

# RED ACTION

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The  
Last  
of the  
Socialists?

# EDITORIAL

**From the first IRA cease-fire in August 1994 Red Action has argued that the peace process was an Irish Republican Movement strategy. And precisely because of that ownership, the peace process should be recognised by opponents and supporters alike as 'subversive'. We do not pretend that the subversive peace process line won over many converts from the English Left.**

Most were derisive: best summarised by the sniggering SWP claim that: 'at least Arafat got the West Bank Adams got nothing!' Another particularly dotty Trot sect, who incidentally never supported the armed struggle, is rumoured to be calling an 'anti-imperialist conference' in Ireland in order to galvanise support amongst dissidents in response to IRA Army Council treachery. As Adams famously commented to a similarly opinioned heckler at a public meeting in Dublin: "Fair play to you: cease fire-soldier!" Significant perhaps that the heckler was, as it turned out, a pro-Unionist, Democratic Left fellow traveller.

Red Action from its foundation has recognised armed struggle as a legitimate tactic. Legitimate in the sense that it was morally right for a people to take up arms against an occupying army, and legitimate in the sense it was an appropriate, indeed vital component, in pursuit of the wider strategical objective. But armed struggle is a tactic. Never a principle, or an end in itself. From either end of the spectrum the English left appear to draw no such distinction. For them, the abandonment of the tactic is the abandonment of the goal. Simple as that. So for some exaltation; crocodile tears for others: "After nearly 30 years the revolutionary situation that gripped the Six Counties, and which throughout that time implicitly endangered the constitutional existence of both the United Kingdom and the Twenty Six Counties is about to be resolved negatively. The peace of the oppressors has overcome the violence of the oppressed." (*Weekly Worker* May 4 1998)

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This is reality - inverted. It is never the oppressed who militarise a situation; and in the present context it is not the oppressor whose initiative it is to demilitarise it. The British militarised the situation. And only republicans have an agenda for demilitarisation. However by so doing,

there are cat calls from the English Left that they have thrown in the towel, sold out, bottled it, let the anti-imperialist side down. From '68 to '98 the overriding concern of our fine revolutionaries has always been, not how they might affect the war but how the war effected them. To paraphrase JFK, 'ask not what I can do for republicanism but what republicanism can do for me'. From the outset this has been the premise. In lieu of authentic internationalism, (where in the interests of the self determination of another country you fight your own ruling class) we have instead, with the ceasefire as backdrop, the articulation and hopes of English Liberalism on the one hand set against the equally self absorbed perspectives of English Communism on the other. Have the Irish not endured enough?

(Issue 1.Vol 3. which carried a cover photo and prophecy from Martin McGuinness attracted a sizeable 'we wuz robbed' contingent outraged, presumably, at the absence of an intimate Hello! type interview. Well there was one; but yours must have fell out) Ed.

## THE LAST SOCIALIST?

Whatever illusions were invested in the Socialist Labour Party, events on May 7 must surely have dispelled them. Entering the local elections with about 20 councillors, to a man, defectors from Labour, the SLP exited with none. In the supposed stronghold of Barnsley, Anne Scargill romped home with a majestic 103 votes. Not withstanding the election of former Labour MP Dave Nellist in Coventry results for the Socialist Party (formerly Militant) were just as ominous. In former Militant power bases like Liverpool, despite the low turn out, it managed to accumulate less than two per cent in some wards. At such an inauspicious juncture news filters out that the SWP, for the first time in over 20 years, intend throwing their hat into the electoral ring. This, a mere twelve months from proclaiming Blair's election 'a class vote and a victory for the working class'. Hardly convincing evidence that they have a finger on the public pulse. The SWP claim that 'discontent with Blair was shown in the local election results'. If anything what the elections demonstrated is that the 'political centre' with Blair at the helm is still expanding. The centre will of course contract. This inevitably leads the aforementioned to conjure a complacent scenario where they will be the automatic beneficiaries of a Labour slide. They are gravely mistaken. After over half a century of false promises, cowardice, opportunism and betrayal the working class have not merely lost all faith in parties like them, but at a fundamental level in socialism itself. On May 8 a socialist, Dave Nellist, became a councillor in Coventry. He was the only one. And the last one?



**Ex-Labour MP Dave Nellist, recently elected Socialist Party councillor in Coventry**

# INTERNAL AFFAIRS

## MINIMUM STANDARDS

It was good to see a whole host of familiar faces and a number of new ones, at this year's annual RA National Meeting. Some were absent because of justifiable reasons, including one of our organisers who was busy cementing links with fellow anti-fascists in Germany. However, a few members appeared to be missing for reasons that were less straightforward. One, a member of some years standing now, confessed to me later that he had felt the main policy document up for debate, 'Fast Forward or...', what can only be described as 'intimidating'. This is a great shame and also a bit silly, as he missed what was a crucial debate within the organisation

The session started with a quick look at the state of the British left and compared their efforts with the ambition of the BNP, who have on their immediate agenda the raising of £50,000 to fight next year's Euro elections and the setting up of their own film unit. The BNP had also insisted that households in the wards where they stood during the recent local elections should be leafleted at least twice and all canvassed, with activists going out four evenings per week and weekends during the preceding month.

As I pointed out in this column before (June/July), we have identified inadequacies that still exist within our own structures that have held us back. Once again these were confronted in the 'FF' document in an uncompromising fashion... "The self deprecatory, raggedy arsed, semi-detached presentation and approach to existing policy and structures needs to be brought to an abrupt end. Failure to attend activities, prepare for meetings, a proffering of feeble excuses, chronic unreliability, an avoidance of subs and other routine derelictions can have no place in Red Action."

The document went on to identify though that: "Unlike previous phases in our existence when the practical political application was often reduced to one or two issues, it is now increasingly symmetrical and all the stronger for it." In other words each area of work will complement and dove-tail with the other, while at the same time fitting into the overall strategy.

The main thrust of the document outlined what the author of the piece felt was required to ensure that the various areas of work we are engaged in moved forward simultaneously. As well as a symmetrical approach to our work it is important that we also have a systematic approach. This means "every member in RA will have one specific individual focus of responsibility, a field of speciality not instead, but in addition to the obligation to the wider project." While this might have seemed daunting to my aforementioned colleague, all we are talking about is ensuring that: "everyone takes responsibility and plays their part to the very best of their ability", or putting it plainly, it's about setting some minimum standards of commitment. What will be required for the coming period, is for RA to become an organisation of organisers.

