about 9 different groups involved, but, perhaps predictably, within a relatively short time and amid much acrimony half a dozen made their excuses and departed.

After much internal debate within Red Action we decided to give The Leninist the benefit of the doubt and support this initiative on a point of principle. The Irish Republican Socialist Party, after publicly expressing its own reservations, did like-wise.

So without placing the same significance as The Leninist, Red Action having committed itself dutifully went about its work, supported, stewarded or organised, socials and public meetings in Colchester, Manchester, Liverpool and London. Naturally through working with them in this way it gave us an opportunity to assess our possible future partners, as it was understood by everybody involved that working to build for the contingent could be the first step in setting up Hands Off Ireland as a genuine multi-party solidarity movement on a permanent basis.

The first warning sign was the insistence, by The Leninist, on holding a HOI conference on August 12, a day they knew many of us would be absent (attending the annual anti-internment demonstration in Belfast).

The second indication that not everything in the garden was rosy, resulted from an incident after a public HOI meeting in Liverpool, where some young working class supporters of Red Action who had in conversation expressed their intention to travel to Belfast, were described by a representative of The Leninist as 'Revolutionary Tourists'. At a later date RA were dismissed as being anti-theory and "caricatures of the working class" (?) So far so bad. If there is one thing that personnel in RA have developed it is a pretty thick skin, so we gave them another chance, with the benefit of hindsight what we were actually doing was feeding them more rope.

On Saturday 22 July, at a meeting in London to discuss the possibility of the continuation of HOI on a permanent basis after the TTG march, delegates from the IRSP and RA spoke freely pointing out the basic approach and strategy that they felt needed to be understood and adopted if HOI is indeed to continue in the short term and, more importantly, achieve success in the long term. After that meeting the following document was hastily drawn up to try and prevent a suspicion becoming a fact, that being that unless they were stopped The Leninist were fully intent on launching both themselves and HOI over the edge of the most convenient cliff. In the document we pointed out that if "any new solidarity movement is to be viable, it must identify and then target a constituency previously ignored up to now - the working class. As we all know, this is a formidable task requiring stamina, imagination and courage, commodities sadly not widely evident on the British left.

While recognising that there can be no short cuts, we readily admit that simply identifying the problem, in itself get us no nearer to providing a solution. What we do know is that it would be both pointless and cynical in the extreme simply for HOI now to join an already overcrowded market, populated in the main by inward looking, ineffective groupings, content to exist under the patronage of Sinn Fein and who limit their activities to one march and/or a few meetings or socials a year. Similarly, a recent suggestion from The Leninist that HOI should hold a march at Easter, the only available gap left in the political calendar, is a mistake, being both premature and unrealistic, promising only to mimic some of the 'three men and a dog efforts' of its less than illustrious predecessors.

If HOI is to have any chance of success it must be and

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'THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT'



FOUR

HISTORICAL

FIGURES

PICK THE ODD

ONE OUT

OUR CHOICE

MIGHT SURPRISE

YOU



"Eventually the ceremony was over. It had taken just 70 minutes to end the class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat. By 1.15pm the time had come for the workers - with substantial intellectual support - to take over."

The above is a quote taken from The Guardian, August 25, 1989, describing the endorsement of a new non-communist P.M. by the equally new Polish parliament. As a statement, conclusion or analysis of what is really taking place in Poland, it is no more ignorant, simplistic or contradictory than any other, simply more concise. Translated it means something like this: 'The class struggle and the rule of the working class is at an end, the time had come for the workers - (with substantial intellectual support) to take over'. Confused? You bet.

Apart from the naive belief that the struggles between classes in Poland has ended, when in reality it has not even begun, the real confusion, for which the reporter can in no way be held responsible, hinges on his interpretation of the term 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. The standard assumption by both left and right, socialist and capitalist, up till now, has been that the meaning of the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is not 'the rule of the working class' but the control of the state by the 'representatives' of the working class, ie the revolutionary communist party, something entirely different as the Polish worker knows. It is also accepted that this 'theory' was first developed by Frederick Engels and Karl Marx and later implemented by the Bolsheviks led by Lenin after the Revolution in Russia in 1917. Right? NO. Wrong, very wrong.

