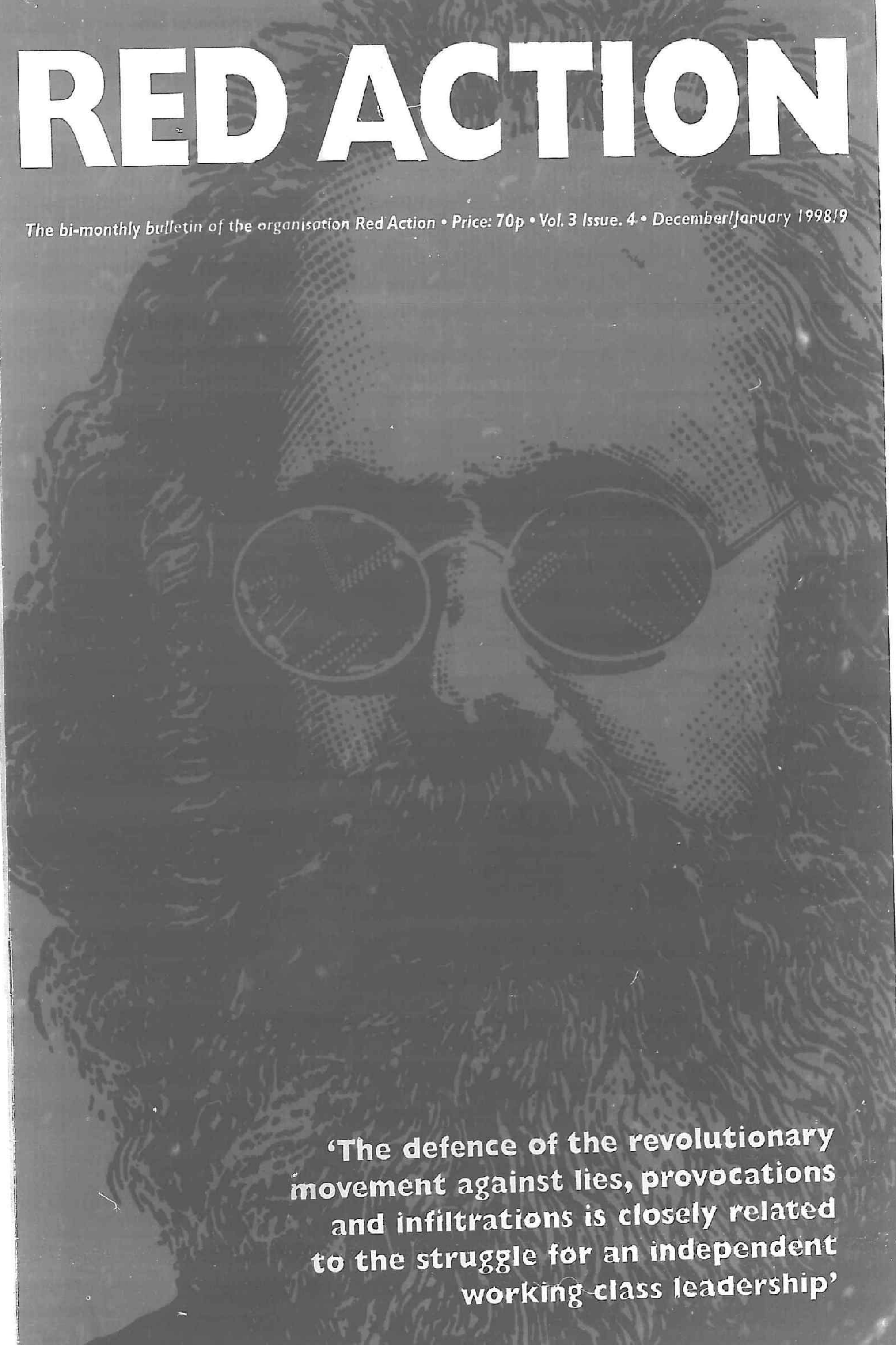


RED ACTION

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'The defence of the revolutionary movement against lies, provocations and infiltrations is closely related to the struggle for an independent working class leadership'

EDITORIAL

In an obviously controversial decision, the previous issue of *Red Action* (see RA vol.3 iss.3) carried an article by a leading BNP strategist. The article by Tony Lecomber, which was reproduced in full, appraised the political developments within militant anti-fascism since the BNP's abandonment of the 'march and grow strategy.' In particular it focussed on the recognition by some AFA militants of the need for a 'political wing'. Our purpose in publishing the article was to allow militant anti-fascism a unique insight into the perceptions of it's current strengths and weaknesses from an opposition standpoint; to allow militants to see themselves as the enemy do.

Sometimes the opinions of our enemies come nearer to the truth about us than our own opinions. Hence the saying: 'If you know your enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt.' Consequently in this issue we follow-on with the perspective of an equally hostile element, since exposed as entryists from the 'state friendly' *Searchlight*. Apparently threatened by AFA's interest in a political strategy they sought from the beginning to disable it. With the authors since unmasked as infiltrators and dupes, a closer study of their emasculating technique, and in particular the political logic behind it, is instructive.