Of course that doesn't mean that anyone 'not making the grade' will be cast into the wilderness; far from it. As the great Irish revolutionary Bobby Sands said "Everyone has their own particular part to play. No part is too great or too small." However, let's not kid ourselves, for us to move forward, it will be up to each member to make what amounts to a personal decision to take a step up.

Steve Potts



## THE BIG ISSUE

They came out of the inquiry snarling, spitting and punching. It was their demeanour, more than the psychotic language, or the failure to secure a conviction that has shocked liberal Britain. Theirs was not the body language of outcasts, but of individuals secure in their own identity, and even aware of a certain celebrity status within their own community. For militant anti-fascists the strutting stride and accompanying smirk will be familiar, having been wiped from countless faces in the last decade. But in so doing, militants warned that the politically organised were more symptom than cause. If the 'infamous five' were for instance card carrying members of fascist parties it would be more comfortable for liberalism to digest. Easier to pigeon hole, demonise, and dismiss as an isolated aberration in an otherwise functioning multi-cultural; mutually tolerant society. Smug self congratulations on the failure of the far-right to make an electoral breakthrough in Britain as in other European countries, has nothing to do with liberalism. Quite the opposite.

It is the ruthlessness of militant anti-fascism that has caused the temporary eclipse of the politicised far-right and distorted the bigger picture. With typical conceit, the chattering classes claim all credit: boasting that liberal opinion has triumphed, and extreme racist views are restricted to the membership of the fascist organisations.

However, Britain enjoys a race attack level on par with Germany where the far-right have just entered government. This is the flip side to 'Cool Britannia'. Former *Independent* editor Andrew Marr 'glimpsed the nightmare that could unfold'. His solution; "Fair policing, a decent liberalism from politicians and yes "respect" all round is the only alternative." (*Daily Express* July 1998)

### POINT BLANK



### AFA in Germany

A leading AFA member recently spoke to

German anti-fascists in Berlin. The Berlin meeting was attended by several groups including Friends of Ireland, Autonomen Kommunisten, Red Antifa Initiative, RotKapchen, Prinzlerberg Anti-Fascists and Antifa (Berlin). The discussions centred around the need for a working class analysis to be the driving force of anti-fascism in Europe. Most of the groups and individuals who attended the Berlin meeting are close to the AFA analysis of the struggle against fascism. However, in the context of the German anti-fascist scene, they appear to be in the minority. Unfortunately, right wing ideology has

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# NOT WAVING...

**A** defining feature of the Trotskyist left has been its continual support, albeit supposedly 'critical', for the Labour Party. Over recent years, some of these groups such as Militant (now the Socialist Party), have concluded that this position is no longer tenable, particularly in the light of Labour's wholesale adoption of anti-working class policies. While a step in the right

direction, most of them still cling to a more 'radical' version of Labourism while calling for a Labour vote at elections.

This stance, dubious for at least half a century, has now become even harder to sustain. When Labour is perceived as being anti-working class by a hefty section of those who were once its supposed natural constituency, it's time to change the marketing strategy.

As Andrew Marr pointed out in the *Observer* recently, "Crucially Blair does not believe in equality. He is not a social democrat. He has no enthusiasm for organised labour, no sentimental attachment to the post-war settlement. He feels himself to be a different kind of politician, responsive to middle England, rather than Labour Scotland. In his speeches he almost fetishises change and modernity; leadership for Blair is not about rendering social democrats more electable, but vaulting the whole idea between Left and Right. His Third Way is vague still, but Blairism, thus far means the three C's - Christianity, community and competition. He is a market radical with decent social instincts. But he's no kind of socialist."

This now appears to be the position of the SWP, according to a report from a recent delegate conference. "Next year's elections to the Scottish parliament have already become the focus for official politics. The Scottish National Party is putting on a left face. We should not abstain from the argument. We are in a position to put forward class politics and stand candidates on a class basis." Lindsey German, *Socialist Worker* 23rd May 1998

The catalyst for their change of heart appears to lie in a fear that they will get sidelined, not only by the Scottish National Party, but more importantly for them, by Scottish Militant Labour and the Scottish Socialist Alliance. Any call for a vote for Labour would be suicide in the current climate and to support the SML and SSA, who, incidentally, will probably have fused into one organisation by the time of the elections in 1999, would be an admission that they just can't cut it. They would run the risk of total wipeout in Scotland, an area where they've always been weak.

The only solution is to stand themselves but this creates a real presentation problem. As recently as last May they claimed a vote for Labour was a 'class vote'. To make things worse for them, much of their membership and wider support come from layers around the trade union and student left who wouldn't have touched the SWP with a barge pole when there was a substantial Labour soft left. That is why it is likely, that though they will stand in the Scottish elections out of pure necessity, they may get cold feet when it comes to future local elections. German herself inserts an instant get-out clause in the next paragraph:

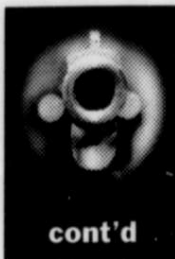
"Elections are only a small part of what we do and standing underlines the need to deepen our roots, set up more workplace sales and build a layer of working class militants around us. We have no idea what vote we will get. We can look big in some workplaces and on demonstrations but elections are not the best area for us. The most important question for us is not the elections. It is building our branches for the important battles to come."

In other words, the most important thing is still to recruit new members, so they can, in turn ...recruit new members. This is backed up by a quote from a 'leading' student, who says: "We've got to use the next few weeks to sign up students to Marxism. We have got to find them in the libraries and coffee bars. The more students we sign up to Marxism this year, the bigger our SWSS (SW student societies) groups will be next year."

The 'new road' turns out to be the old road with an extra lane on it.

Colin O'Brien

not just affected German society and institutions, it also appears to have pushed most of the German left - including some militant anti-fascist groups - to abandon the idea that the working class can become the force for progressive change in society. The AFA representative also spoke to anti-fascists among the St. Pauli fans in Hamburg who have also expressed an interest in AFA. One young St. Pauli skinhead commented: "The problem with the left wing people in Germany is that they no longer speak the language of the ordinary people." Another well-known anti-fascist football fan went further when he said: "They can't relate to working class people because few of them come from the working class themselves. The worst thing is that the left actually think that they are winning."