When the term was first introduced by Marx in 1850 it was misunderstood. Mis-

understood? This fact is something else that needs to be understood. As we will demonstrate, misunderstanding became the rule, but this happened so consistently, it can only be assumed that the people who misunderstood wanted to misunderstand. They already had a conception about 'the dictatorship' which they had absorbed before they ever knew of Marx and they merely used, ignored or attacked - Marx's term in accordance with their own leanings. (The concept of some sort of 'benevolent' dictatorship had long pre-dated Marx). On top of that these "disciples" of Marx, including Lenin, Trotsky etc., were always more heavily influenced by their own environments socialist and capitalist, than by Marx's ideas. Both of these factors were to play a decisive influence on events in post-revolutionary Russia, and subsequently in every other revolution world-wide ever since.

The following article is not the kind normally associated with the publication called Red Action. This is not because we are 'Anti-theory', but because we are a working class socialists and as such often judge things very differently from the middle-class academic and pseudo-intellectuals that populate the sects on what passes for the revolutionary left in Britain today. In any case we believe practice comes first, that any real theory must be based on practice, which in turn serves practice, and its value must be judged by the objective results. Many "theoreticians" on the left would no doubt violently disagree, but as they often have their heads up their own, or each others, arses, the end result is often ~~nothing~~ to provide a whole new meaning for the term "tunnel vision".

The importance of this "discovery" is that it clarifies and enlightens. Its particular

relevance to Red Action is that in sentiment it is entirely consistent with every thing we have ever stated to be valid, true or correct. It also confirms our long held suspicion of the 'fundamentalist' pedantic approach of the traditional left to the writings of the Russian revolutionaries Trotsky and Lenin. Finally it offers up this delightful or appalling prospect (depending on your point of view), that is, if on this issue we are right, then it follows that their basic approach is completely and utterly wrong

So what did Marx actually mean by it, and more importantly when, rather than if, did Lenin's interpretation fundamentally depart from that of Marx?

Many choose to believe that Lenin stood on Marx's shoulders, or if he did not, Lenin's vision of the future was perhaps superior to that of Marx, but what can no longer be in dispute is that on this vital question choice is necessary. It is not a case of Marx and Lenin, but quite simply Marx or Lenin.

Before we examine Lenin's theory on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat let's first explore Marx's theory. The first shock is to discover that old Karl didn't have one. He lent the phrase no particular significance. In the two decades before the Paris Commune there was not a single case of Marx's use of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, instead he always referred to the 'rule' of the proletariat, conquest of political power, workers state, and similar expressions to denote the assumption of state power by the working class.

Due to confusion within his own circle Marx explained in 1875 what he meant by the term, unfortunately the explanation was regrettably brief: "Between the capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. To make this there corresponds a political transition period whose state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." According to Marx: "A workers state can be nothing but a dictatorship of the proletariat in other words the two are synonymous. As we shall see Lenin's understanding was vitally different.

When Marx died in 1883 the term had not come up for 8 years and it was another 7 years before it appeared again, under Engel's name defending Marx's 'Critique of the Gotha Program' against attacks from right wingers in the German SDP. Engels wrote: "of late the Social Democratic philistines have once more been filled with wholesome terror at the phrase dictatorship of the proletariat. Well and good gentlemen. Do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like, look at the Paris commune. That was the dictatorship of the proletariat. No ambiguity there.

This caused consternation. How could the Commune be a dictatorship, if it did not obviously take dictatorial steps. Many wondered was this indeed Engel's own invention, perhaps neither he nor Marx actually understood Marxism?

Blinded by their own prejudice they could not accept the simple truth. For Marx and Engels from the beginning to the end of their careers and without exception, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat meant nothing more and nothing less than the

rule of the proletariat, the conquest of political power by the working class, the establishment of a worker's state in the immediate post-revolutionary period. It did not mean the rule of one man, clique, band or party. It means the rule of class. Class rule means class dictatorship by the class not over the class.

The standard anti-democratic definition was first introduced formally not by Lenin as myth has it but by Plekhanov, future Menshevik theoretician, who wrote it into the party program of the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1902. Though it was generally assumed and accepted that the "Dictatorship" meant only the suppressive function of the new state, it was left to Lenin to explain why this might be necessary. "If we really knew positively that the petty bourgeoisie will support the proletariat in the accomplishment of its, the proletariat's revolution, it would be pointless to speak of "dictatorship" for we would be guaranteed so overwhelming a majority that we could get on very well without a dictatorship." Therefore if the revolution

cracy, but as soon as we saw the first sign of socialism in the progress of the revolution we took a firm and resolute stand for the dictatorship."