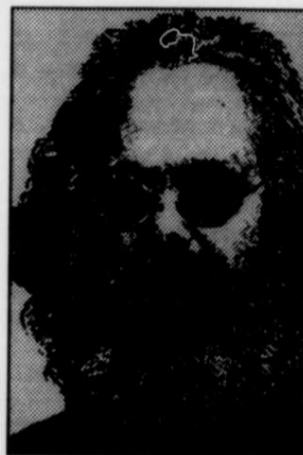
In 'private' it is whispered that the 'leadership's' enthusiasm for the political strategy can be primarily put down to 'loss of bottle.' As Machiavelli observed 'people willing to be deceived will always find people willing to deceive them.'

sion with the determined intention of undermining growing AFA support nationally for the IWCA strategy. His method was to make the same allegations and 'demand' answers to precisely the same questions - as if the 'clear the air' meeting in Sheffield had never happened! Significantly, both documents were distributed directly to all AFA branches prior to London being notified or afforded the right of reply (in a further twist when the net began to close on the covert *Searchlight* operation in Yorkshire and his pivotal role in it, in addition to reinventing himself as an anarchist, he suggested that his on the record opposition to the IWCA was the real reason why London AFA in particular were 'out to get him!'). Despite a prompt and detailed 6,000 word rebuttal from London, no response was forthcoming. The intention was merely to inflame or confirm existing prejudices; to smear - not debate.

And as with those initially impressed by his elaborate crochet of lies and energetic defence in response to initial accusations surrounding his involvement with *Searchlight*, this overtly political sabotage caused considerable confusion in similar quarters. Leeds/Huddersfield branches and temporarily Nottingham registered as casualties. Even now, despite incontrovertible evidence, certain elements within AFA continue to argue that the change of strategy by the BNP is more 'one of style rather than substance.' Consequently the IWCA is presented as 'the cause of AFA's loss of focus' rather than a strategical response to it. In 'private' it is whispered that the 'leadership's' enthusiasm for the political strategy can be primarily put down to 'loss of bottle.' As Machiavelli observed, "the deceiver will always find someone ready to be deceived."

Twelve years after writing the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx was forced in 1860 to address a highly publicised attack on him by a prominent political leader, and yet to be unmasked police spy Carl Vogt. His crushing riposte, 'Herr Vogt: A spy in the workers movement' which took a full year to compose, was as Marx emphasised, designed to be a "model for defending the revolutionary movement against lies, provocations and infiltration." As the foreword explains, "the struggle against the agents and their 'patrons and accomplices' is closely related to the struggle for an independent revolutionary working class leadership against all petty bourgeois tendencies and diversions." According to Karl Marx then, 'the fight for an independent working class movement is intimately connected with the struggle against lies, state infiltration, provocateurs and all middle class inclinations and detours.' No change there then.

'the fight for an independent working class movement is intimately connected with the struggle against lies, state infiltration, provocateurs and all middle class inclinations and detours'



EVENTS • EVENTS • EVENTS •

COMMUNITIES OF RESISTANCE FESTIVAL TAL presents the UK premiere of... **'WAR AND PEACE IN IRELAND'**

introduced by it's internationally acclaimed Irish-American director Arthur Mac Caig (*Patriot Game* & *Irish Ways*) followed by questions and answers



SATURDAY 12th DECEMBER

2.15 pm - £5/£3.50 concs

RIO CINEMA, 103 KINGSLAND HIGH STREET, DALSTON E8

(Dalston Kingsland B.R.)

Traditional music session will follow

INTERNAL AFFAIRS JOIN RED ACTION

THE AFA Cable Street anniversary events once again proved a success. Apart from the public events a day-long internal forum was held, where AFA members openly debated topics of their choosing. This aspect has become especially important nowadays as informal opportunities to meet with AFA members from around the country have drastically diminished since the fascists deserted the streets. While there were a number of members (still too many in my opinion) who didn't feel confident enough to contribute, the debate was conducted in the most part with a refreshing honesty and in a fraternal manner. For many it actually proved to be the highlight of the weekend.

While there has undoubtedly been problems within AFA over the past couple of years, the assertion by leading BNP'er Tony Lecomber, that AFA is somehow on its knees; appears to be based on little more than wishful thinking. If debate is the lifeblood of any progressive movement, then AFA, on the evidence of this session, is very much alive and... yes... kicking. Of course there is still a small rump, who, while candid in their criticisms of existing strategy in private, were far less forthcoming in public. No matter. Red Action will always defend the right to free and fair debate within the movement over that of the backroom whisper, quite simply because we have nothing to fear from it.

Sharing a pint with a RA colleague later that weekend he told me that this openness of debate would have been totally unheard of in his former organisation, Militant (which is probably one of the contributing factors as to why they now have 400 members when they previously had 200 paid organisers). Our commitment to open dialogue within the movement is obviously something we do well. But there are other aspects we are not so good at.

Dishing out deserved praise is certainly one of them. All of those who worked hard at this year's events - and previous year's - deserve praise. From those who did the background organisation, the stewarding, staffed the stalls, did the driving, produced or distributed the excellent publications; are all shining examples of what RA and AFA members, away from the hype, are really about.