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## Defections in West Midlands

Midlands BNP are feathering the nest for the influx of realigning fascists that have gone over to their ranks in recent months. Prior to the May elections the West Mids National Democrats joined the BNP en masse, followed closely by Fullbrook fledgling Wayne Ashcroft, who had previously acted as a National Front organiser within the region. This will be the first time that fascists in the West Midlands have worked under one banner since the late 70's, significant because that too was under a maligned Labour Government. At that time NF candidates contested virtually every electoral seat in the region, and harboured large pockets of support in many working class areas. AFA though are always willing and able to exercise the fine tradition of militant anti-fascism. The Midlands fascists are acutely aware of just how effective AFA can be, no matter what label they choose for themselves. (See 'Something we said', page 12)

# BACK ISSUES

## WITNESS TO MURDER

The thirty Red Action members and friends who went to Belfast for the anti-internment demo this year were able to experience for themselves exactly what life is like for those that oppose British rule in their country. The actions of the RUC during the incident when one man was killed and dozens injured have been reported around the world. Much of the reporting, especially in the British press has been distorted to try and excuse the RUC. Here one of the Red Action party gives his impression of what it was really like...

"The thousands of participants on the anti-internment march - apart from the smartly uniformed teenage flute bands - were no different from those that we pass in the streets each day. Just normal people, young and old, a whole community from it's skinheads to it's grandmas out together in a peaceful act of protest.

I was standing with a few friends looking across a peaceful attentive crowd, when suddenly, amid the deafening crack of plastic bullets being fired, everybody started to panic. People everywhere dived to the ground or ran for cover. The RUC had opened up on us. I ran towards a small bookshop, but couldn't get in because of a rush of people ahead of me with the same idea, so I had to get my head down behind a small wall in front of the doorway. Nearby, on my left, still in the open, stood a small girl crying, too young and confused to understand the situation. As I put my arm up and grabbed hold of her, a rebounding plastic bullet smashed into her knee, knocking the skin away and making it bleed. The next few seconds are very hazy. I remember feeling very vulnerable and fearing a baton charge. I can't remember how, but me and the little girl managed to get into the shop.

Later, as everyone walked away from the area, we were passed by several RUC landrovers whose occupants were flicking the 'V'. A short time later an army landrover passed us. One of 'our brave soldiers' provocatively aimed his rifle at me and sniggered".

Red Action, issue 14, September/October 1984



# Changed Utterly



Gerry Kelly (centre) Long Kesh escaper and Assembly member

**As Sinn Fein take their places in the new Northern Ireland Assembly, Joe Reilly argues why this signals continued subversion not sell-out**

**If a week can be a long time in politics, the converse can be equally valid: a decade can be a short time. Less than a decade ago Sinn Fein was forced to hold its annual Ard Fheis in a community centre in a run-down estate on the outskirts of Dublin. Prior to the August 1994 cease-fire Adams was dismissed by British commentators as 'Mr 10%'. Following the Assembly elections on June 25, Sinn Fein lay claim to be the third biggest party behind Fianna Fail and Fianna Gael in the entire country. Republican fortunes have been transformed: changed utterly and with them the political landscape of the island as a whole.**

This transformation is not merely as a result of the recent Assembly elections, instead it is the undeniable impact of the republican strategy in all areas and on all levels. From the first cease-fire in 1994 everything has been turned upside down. Majorities have become minorities, the demonised are in government and Britain's historic conundrum has been resolved. This is not to say that a republican victory is in the bag, but who can deny that they have the momentum, have grasped the initiative and set the agenda for a resolution to the conflict. Strategically, electorally and even morally republicans are in the ascendant. And because of this, even though not politically dominant, their destiny is surely in their own hands.

Outside of republican circles this is not a view that is widely shared. Almost as much has been written about the war in the last four years since the cease-fire, as in the previous twenty four when militarily everything was in full swing. War is politics by other means and the war reflected a political impasse. It was the IRA not the British who broke the stalemate. But not as many contend, by blinking first. On August 31 1994 all the blinking was done in the opposition trenches; Major was

gobsmacked, Molyneux visibly distraught and so on. Significantly it was British Trotskyism, rather than the British Establishment, who shouted 'surrender' loudest and longest. Significant in the sense that fundamentally they call it wrong on everything else.

It has often been said that the British have never really understood, never got inside, the republican psyche. This applies as much to the so-called revolutionaries as to the establishment and the securocrats. Too often perhaps they judge them by their own standards. For above all else the IRA and Sinn Fein are revolutionaries. Nationalists of course but the stamp is unquestioningly insurrectionary. It is this drive; the determination to get to the root of the problem that has at different times awed, stunned and bewitched a watching world.

In 1981 a five year no wash protest against criminalisation in the jails burst upon the world stage with the Provos upping of the ante: the hunger strike, the election of Bobby Sands and subsequently ten men dead. Heroic and dramatic as the hunger strike saga was for millions, the real republican ingenuity and resolve was illustrated by the traumatised survivors picking up the pieces in the aftermath, both inside and outside Long Kesh. The prisoners had won many of their demands: the right to wear their own clothes, right to [limited] association, right to normal visits, letters and parcels, but there was no concessions on prison work or remission lost through protest. If republicans came off protest, they would be required to do prison work; effectively to conform. 'Conforming' would also mean going into mixed Blocks with loyalists. By mixing the Blocks, the authorities figured that if no side controlled them, then they would.

But by refusing to work prisoners were locked in their cells and were clearly going nowhere. The arguments for and against coming off were bitter and divisive. Those who wanted to continue thought it was a 'sell-out' to the men who had died. Additionally the Provos were also split into those who had protested and those who had not taken part in any protest.

In any case, in November 1982 the no-work protest officially ended and on that date Provos were offered work throughout the prison. The making of garden gnomes was one scheme. Tables and chairs another. But it never quite worked out as intended: there was always too much sand or too much water; the gnomes fell to pieces, the frames were also too long or too short. Productivity was very low and in the end the quota was made up by the screws, just for a quiet life. Subsequently any attempts to get the Provos to conform ceased, and they got their way on the work issue without open confrontation. Next, segregation and then control of the Blocks was achieved with a mixture of ruthless mind games, violence and intimidation.