In the same year he explained "Our dictatorship of the proletariat is the establishment of order, discipline, labour, productivity, accounting and control by the proletarian power." And finally, in case there is still any doubt, he explained graphically that "our task is to study the state capitalism of the Germans to spare no effort in copying it and not shrink from adopting dictatorial methods to hasten the copying of it."

Now isn't that worth fighting for? Ironically, given subsequent events, it was Trotsky who chiefly accelerated this process of theoretical degeneration. It was he who accepted the label of "workers state" for Stalin's totalitarian regime, solely and exclusively because it maintained statified property. This was entirely the consequence of having earlier separated, theoretically, the concept "workers state" (dictatorship of the proletariat) from the question of working class control from below (rule).

Trotsky, Bukharin, Kamenov etc., who held centre stage, busily gutting socialism of its automatic enroachment in the mass of the people, as we now know, Stalin was standing in the wings carefully rehearsing his lines. During the period when the revolution was fighting for life against fourteen invading armies, Lenin thought that the outcome was going to be either/or: either the military overthrow of the Russian revolution before the European revolution could save it; or the expansion of the revolution into a continental or world-wide upheaval - the final destruction of capitalism over the entire planet. He did not count on the in-between situation that actually took place; a level of European revolution and war exhaustion sufficient to blunt the imperialist worlds intervention without bringing about a social revolution on the continent, so that the Russian revolution survived militarily - but isolated. They had been hanging on, waiting for the revolutionary war to be won so that it would be relieved, but now the war was over, they were still beleaguered. It had been accepted in Russia for decades that a socialist government would be unviable, meaning that a counter-revolutionary overthrow was inevitable. What was expected did actually happen. The crucial element was that the counter-revolution came from inside the ruling party, which was not itself overthrown but which overthrew the workers state.

The principles of revolutionary socialism were first distorted under the strain of the protracted emergency. Then the distortions themselves became the principles.

So for the last 60 years or so what the left has been, and still is, woodenly debating is not the result of the application of Marxism, but the legitimacy or otherwise of the distortions, deformities, mutations that they have undergone since they were first conceived. Hardly surprising therefore that socialism has been in ideological retreat, leaving the working class estranged, bemused and betrayed.

Instead of the valuable lessons of the failure of the Russian experiment being digested by the working class, it was accepted as a success, a role model for the revolutionary party and state to be exported worldwide, with predictably disastrous results. Every subsequent revolution, instead of being an advance for socialism and the working class, had the effect of further confusing and clouding the vision of a future alternative system, enfeebled and unnerved the international working class, and so in the long run actually copperfastened the capitalist system it was meant to replace. The mistakes of the past have been further compounded because the original errors have still not been confronted. Genuine revolutionaries must start again.

Should the events in China where the 'army of the people' is slaughtering the people in the name of the people under the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', be regarded as an embarrassing excess, a contradiction to be explained away, the blame laid at the feet of a corrupt and geriatric bureaucracy, or instead celebrated as the bloody memorial to end a disastrous epoch, and herald the beginning of a new socialist era.



Stalin's version of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'

commanded the support of the immense majority then dictatorship would not be necessary, so what Lenin clearly understood by the term was a dictatorship of the minority. It goes without saying that this was a complete negation of Marx.

He 'advanced' on this basis from the dictatorship of the people to the dictatorship of the "revolutionary people". "Why only of the revolutionary and not the whole people? because among the whole people constantly suffering most cruelly from the brutalities of (the Cossacks) there are some who are physically cowed and terrified, degenerated by bad theories that prevent them from fighting or by prejudice, habit, routine or, for others, simply cowardice".

From this position he slid quite seamlessly, disastrously from the concept of class dictatorship to the concept of party dictatorship. Once having accepted they necessity of minority over majority rule it was perhaps predictable that later, in 1919, Lenin was found attacking the very concept of democracy.

"Democracy is a form of Bourgeois State championed by all traitors to socialism who assert that democracy is contrary to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Until the revolution transcended the limits of the bourgeois system we were for demo-

The process was pursued systematically to its logical conclusion hence, "our practice has led us to the result that in all moot questions generally - conflict between departments and personal conflicts within departments, the last word belongs to the central committee of the party. This affords extreme economy of time and energy and in the most difficult and complicated circumstances gives a guarantee for the unity of action."