After Loyalists were driven out the IRA set about provoking a division between the

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**A public denunciation of militant anti-fascism by the USA-based 'United Front Against Fascism' serves to demonstrate perfectly the incautious methodology and paucity of thinking that makes up this strain of anti-fascism. G. O'Halloran investigates the multi-cultural rationale.**

# ● BRANDED

**Within a year of Anti-Fascist Action hosting an international militant anti-fascist conference which warned of a 'fascist renaissance,' the far-right have gate crashed democratic institutions at regional level in three separate countries. The conference which was held on the anniversary of the Battle of Cable St on Oct 4 1997, was attended by twenty six different delegations from counties in Europe, America and Canada**

Central to the discussion was the need for anti-fascism to reorganise around a comprehensive counter strategy. 'The far-right have reinvented themselves and we [the radical left] must do the same.' Writing in the *Guardian* recently a black journalist with first hand experience of the changing political climate in Europe, echoed the conference theme: "As we approach the 21 century, fascism has reinvented itself as a mainstream ideology in European politics. In the words of the Front National's number two Bruno Megret, earlier this year: "We have brought off a great strategic victory. We are no longer demonised," (*Guardian* June 17 1998)

Called by Anti-Fascist Action the two day event was structured around discussion on a draft manifesto. Nine months in advance of the advertised date a 'militant manifesto' and founding statement circulated throughout Europe, involving 36 groups in preliminary discussions on plans to launch an 'International Militant Anti-Fascist Network.'

From the outset the Spanish delegates and a minority of the large German representation who attended the conference, strongly identified with the central tenets of the draft 'manifesto' which highlighted the responsibility on militant anti-fascism to put 'the whole rightward process into reverse: not merely to destroy the fascist's influence in working class areas but replace them there. But for this to happen fascism must not only be out-violenced it must be out-radicalised.'

For the majority however, when it actually came down to it, the 'working class did not [politically] exist'. Period. No meetings of minds there then. Needless to say the majority did not affiliate to the 'Militant Anti-Fascist International Network.' Along with the majority of the German delegates, other refuseniks included delegations from the Scandinavian countries and of course the USA. At one stage both the Swedish and Norwegian delegation complained that AFA was 'giving the fascists too much credit'; in effect exaggerating its potential for growth. Only later did it come out that the Norwegian far-right had itself recently received 17% of the vote in national elections and they had no counter strategy. Unlike the Norwegians, the American Trotskyist delegation; 'United Front Against Fascism' put their criticisms of the 'Manifesto', and AFA on paper and circulated it on the Internet.

Being broadly representative of the majority German/Scandinavian opinion; for the purpose of debate by proxy the UFAF document is ideal. Custom made in fact; being both entirely accurate in representing a particular mindset,

and sufficiently precise.

Notwithstanding AFA organisers being described as 'undemocratic, arrogant, racist, sexist, homophobic, "anti-communist McCarthyist red-baiters," the UFAF document remains an important illustration of the incautious methodology and paucity of thinking that makes up this strain of anti-fascism, possibly at the moment the dominant one internationally. Throughout the UFAF document, the working class are mentioned only in passing, and then almost as a concessionary after thought. This, as will be demonstrated is no oversight. Slander apart, the UFAF critique is littered with quite staggering tactical, strategical and theoretical gaffs. For choice? Probably the notion that it is 'economic woes of the middle class' rather than the working class that need addressing as a militant anti-fascist priority. Fractionally less crass is the inference that all fascist parties are instigated and controlled at board room level. The list of boo-boos is endless.

But by a longshot the most telling paragraph, is the core UFAF insistence that a "successful anti-fascist movement depends on recruiting and promoting the leadership of all those who are direct targets of the fascist program of racism, anti-Semitism, anti-immigrant scapegoating, misogyny and homophobia. For these reasons we advocate a manifesto that overtly and explicitly addresses the issues and concerns of these constituencies and a network that aggressively seeks representation from these groups."

At face value, this is the nutshell of a philosophy that declares that race, gender and sexual preference are in themselves defining qualities, governing all other considerations. Class and political allegiance included. 'Equality' regardless of colour or creed used to be the thing. Yet now in mainstream anti-racist/anti-fascist thinking, the deification of difference has replaced equality as the norm.

The implications are so glaringly obvious that even its UFAF sponsors acknowledge that it is an idea so alien to working class, socialist, anarchist and communist traditions, that it would need to be pursued 'aggressively'. How was anti-fascism reduced to this? When did it happen? Who instigated the debate? Whose interests is it intended to serve?

Reality is, the whole concept is an enormous charade foisted on us by the ruling elite, with strident middle class liberalism as the conduit. Mostly the pose is hardline anti-fascist, but when examined turns into its opposite. Stripped down, the multi-cultural mindset has its origins not in utopian grass roots democracy but in a post war establishment consensus on realpolitik.

The impetus was the Holocaust legacy, which discredited all previously cherished racial theories. This coupled with Soviet Cold War propaganda that exposed American hypocrisy on



**Pauline Hanson, leader of Australia's far-right One Nation party, with admirer.**

democracy and human rights was responsible for the policy review on the race issue. American President Truman set up a Committee on Civil Rights which reported in 1947. 'Throughout the Pacific, Latin America Africa the Near, Middle and Far East the treatment which our Negroes receive is taken as a reflection of our attitude to all dark skinned peoples and played into the hands of Communist propagandists'.

Then in 1963 US president John F Kennedy told his audience that "if we cannot end our differences at least we must make the world safe for diversity." Five years later the British Home secretary Roy Jenkins announced that Britain had embarked on a policy which he described as the promotion of 'cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance'. This concept of a plural society first emerged through the analysis of colonial societies. It began as a description and ended up as a rationalisation. Divide and rule worked so well there it was imported, refined somewhat and implemented at home.

Thirty years ago the Black Panthers opined that "the CIA has promoted black cultural nationalism to reinforce neo-colonialism in Africa. In many cases the same techniques and occasionally the same individuals are used to control the political implications of Afro-American culture." Put simply multi-culturalism is not a creature of the left but of the right. For the establishment multi culturalism is not seen as major social change but as an alternative and bulwark against it. Today that is still the principle attraction. As social change is considered undesirable, any improvement in circumstances through the promotion of difference is accommodated, indeed encouraged *within* the existing economic, social and political parameters.