In a further assault on democracy good old Leon proclaimed "And it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party, otherwise, Soviets would be the shapeless parliaments of labour." He particularly distinguishes himself here, not only by attacking parliamentary democracy but any representative democracy. Later he talked about the 'militarisation of labour.' At this time it was



'Dictatorship' of the proletariat - Chinese style!

THROUGH THE POST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

The pages of Red Action are open to all of our readers to write about anything they wish. So if you want to make a point about any political matter, or perhaps just comment on something which you have read in Red Action, write to the box number. Please keep all letters as short as possible.



Dear Red Action, Thank you for the back copy of the paper, and it is good to hear that you have run a successful campaign against the police attempt to frame Billy Lacey. I think Martin would appreciate an article about his case in RA and you are welcome to use anything I have sent you. It probably would be best to make it clear that Martin is not a 'Republican' prisoner; I know the bulletin is not clear in reporting Martin's feelings on this point. The problem really is that many Left groups do not have the integrity of 'Red Action' and will use any campaign, whether it is strike or prisoners' campaign as a form to sell papers and recruit members and then leave. I think Martin felt that FRFI were trying to manipulate him on their terms and then just dropped him when they found he didn't have the 'right' stance on Ireland. I will ask Martin about this if I can get into seem him, but that might take some time as he is thinking about going 'on the block' and if he goes into isolation no-



body, apart from his family and lawyer, will get in to see him. Martin may be moved to Wandsworth quite soon. The official reason given is that the local specialist will not treat him so he will have to go to a jail in London and wait for treatment at St.Marks' hospital. However Martin's lawyer has found him a specialist who lives at Stockton, quite near Frankland. The real reason in moving Martin is that he is suing the doctors at Frankland for 'negligence' and also the usual pattern with the Authorities and their attempts to make life hard for him is to move Martin as much as possible. There is no guarantee that Martin would not be moved again once it looked like St.Marks were going to treat Martin. and so on. To try to stop being moved Martin may go 'on the block' which means that he will be in isolation from other prisoners and have less contact with staff. Obviously as far as the campaign are concerned we call for his release. The Irish Embassy seem to want to compromise and last time I was on the phone to them they were asking me did I think that Martin would prefer a different jail to Wandsworth, but he is an innocent man whose life and health are being wrecked from being framed; I don't think he is wanting to pick and choose jails.....

The campaign is doing better than ever. In Birmingham there is more of an interest in Police framing after a batch of cases have emerged where the West Midlands Force have blatantly contrived 'confessions' and fabricated evidence against suspects. We are working a lot closer with the Birmingham Six

campaign and there seems to have to be an over lap in the officers who framed Martin in 1977 and the B6 and Carl Bridgewater men. Martin's 2nd framing for robbery and 'conspiracy to rob' case was partly instigated by Detective Inspector Paul Joseph Matthews who was behind the framing of Paddy Hill from the B6. He has also been involved in pyramid selling (confirmed by Chris Mullin) and has departed the Force in mysterious circumstances. The main Serious Crime Squad in Birmingham has been disbanded, but only four members face disciplinary procedure-three of them were involved in the B6 case. Clare Short has a list now of fifty cases where the West Midlands Police Force have intervened to falsify evidence.

DAY OF ACTION
There will be a day of action calling for Martin's release on September 11th, roughly the fifth anniversary of his arrest in 1984. There is a court order in force stopping a mention of the assault against Martin at Walton. When Martin looked like winning in the civic court, he agreed to an out of court agreement which in theory would leave the way open for criminal charges to be brought against the officers from Walton, and part of this was an agreement that the hearing would not be publicised. In return he got £750 compensation. Martin expected criminal charges would be brought but nothing has happened and the Attorney General announced that none would be brought. Moreover not even disciplinary action has been taken against the men. Presumably they are still at Walton on the Medical block attacking sick prisoners. I hope that more people will realise that this is an important class issue and that we need stronger organisation to resist the legal system and its periodic attempts to frame working class people.

For more information contact BM/FORAN London WC1N 3XX.

Best Wishes
Mike Shankland

Martin Foran, an inmate of Parkhurst Jail, is fighting to clear his name of a robbery conviction. He was sentenced to eight years imprisonment back in May 1985. His conviction is based on the evidence of the police, there was no identity parade, and one witness to the robbery in question did not recognise Martin in court. The robbery took place early in the morning of 10th September 1984. The witness to the incident said that the robbers were young, coloured males with Birmingham accents, Martin is a white Irishman, 44 years old and has an obvious accent.