A direct consequence of the us and them outcome is that social antagonisms historically on a vertical trajectory are thereafter directed horizontally. From the outset multi-culturalism was conceived and implemented to serve the ruling elite. However with the enthusiastic collaboration of liberals, it has surely succeeded beyond all expectations. Where, as in America and Britain, a whole infrastructure was put in place, the result has been a fast track for blacks to rise from their class, rather than with it. 'Affirmative action' has created a black middle class directly at the expense of the black working class. For the working class majority, circumstances on the ground are widely acknowledged even by both liberal and right-wing commentators to be more desperate than ever. But only the right suggest solutions. Thinking liberals are mute.

An anti-racist/anti-fascist movement that pursues its goals from that same premise: making a fetish of the supposed virtues of any minority, is immediately forced to discard any idea of class emancipation. And by divorcing the

anti-racist objective from any concept of social justice, this promotion of minority or sectional interests is itself ultimately undermined. As is generally accepted a determination to focus on minority rights and the subsequent racialising of political situations inevitably leads to an 'us or them' scenario. Normally a minority rights platform is one the liberal left is more than happy to morally endorse, with discord seen as a price worth paying (as long as they don't have to pay it), regardless of the outcome.

Essentially a missionary mindset, it is done without a flicker of recognition that in certain circumstances this same platform can be hijacked and transformed practically overnight, into its antithesis. Where once it pandered to the self-determination of the few, the same logic can be also be politically employed to justify a design; suited exclusively to meet the vengeful and equally self serving needs of the many. The 'many' of course being similarly defined along racial rather than conventional democratic lines.

Recent events in Australia provide a succinct example. "Multiracial, multicultural Australia which goes back to Gough Whitlam was thought to be so solidly established that no regression was possible. You already expect, if you are an educated Australian of the academic, professional or business elite that your greengrocer or taxi driver may well tell you what Pauline Hanson leader of the One Nation Party says makes sense." was one tortured liberal response. (*Guardian* 20 June 1998) And if multi-culturalism is itself the basis for the regression. What then?

The Cold War is over and the consensus it engendered is fast unravelling. No longer 'demonised,' the far-right can now quite confidently dismiss the the Holocaust as a 'detail of history.' It is to this Megret refers when he talks of "a strategic victory." Primarily, it is the determined air brushing of the working class out of any serious political equation, which is responsible for allowing the far-right into working class communities in the first place. Seen as more an invitation than an opportunity, they have come to rely on it.

Placing race at the heart of the debate; then denying the political existence of the working class, prior to being forced to seek allies against them, is a compound of liberal blunders without parallel. To concede that race is the dominant motive force in society is to justify the political existence of the enemy for them: is in effect on a certain theoretical level to even take sides with them.

This theoretical displacement of class as the primary dynamic within society for one of race, gender or sexual orientation is nothing less than a fundamental betrayal and the fount of all our misfortunes. As was intended, it is the subversion of the progressive movement from within. Here is the cause of the crisis in the Left. Not one of 'leadership' as the many sects contend but of - orientation.

Given the weight of evidence and current circumstances, to deny cause and effect, and brazenly seek to institutionalise the same treachery within militant anti-racism "deserves" to paraphrase Trotsky "to be branded with infamy if not a bullet." Out of choice to deny the pivotal role of the working class in anti-fascist resistance is perverse. It is to deny history. To deny the past is a lie. More importantly the same lie, if left unchallenged now, will also deny us a future.



# Germany Calling

**On Sunday April 26 the German People's Union (DVU) scored 12.9% of the vote in regional elections in Saxony-Anhalt. Recognised as Germany's poorest province, Saxony-Anhalt, situated in eastern Germany has at street level since 1990, been the political preserve of the far-right. Consequently an electoral breakthrough has been a long time coming. As one commentator pointedly remarked: "That the DVU's success was unexpected cannot be maintained". And yet no viable counter strategy on a local or national basis shows any sign of emerging.**

Back in 1990 the anti-foreigner chants of 'Auslander Raus' were widely regarded as an embarrassment, the principle concern among politicians being that the unwelcome publicity might 'damage Germany's image abroad'. Then the far-right was seen as a sort of sub culture; or a social problem in much the same way as race attacks and football hooligans are regarded in England.

The Saxony-Anhalt result where the DVU 'came from nowhere' to snatch 13% of the poll has markedly changed perceptions. Now as the governing Christian Democrats face defeat in September's general election, the feeling is that there is nowhere for them to seek new votes except by 'Kohl playing the race card'.

Despite this direct echo from France and Austria where the far-right have also pulled the centre toward them, the perception remains that (a) this is a protest vote and (b) support for the far-right is something that its youthful supporters will grow out of.

But far from growing out of it German youth appear instead to be growing up with it. Two thirds of the DVU vote came from first time voters who four years ago could not have voted, or would not have bothered

Nor is the orientation and appeal to youth restricted to Saxony-Anhalt or the DVU. The Junge Nationaldemokraten (JN) the youth wing of the NPD held a 5,000 strong demonstration in Leipzig on May 1. Unlike the FN in France and the Freedom Party in Austria, the political presentation of the NPD is recognisably national socialist, with many of the traditional trimmings. According to the *Observer* (April 12) much of JN leader Oliver Handel's "rhetoric on economics makes him sound like a socialist, or even a communist, and he supports many of the environmental policies of the Greens."

The night before the Leipzig demonstration a rock concert called "Leipzig shows courage" was organised by local unions, political parties and artists. More than 10,000 people attended and hung a banner reading "Fascism never again" on top of a war memorial in protest. But that was

**For the first time since the fall of the Third Reich the far-right has been voted into office in Germany  
A. Shaw asks who's to blame?**

all.

As a militant anti-fascist from Hanover commented: "after the last band had left the stage at 1am all the 'courage'd left with them. Nobody from the stage calls on the 'courage'd to stay and occupy the plaza where the Nazis planned to meet the following morning. An anti-fascist rally organised by the local metal workers union was cancelled by them in the night, after it became clear that the Nazi rally would be allowed." All in all, the type of posturing followed by capitulation to make the heart of any fascist soar. Now militant anti-fascism has never been merely a matter of 'getting stuck in'. And undoubtedly because of its own history German anti-fascism has never appeared to lack the appetite for the physical side of the battle. Though often caricatured, militant anti fascism is more than propaganda by deed. Physical prowess, though vital, is on its own rarely enough. Successful anti-fascism is as much a political as paramilitary strategy. This in recognition that if you allow the political argument to be lost, then sooner or later you begin to lose the physical argument. Germany is now at that stage.