On Thursday June 15th Martin sent out a letter from Frankland- "I am in a very bad way, and I'm being moved again. On Tuesday 13th June the duty prison doctor on seeing the mess my belly is in said that I should be in an outside hospital. I've seen the solicitor who took photos of

my belly and I've seen the Bloke from the (Irish) Embassy. Now as you know the Governor in the letter you have said that I would not be moved. Nothing has been done for the opening running sores on my belly, and now I'm being moved very soon to a London prison, after the Governor saying that I would not be moved. I'm unfit to walk never mind be moved - the doctor ordered me into hospital. I haven't received treatment, never mind hospital. Every single prisoner on my wing has signed his name to a petition because of the mess I am in, it's fifty times worse than when you saw it (June 3rd). As it is spreading, as my skin now smells it is quite clear to everyone that I will die of gangrene. The specialist Mr.Cook was willing as you know to help me, he has told me this in person, they now tell me that he doesn't want to take the risk, so bad is the mess I'm in. So now to enforce a cover up, they are moving me on again knowing that it is going to kill me....All I ask of you and every person who has helped and supported me; For me it is too late, think not of my suffering but that it must never happen again. Doctors in prison should be made to answer in a court of law for the lack of treatment to prisoners, so should prison officers who kick and beat up sick prisoners. They waited until the bloke from the Embassy had gone before telling me that I wasn't going into hospital like the doctor ordered, but that I was being moved. Will you please tell everyone what is now going on. It's too late to save me but they must be made to answer, don't let me die for nothing. Stop it happening again."

For more information contact BM/FORAN London WC1N 3XX.



P.O.W.

To all Red Action members, A Chara, This is just a note to thank you all for all the support you have been giving me since the initiation of the sponsorship scheme for INLA (INLA/IRSP related) Republican Socialist POW's within

the H-blocks. I am really looking forward to seeing you tomorrow on the visit. I only hope that next year I can return the compliment by coming over to London (if I can get in. Ha Ha. I hope you do not feel in any way intimidated by all of the security you will see around you. You may notice that as POW's none of us wear convict uniforms - something which ten men - seven IRA, three INLA - gave their lives for. Every concession we have now in here has been fought for. I hope you can read this 'Comm' okay and please forgive the grammar. I really hope that your visit has been thought-provoking and that you gain a greater insight into the war. Finally, let me thank you all once again for everything - my family now would find it hard to cope without all your support and the moral support I get from you all makes my ten year sentence irrelevant.

STUDS
"too detailed"?!
Dear Red Action, I am writing you to comment on the articles in 'Red Action'. The articles are too detailed and should have less details of information on the topics you are covering if you are not to put people (especially working class people) off from reading them. You could also show more concern in explaining socialist ideas. Yours fraternally, Kevin Boyle

First of all it must be admitted that it is with some surprise that we greeted this letter. Rarely is RA or its publication challenged from the position of being too high brow, or too detailed from some quarters the criticism is exactly the opposite. However, having said that the paper has changed particularly in the last 6 months since our National Meeting. It is now chiefly concerned with reporting on issues with which Red Action is directly involved, Anti-Fascist Action, Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid and Solidarity Network, Cable Street Beat, Hands Off Ireland etc., and keeping our readers, contacts, and members informed on the progress, or otherwise, of these campaigns.

While this might seem a perfectly legitimate role, it had not always been the case. Up until then in recognition of the damage done to the socialist cause by party newspapers on the left, loudly proclaiming some squalid shabby affair to some eminent historical event. In complimentary fashion they often justified an untenable position or alternatively attempted to disguise a real ignorance of the subject they claim to be expert on by dropping random quotes from dead Russians. Further more they were characterise by launching shrill and probably libellous attacks on all and sundry with reckless abandon. We in RA were determined that our paper would be different.

Not only did we avoid any possible accusation of sectarianism, we avoided mentioning for years any other left organisation at all with, we believe commendable consistency we usually managed to avoid mentioning our own organisation either. Secondly, the rhetoric and jargon associated with the publications was visibly absent. Finally, we attempted to leap frog the existing left with broad, generalised, socialist arguments rather than anything specifically related to Red Action. As a policy, though attractive and in a way admirable it was both naive and flawed reflecting perfectly the generous altruistic nature of the parent body. However, no

matter how painful or embarrassing it might sometimes be to admit it, there are some weird and wonderful organisations out there, our differences and our relationship with them must first be explored and explained. Secondly though, Marxism is a science, it is not an exact one and was never meant to be the preserve of academics. It is, and should be, used by working class militants as a guide to action. Thirdly, by neglecting to articulate our politics on specifics, it is possible that for a time we retarded our own development.