In hindsight it can be seen that the naked ambition and political potential of the far-right has been flagged up for at least a decade. The broad strategy of the German far-right is not simply to embrace designer fascism as typified by the Freedom Party and the FN, but to combine it with the more traditional strong-arm language and methods. From the beginning the orientation has been directly toward the 'bottom 30% in society'. Because the foundations were being put in here, as always a section of society shunned by middle class commentators, the media sought to glamourise the violence while at the same time reassuringly dismissing the political aspiration as anodyne and imbecilic. The alleged stupidity of fascism's working class supporters is a staple diet of these features which only coincides with a societal view of the working class as a whole.

As always it proved convenient for many on the Left to be both flattered and reassured. On the other hand those who sought to address the problem, did so by dealing only with the surface manifestations. Lacking the ambition to 'put the whole rightward drift into reverse' anti-fascist strategists were too taken up with the fleeting concerns and challenges of the moment, dealing for the most part with symptom while leaving fundamental issues, and most crucially the targeted audience unaddressed.

In mitigation it might be suggested that the influx of 2 million immigrants in addition to the collapse of communism and German reunification was directly responsible for this unprecedented, accelerated, development. While perfectly valid, it is equally true that with everything else in place anyway, acceleration is all that it was. In as much as the set pattern already existed. Surely time for plan B?



## Camden surprise, surprise

Alan Walters is the Chair of the Peckwater tenants association, spokesperson for the Camden Defend Council Housing (CDCH) campaign and a member of the SWP. A bit of work had been put into the campaign against the Labour council's 'New Opportunities' scheme and CDCH had achieved a profile in the local press. Back in February, IWCA activists attended a meeting of the campaign which, despite having a reasonable turn-out of tenants reps in attendance, it soon became clear all was not well.

For a start, while those present were asked by Walters if they objected to the presence of the media, he did not deem it necessary to consult campaigners over the presence of three Labour Party councillors! The meeting proceeded to be entirely dominated by Walters and his three Labour chums (who proceeded to patronise those present) and all was going swimmingly for them until near the end of the meeting when the issue of the forthcoming local elections were discussed.

There was a debate around the best way to ensure that those councillors elected in May would oppose plans to proceed with the sell-offs. While Walters urged strong lobbying of Labour candidates, an IWCA activist suggested that campaigners stand their own candidates, who if elected, could be guaranteed to represent council tenants interests. This suggestion, greeted with great enthusiasm by campaigners, caused visible panic to the councillors and a pro-Labour Walters, who immediately announced that this was too big an issue to discuss as there wasn't the time left.

Before the next meeting had taken place, the ruling Labour group passed two contradictory motions, described, even by a Labour councillor in the press as "just a fudge." No matter, this gave Walters the opportunity he

was looking for. Immediately he declared (in true SWP style) victory and placed the campaign, despite protests, on ice; effectively letting Labour off the hook for the course of the election campaign.

Surprise, surprise, barely before the ink on the ballot papers was dry, reports appeared in the local press that Camden council was planning to refloat it's 'New Opportunities' privatisation scheme

## Tower Hamlets a national network

The issue of the privatisation of council housing is slowly gaining recognition as a struggle that might yet determine the very existence of the working classes in London's inner-city areas, as the colonisation by the middle classes continues apace.

Developers appear to be concentrating on the 'golden mile' which lies between the City/West End and Regents Canal and runs from Camden, through Islington, Hackney and onto parts of Tower Hamlets.

In the last issue of RA it was stated that an initiative by activists in Hackney to lay the foundations for a national network against the sell-offs, had already fell victim to "the usual SWP rule or ruin strategy".

While this might well prove to be the case, there will at least be a second opportunity to build an effective, tenant-led, network when a second 'National Gathering' takes place in Tower Hamlets soon.

Of course the left and the SWP in particular, will be attempting to construct the usual, 'we say fightback, tax the rich, Unison (i.e. SWP) dominated, Socialist Worker selling, appeal to the Labour Mvmt' campaign that has not yielded a single result in living memory.

No doubt amongst those leading the charge will be Alan Walters...

## Islington we live here too!

FACTS (Fight Against Council Tenancy Sell-offs) campaigners have been going from strength to strength in Islington. An article in the local press recently, described a meeting between tenant reps and council leaders, "Tenants have sent out an unequivocal message to Islington council - they want to remain council tenants. More than 100 people, including representatives of 74 tenants' associations, made clear their opposition to transfer of properties to housing associations."

Meanwhile, the Islington branch of the IWCA is continuing to put forward a clear, alternative, independent, working class, voice in the borough. The *Guardian* quoted the local IWCA newsletter, "Middle class colonisers now even challenge our right to live here. It is time the politicians were reminded - WE LIVE HERE TOO!" *The Highbury & Islington Express* warned "The Blair-voting, Barnsbury-living middle classes" that the IWCA are demanding that "Working class rights to proper political representation, to decent housing and, most of all, the defence of our right to live in Islington must be put to the top of the political agenda with immediate effect."

An IWCA spokesman has also recently crossed swords with the leaders of the Lib-Dems and the Greens in the local press on important issues.

## Now & Then

It is only in the past year or so that investigations of Israel's political make up, hitherto assumed to be socialist egalitarian, pioneering, forward-looking, have turned up a rather unattractive picture. Zeev Sternhell's book, *The Founding Myths of Israel* is the work of an Israeli historian of the 20th century right-wing movements who finds a disturbing congruence between those movements and Israel's own brand of what Stern hall rightly calls "nationalist socialism."

The moral dilemma faced by anyone trying to come to terms with the Palestinians Israeli conflict is deep one. Israeli Jews are not white settlers like those in Algeria or South Africa, though similar methods have been used. They are victims of Western largely Christian persecution that culminated in the Holocaust. But Palestinians are victims of victims. As for Israel's nuclear policy, or its campaign of torture, or of using civilians as hostages, or of refusing to give Palestinians permits to build on their own land in the West Bank - the case [for Palestinian self determination] is never made in the liberal public sphere, partly out of fear, partly out of guilt.

Edward Said, Palestinian historian - *The Guardian* - 2 May 1998

Since the establishment of Israel some thirty years ago the S image of the Jew has undergone a dramatic evolutionary change. Their daring rescue of the Jewish hostages in Entebbe captured the world's imagination. They showed emphatically that they were not prepared to roll over and play dead again. They have probably built the best man for man army in the world. Their crushing victory over the Arab Nations in the Six Day War and since, has proved they can kill and maim with the best of them.

The national dignity they displayed after the slaughter of the Israeli athletes in the Munich Olympic village in 1972 aroused international sympathy. Their systematic oppression of the Palestinians is being done arrogantly and totally contemptuous of world opinion. People listen to them now - carefully. In just over 30 years they have destroyed a 2000 year old racial myth. Their image now is of a vengeful jack booted thug that every craven Nazi would love to be. They have respect. Funny old world isn't it?

Red Action - Issue 6 - October 1982



**Bernadette Sands-McKevitt, one of the leaders of the 32 County Sovereignty group.**

**continued from page 5**

screws. So instead of looking for revenge as expected they offered to let bygones be bygones. Delighted, the screws who knew what they were capable of jumped at the chance of reconciliation. Hardliners who smelled a rat were sidelined by the authorities. Once everything was in position - the provos broke out. Broke out in a literal sense with a mass, morale boosting escape, and broke out of the impasse imposed by the policy of criminalisation.

Jailed for life in 1973 Gerry Kelly was one of the architects of the 'breakout' in 1983. A decade later, Kelly represented the IRA in initial pre-ceasefire discussions with the British. On June 27 1998 he was elected to the Assembly. In the same way that 'coming off protest' wrong footed their opponents inside the jails, setting aside armed struggle as a tactic, is having a similar effect on the political criminalisation of Republicanism outside the jails. As anticipated all is in disarray.

Unionism is irrevocably split. Divided against itself, on ideological, class and paramilitary lines. Trimble, who was elected as a 'not an inch' hardliner was forced into constitutional negotiations, or as was predicted faced being "represented by a surrogate" i.e. the British government" (*Red Action* issue 69 Autumn 1994.)

His failure to prepare his constituency for constitutional change he knew was inevitable, has split his party. For the first time ever the UUP failed to top the poll. And the problems for Trimble are only beginning. Paisley is no position to take advantage. Instead the DUP is doomed to be a dwindling minority within unionism, in the same way it was envisaged republicans would, pre-ceasefire, be contained as a permanent minority within nationalism.

On the face of it the SDLP, the largest party in the Six Counties are in the ascendancy. On closer examination, the vote of 22% does not represent growth but stagnancy. For some time the SDLP has been recognised as a 'one saint band'. Hume is very much a spent force; his political vision reduced as a wag put

it, 'to the one transferable speech.' As a consequence of government, the SDLP can expect a short term boost from an influx of young, personally ambitious, middle class careerists. This, aligned to a class alliance with the UUP will destroy any remaining vestiges of credibility in working class nationalist circles.

Working class nationalism is the same constituency Republican Sinn Fein, the Sovereignty Committee, the 'real' IRA and so on, expect to be drawn to them like a 'magnet' once a Provo capitulation is gradgrind fact, rather than prophecy. Of course, the dissidents are the same people who regarded standing for election as a 'deviation from principle, coming off protest was a 'sellout' and the cease-fire 'surrender'. They are afraid of change and devoid of strategy. Revolutionaries cannot be frightened by change: organisations frightened by change are not revolutionary.

In place of 'a strategy rooted in objective reality' they have ideology: in place of ambition they have obstinacy. This culminates in an inability to distinguish tactic from cherished principle. Result: muddle-headed thinking and confusion. Ironically for all the ultra nationalist stance, they seem to credit the British for every fresh innovation. The peace strategy was a 'cunning British trap which the IRA leadership walked into' and so on.

The British establishment are of course nothing if not cunning. Their support for the peace strategy, is not in the belief that it copper fastens the union. Rather the opposite. In the Agreement, the establishment (if not all, at least those Blair represents) sees the opportunity, to solve the age old British conundrum: 'how to leave without being seen to have left.' Or as Martin McGuinness puts it: "[The Agreement] is a bit like a partner in a relationship saying that the relationship is over, but that she is willing to wait until the children have grown up."

And the children of '68 have indeed grown up. As a teenager in the mid-60's Adams became involved in the Republican Movement. He folded leaflets for candidates who lost deposits, and saw service in the agitation for Civil Rights. He, like others was routinely batoned from the streets. Of the current leadership Adams is almost unique, in the sense that he was political prior to the 'Troubles', rather than the likes of McGuinness, McFarlane, Kelly, who as kids were politicised by the reemergence of conflict.

It is important to remember that this generation of republicans did not 'resort to violence' they responded, admittedly with relish, to Unionist and then British violence. Consequently the thinking behind the 1986 peace strategy was not merely to extricate themselves from an unwinnable military conflict, not of their making, but to extricate the British from the impasse as well. Rather than continue blaming British intransigence for the conflict, they instead assumed political responsibility for its resolution. And so it was Adams who went to Hume. And so it will be Adams who will replace him.

With 17.6% in the Assembly elections Sinn Fein realised their highest vote since 1981. They now command 45% of the nationalist vote in the North; almost one in two, compared to less than one in three six years ago. An emergence of a class alliance of the SDLP/UUP in the North, will force Republicanism to seek class allies of its own, in the South. With the fortuitous collapse of Democratic Left, a ready made constituency is theirs to inherit. And consequently the new phase of struggle will for the first time since partition, return to an all Ireland dimension.

Not because of any 'cross border legislation' but because Sinn Fein are the only all Ireland party, and

it is in their immediate and longterm strategic interests to make it so.

"In 1998 we are at a high point where Sinn Fein and republicanism are pivotal and a growing force in Irish politics. We need to be confident about our own strength. We need to build our struggle right across this island. Our task is to develop the core republican positions in a way that is attractive to the broad mass of the Irish people. This cannot be a northern struggle with the south tagged on. It has to be a truly national struggle. That is your responsibility" (Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, 1998). As has been stated from the beginning the motive force for change, would not and could not be found in any interim agreement. As always, the revolutionary dynamic is found not in the particular circumstance but in republicanism itself.