In conclusion it can be stated as a simple matter of fact, that since the early eighties when Red Action took its first tentative steps, we have been attacked, ridiculed and libeled from all sides, indeed rarely can so few, been slandered by so many for so little reason. Perhaps, being a working class revolutionary organisation a phenomenon on the left in Britain, we were regarded with and still are in many quarters with deep suspicion.

We have been accused of 'looking like fascists,' 'being fascists,' 'worse than fascists,' 'bar room rebels,' 'caricatures of the working class,' etc., Rarely have we bothered to dignify these attacks with a reply in print, not because the allegations were true, or that we were so over-awed by the accusers that we couldn't even manage a feeble

denial, but simply that we felt such incredible contempt for these cartoon-like characters masquerading as socialists or revolutionaries that regardless of the provocation we never felt threatened, so never felt the need to retaliate, we just looked at them through the eyes of the working class and laughed. With the benefit of hindsight which is now obvious that such vigorous and prolonged character assassination couldn't fail to have a negative effect, not on the self-confidence of our membership or supporters (sometimes its had the opposite effect only confirming our own prejudices) but on other individuals possibly sympathetic but not acquainted with the facts.

If Red Action does not promote or neglect to defend itself, then obviously nobody else is likely to do it for us. Finally, you mention articles being too detailed. We live in a capitalist society so capitalist ideas have greater currency. If the 'Sun' says 'The IRA are gangsters,' 'Strikes cause inflation,' 'Immigrants cause unemployment,' it is not sufficient just to say, it is not true! It is the responsibility not just to explain but to convince the working class that such arguments run counter to their self-interests. The ultimate objective is not to win the argument but to change society.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

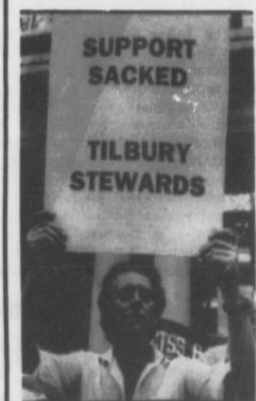
By coincidence this is 100 years after the great victory of 1889. 1989 was a disaster for the workers in the dock industry, which resulted in the largest port in Britain losing all trade union recognition for the TGWU and approximately 150 men being sacked, including all the shop stewards, of whom I am one.

We are still in dispute with the Port of Tilbury. We have set up a dispute committee and will carry out a campaign to seek reinstatement in our jobs and trade union recognition for the men who were blackmailed, whose families were intimidated, threatened with the sack, and forced to sign contracts imposed on them. If they did not do so, they were to be sacked with no pension rights and no compensation, many after 30 years in the industry, in their late 50's.

The dockers now working in Tilbury docks could not be described by any trade unionists as strike breakers or scabs. These people were on the picket lines with us during two strikes. Some travelled all over the country with us to picket other ports. These people, loyal members of the TGWU, were sold down the river, or dumped, by the Executive Council of our union. Ron Todd was compliant in this, as were many regional secretaries. The reason given was that they have an obligation to the broader membership, in other words, the 76 million pounds worth of assets. Money means more than principles. These men are paying the price for the trade unions becoming big business. Right in the middle of our official strike, all our members received a mailing from the TGWU of a glossy brochure advertising their new financial and insurance advisory service!

The extreme left newspapers blame the failure of the dispute entirely on Todd and the EC of the union. This is not entirely true, as we were deserted by some

of our people, in particular the shop stewards committee in Southampton. Maybe this was affected by their employer, Associated British Ports handing out shares in the company to their workers. Did they have a conflict of interests? Whatever the reason, we lost the unofficial strike, due to their treachery, and the official strike for the same reason.



This strike was bought out by the government, who paid a minimum of 150 million pounds in severance payments, and these are continuing for the next 3 years. The final cost to the taxpayer of buying off a dispute, might never be known. With all that has happened to us in Tilbury Docks in the last six months, we are not prepared to accept defeat. We will continue to fight for the reinstatement of all dockers sacked in Tilbury, and more importantly for the restoration of trade union rights in the Port of Tilbury. The struggle our grandparents began will continue. We will continue to fight for trade union principles which are far more important than millions of pounds in the bank.