**They are afraid of change and devoid of strategy. Revolutionaries cannot be frightened by change: organisations frightened by change are not revolutionary.**



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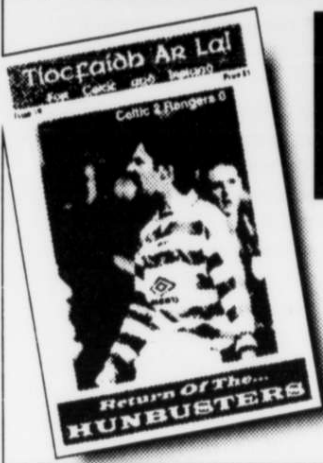


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## A Word In Your Ear...



### FAT PHIL, THE INLA AND THE ISLEWORTH RESIDENTS

In a passing reference to media manipulation *Guardian* columnist Jeremy Hardy observes that, "Stories about the IRA are always decorated with the expression 'the terrorists' in case we thought they mean the Isleworth Residents Association." However to so label the Isleworth Community Group might not be so wide of the mark.

Throughout the 70's and up to the late 1980's Hounslow NF had an extremely large branch and high profile locally.

In 1988 a victim of a NF race hate campaign in the area, an Asian Councillor no less, 'absolutely terrorised' to his wits end, and having exhausted all conventional avenues travelled

one evening with his wife to a venue on the other side of London.

A go-between apparently guaranteed that 'all the right people would be there'. Driven by a desperation to have the situation resolved, he will go down in history as the only Asian Labour Councillor, to ever attend, albeit inadvertently, a fundraiser for INLA prisoners! It was of course his intention to speak directly to RA. Once the situation was explained and the string puller NF Directorate member Phil Andrews identified; a few well chosen words, among them 'douglas and bader' did the trick. Not only did the culprit show himself to be adept at getting the message, he is equally adept at putting the political message across. Whatever it is these days at least the method of delivery is different. No longer shit parcels and midnight calls, instead it is phone canvassing and touchy-feely concern about community morale. Instead of 'Keep Hounslow White!' it is now more Keep Isleworth tidy. With the consequence that on May 8 'Fat Phil' was elected as a councillor for the Isleworth Community Group. Any temptation to use the platform to return to the old 'Leibenstraum' policy will be tempered by the knowledge that the firm, 'Douglas & Bader' are still very much in business.

### GERMANY CALLING

I was flicking through Fionn Mac Cool's *Diary in the Irish Post* (9.5.98) recently when I came across the following:

"A royal pardon is being sought by the brother of an Irishwoman jailed in 1946 for helping Nazi Germany make propaganda broadcasts to Ireland during World War 2. The move follows a new book called *Hitler's Irish Voice's*, by Davia Donoghue, about the Nazi wartime broadcasts on Germany's Irish service, **Irland Redaktion**".

What do you make of that?!!

### THE BIG ISSUE

An advert caught my eye in *The Guardian* (10.6.98) recently. *The Big Issue*, the magazine for the homeless, were hosting a conference entitled 'SOCIAL EXCLUSION - Narrowing The Divide' on the South Bank. It was billed as 'A major conference examining social exclusion over two days'. The price? £150 per person (2 days) and £100 per person (1 day)!!! I Kid you not.

### OUT OF THE MAZE

Sitting in the RA office flicking through a recent copy of *An Phoblacht*, I came across a feature on the '81 hunger-strikes. The piece included an interview with Bik McFarlane who has been at the forefront of prison struggle in Ireland for over two decades. He is described as someone who has a "remarkable ability to evoke the affection of strangers". This reminded me of a story told to me by an RA colleague where he had witnessed this phenomenon at first hand.

In 1986 following a 'Shearer type incident' with a member of the constabulary, he unlike the England captain, was sent-off to an institution on the Isle of Sheppey!

Playing table tennis one day a con shouted over, "Oi! Gary one of your lot is on the box". Curious he wandered over to the TV room and peered in. As it was the *News at Six*, the room was of course entirely empty, except for the front row which was occupied by seven Asians who sat watching the screen in complete silence. The item being covered was the first court appearance of Bik and Gerry Kelly following their arrest in Amsterdam.

Smugly satisfied at the capture of two such eminent 'terrorists' the camera zoomed in for a gloating close up, at the precise moment Bik responded to a shouted greeting from the gallery with a roguish wink; twenty four carat universal charm.

The effect on row one was electric. As if on cue, it burst into a round of loud and sustained applause worthy of any Stalinist rally. A genuinely surreal and yet poignant moment... And as he later explained to me, "I knew then that we would win."



Bik McFarlane

## Something We Said!?!?

After it became known that the West Midlands region of the National Democratic Party was going to transfer its allegiance to the BNP, Steve Edwards, one of the prime agents in the move, was visited at his home by two officers of Special Branch. The two SB officers confessed their great surprise at the news, one saying that it had sent 'shock waves' through SB circles. They thereupon set about doing everything they could to dissuade Mr Edwards from the course he had decided to take. One tactic was to speak of there being a 'disreputable' and 'lawless' element within the BNP. The SB men then said to Mr Edwards that the BNP had connections with loyalist groups in Northern Ireland and with the Ku Klux Klan. The SB men then tried the frighteners. Birmingham Anti-Fascist Action, they said, were well aware of the move of Mr Edwards to join the BNP. This was raised under the pretext of concern for our new friends' security, but the hint of menace was clear.

**BNP magazine, Spearhead, May 1998**

It was a happy experience to listen to the young people of [AFA] express their solidarity with the refugees who've come to this country. If you look back at the progressive movements in any country, in any shape or form, it's the young people who always play the vanguard in these situations... That's the first criterion, the first basis for the development of an anti-fascist movement.

**Mick 9'Riordan International Brigade veteran, about the growing racism in Irish society, and the lessons from his own political experience.**

**An Phoblacht/Republican News - 16.4.98**

There are more Irish people in Munich than there are immigrants in Ireland. The press and politicians alike talk about the need to put Irish people first. As if they were just on the point of housing all the homeless when refugees started arriving.

**Aidan Perry of Anti-Fascist Action, speaking at a rally outside the GPO, Dublin.**

**An Phoblacht/Republican News - 30.4.98**