BY MICK FENN
sacked Tilbury dockworker and TGWU shop steward

WE ARE RED ACTION

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 unelected and unaccountable 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 of 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 lays 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.

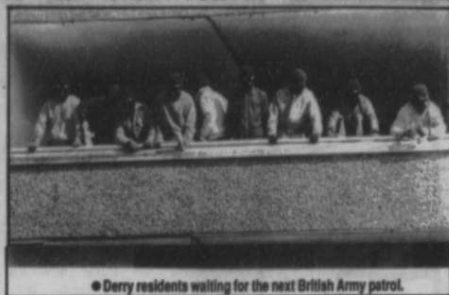
UNION STRENGTH. WE SUPPORT ANY PICKET LINE IN DEFENCE OF WORKERS LIVING STANDARDS. We support a strong organised rank and file movement within the unions. Union officials should be supported as long as they represent their members correctly. But rank and file unionists must reserve the right to take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



© Derry residents waiting for the next British Army patrol.

And what of the IFM and their like? RA has worked with the IFM in the past and will almost certainly do so again in the future, in line with our policy of non-sectarianism. However, if the truth be told, the IFM is plagued with the same problems as so many other organisations like it. As it is in reality a front for the Revolutionary Communist Party, it believes that the only way forward is through building their party, which of course claims, like every other organisation on the left, to be the only party that can lead workers to the ultimate goal of revolution. Ultimately what really happens, is that in their drive to build their own organisation along with all the sectarianism which it entails, they end up divorced from the working class, and true Irish solidarity work is neglected to the point whereby they excuse their refusal to sponsor any Republican Socialist POW's by dubbing the scheme 'charity' and read out a message of 'solidarity' from the IPLO who only two years ago set upon a course of genocide to wipe out the only genuine revolutionary Marxist group in Ireland, the IRSP. The role in the campaign to expose Sinn Fein's strategy of censorship aimed at silencing the IRSP.

Leninist have done with HOI, using the same old tired formulae (I know. We'll have our own march, we'll use the slogans 'troops out now' and 'self-determination' 'cos we really mean them.), but to sit down with all these interested and debate the failings of all that has gone before, and, based around a programme of practical work and support, form a strategy that will at last truly begin to mobilise first, the Irish, and then, the British working class, in Britain. An immediate step as advocated by RA, would be to amalgamate the various committee's who organise the national Irish marches in this country in different areas, so they can mobilise on a national basis for each others marches, pooling their resources, and so bringing about the maximum turnout for each event. Whether the various groups will be able to see through their own blinkered sectarianism and petty arguments is doubtful. However, the fact remains that RA is dedicated to the building of a genuine Irish solidarity movement in this country, that will at last do honour to the commitment and sacrifices being made across the water, and call upon those dedicated likewise to join with us in heated and constructive



However our criticisms of Sinn Fein have only been made in a context, that also recognises them as a revolutionary organisation that is fighting British Imperialism, our enemy and that through the sacrifices, courage and hard work of their activists have gained the hearts and minds of the most militant sections of the working class in the six counties. We have never, unlike others, had the affrontery to doubt their credentials as revolutionaries, and used incidents such as Eniskillen etc., for opportunist slappings of the armed struggle. We say support neither the INLA/IRSP and the voice of revolutionary socialism or the IRA/Sinn Fein and the voice of revolutionary nationalism; but BOTH.

As we draw towards the close of this article, and the gloomy picture it paints of the situation in this country, we find ourselves confronted by the same old question, 'so where do we go from here?'

The fact clearly remains that there is an urgent need for a genuine Irish solidarity movement in this country. For once, however, surprising as our readers might find it, RA does not call for people to immediately dive into various courses of action and activities. After twenty years of failure by the British state to smash resistance in Ireland we are also faced with twenty years of failure by the left in Britain to form any kind of genuine solidarity movement. We say that now is not the time to blunder into immediately forming yet another organisation, such as The

debate as soon as possible. To the left we say look to your own mentor, but whichever one he may be, the message is clear:

Marx: "For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working class ascendancy. I also expressed this point of view in the 'New York Tribune'. Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied to Ireland. That is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement in General."

Lenin: "It is necessary that all communist parties render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and subject nations (for example in Ireland, among the Negroes of America etc) and in the colonies."

Trotsky: "The British socialist who fails to support the uprisings in Egypt, Ireland and India deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet."

In response to being branded with infamy over their record on Ireland the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers Party had this to say in 1988. "We alone today on the British left can claim to have passed each decisive test. Our record is second to none, it is qualitatively different. Comrades should reject any tendency towards defensiveness over the Irish issue." Qualitatively different? who could possibly argue with that.

The road to hell... contd.

be seen to be radically different in both politics and approach from its contemporaries.

To undertake a task of this nature will require, especially given our meagre resources, in-depth discussion and debate to formulate the precise strategy and tactics that will be required if we are to break the necessary new ground. Failure to do all of this before any new initiative is launched would, we believe, cast grave doubts on the integrity of the sponsors'.

A week after that meeting The Leninist proposed setting up a 7 member national committee in anticipation of HOI continuing on a permanent basis. The proposed ratio was, wait for it, ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE SHEFFIELD DEFENCE CAMPAIGN, ONE FROM RED ACTION AND ONE FROM THE IRSP - THE OTHER FOUR FROM THE LENINIST - AN INBUILT MAJORITY. The justification was that the committee should be representative of those individuals who had done most of the work. We readily admit that The Leninist did more to build for the contingent, but that was all based on the importance they themselves attached to it (presumably they swallowed the propaganda coming from the Time to Go campaign which predicted a march of 25,000 to 30,000). On the other hand if our involvement around Republican Socialists Prisoners Aid was anything to go by, where it took The Leninist over 18 months to sponsor a POW, in the same period RA members and supporters had already set up seven separate support groups (each paying £8 weekly to a POW and his family) - then the ratio on any permanent HOI committee would in all probability be radically different. (Ironically their belated first payment was taken from the proceeds of a fundraiser for HOI organised by RA).

In the latest edition of their paper The Leninist issue 81, they neglect to mention any of this, blandly describing the HOI contingent as "a great success". The article goes on "at the end of the march the HOI contingent peeled off and held a short rally with speakers from HOI, Red Action and The Sheffield Defence Campaign, with messages of solidarity from the IRSP." What they neglected to mention was that due to their own stupidity, both the IRSP and RA have since 'peeled off' from HOI. It goes without saying that the conference itself merely rubber-stamped every proposal from The Leninist. Naturally the planned march for Easter is to go ahead, for according to The Leninist "Such a march can provide an important focal point for working class mobilisation on Ireland". Even if the afore-mentioned fucking dog doesn't turn up, it will no doubt be declared a tremendous success.

Where do we go from here? RA has obviously been misled, but that in itself is nothing new and something we accept with weary resignation. The trust of the IRSP has been betrayed and that does matter, because they are of and for the working class, actively involved in a war of national liberation and, quite frankly, in seeking allies they deserve better. Come to that so do we. What then of HOI now? The plain fact is that without the support of the IRSP, which lent it credibility and, if nothing else, the very necessary practical advice as regards 'street strategy' RA would have provided, HOI is already dead in the water. The responsibility for this clearly lies with The Leninist, whose behaviour from beginning to end has been short-sighted, self-serving and dishonest. This type of behaviour is so typical of the sects that litter the British left that anything else would come as a complete surprise.

Why do they do it? What makes them tick? How can educated, hard-working, apparently intelligent people be so negative? Why do they consistently opt for an imaginary short term advantage and, as a consequence, sacrifice any possibility of achieving the long term goal and, just as consistently, confuse the two? If it is any compensation it is not a recent phenomenon, nor exclusive to the British left. The following quote from Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky in 1935 on the nature of sects and sectarianism provides an illuminating explanation: "Each sectarian wants to have his own labour movement. By the repetition of magic formulae he thinks to force an entire class to group itself around him. But instead of bewitching the proletariat he always ends up demoralising and dispersing his own little sect....The sectarian no longer recognises his world. All reality stands marshalled against him. And since the facts flout him he turns his back on them and nurses himself with rumours, suspicions and fantasies, he thus becomes the source of slanders without being by nature a slanderer. He is not dishonest. He is simply in irreconcilable conflict with reality."

SUPPORT RED ACTION



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·WC1N 3XX·

RED ACTION ON MERSEYSIDE

If interested in finding out more/getting active in the North West or on Merseyside. There is a grouping of members and supporting members on Merseyside who can be contacted by writing to:

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