Selling our own organisation, is also something we apparently do badly. After receiving my best sales patter, a recent recruit to RA told me that, "RA members are terrible at selling their own organisation aren't they?" This is probably true. Repulsed by the 'Jehovah Witness' style devotion to recruitment practiced with evangelical zeal by much of the left, it is in some ways almost inevitable. But at the same time we have allowed it go too far the other way. A recent example of this was of a long-time associate enquiring tentatively about RA membership; he had assumed that you had to wait for an 'approach.'

With all the component parts of our overall strategy just beginning to edge forwards, if only slightly, the first trickle of new recruits to RA for some time have begun to appear. As the British left continues its downward spiral, with little sign of a bottoming out, there will be an increasing number of activists who will be facing the choice of retirement or finding a new political vehicle. To the serious elements amongst them we say this... forget the sectarian bickerings of the past, bury the ego's, whatever your political background: **JOIN RED ACTION**

Steve Potts



THE BIG ISSUE

OCTOBER 31, according to the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, should have seen the establishment of the Executive for Northern Ireland. But David Trimble said 'NO' citing the absence of decommissioning by the IRA as the reason. This in the knowledge that the IRA will not decommission. Indeed he neither wants or expects them to. He simply 'does not want a Fenian about the place.'

With the Executive formed, both Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, reputed by British Intelligence to be long-standing members of the IRA Army Council would have been on it. Self evidently, with the IRA in government, 'the Protestant state for a Protestant people' and with it the reason for being of Unionism, would come to an unpleasantly abrupt end.

Rather than be judged by history, (or more pertinently by the likes of the Red hand Defenders) as the man who betrayed the Union, Trimble, very deliberately painted himself into a corner. Thereby confronting Blair with the conundrum: 'To save the Agreement you must save me - to save me you must sacrifice the Agreement.' Our Nobel Peace recipient believes this to be his 'win-win' scenario.

As part of this ploy, Trimble persuaded Mowlam to recognise the LVF cease-fire (now operating under a new nom de guerre), who immediately offered to surrender weapons, on a quid pro quo basis with the IRA, on a ratio of one to ten. Ironically, far from IRA arms being the obstacle to peace, in reality it is only because of the armed struggle that there are negotiations. And it is because republicans are aware, to paraphrase a famous military strategist, that 'it is unreasonable to expect a man who is armed to negotiate with one who is unarmed' that they will be the last to blink.

BIG ISSUE PREDICTION: not a single bullet.

POINT BLANK



Camden Ban Lifted

IN AN out of court settlement the Camden

Irish centre accepted that the unprecedented ban placed on Anti-Fascist Action, which led to the cancellation of the International Anti-Fascist conference at the venue in 1997, would be lifted. Additionally they agreed to pay AFA a four-figure sum for financial losses incurred. AFA spokesman, Joe Reilly, said that "the settlement vindicates AFA's position that this ban had been implemented without any justification."

continued on page 4



NOT WAVING...

**RED ACTION CONTINUES
IT'S REGULAR LOOK AT
THE BRITISH LEFT**



WHILE THE trotskyst outfit, 'Workers Power,' is infamous amongst the British left for their various theoretical twists and turns; Red Action will remember them for different reasons. During the now famous, 'Battle of Waterloo,' as chaos ensued all around them, they gathered for what looked to be an intense emergency meeting. All of a sudden, one of them reached inside their coat; jeez we thought we've got this lot wrong, they're seriously tooled-up. But no, they didn't disappoint, as they pulled out a bundle and attempted a paper-sale!

This was also the outfit that confidently predicted the IRA would be handing-in their weapons, even before the first ceasefire broke. What was needed, we were told, was an armed workers militia to defend the people the provies were about to abandon. It would have been worth the IRA offering Workers Power some gear, just to see their faces!

Since Workers Power abandoned AFA for ANL back in 1992 it has gone remorselessly backwards. Like the rest of the left, it has found it hard to come to grips with the fundamental political changes in Britain and is seriously floundering. Struggling with internal feuds and falling membership, it has in a last throw of the dice relaunched its paper.

The relaunch issue of includes such radical and innovative headlines as: "Welfare State: Safe in Labour's Hands?"; "Fight Straw's Racist asylum White Paper"; "Imperialists Support Nigerian Military as it clings to Power"; "Education as a right means No Fees and Full Grants." Groundbreaking.

As they explain: "From this month, Workers Power has a brand new look. Our new Workers Power, in stark contrast to New Labour, still champions the 'old' principles of socialism." The purpose of the "new design," we are told, is "to remove any confusion with the 'red top' tabloids which many left papers have modelled themselves since the 1970's." Yes, including Workers Power until September 1998! The new masthead instead of being white on red is now red and black on white (see above). "We think the look now reflects the fact that Workers Power is the only really revolutionary paper in Britain." This from an outfit that demanded we all vote to put a right of centre party into government. Amazing what a simple change of mast head can achieve. Despite the radical overhaul, evergreen is the need for a 'revolutionary party and programme for the working class and youth.' What follows is what can only be described as worrying.

"The International youth movement, *Revolution*, held its first European Youth Camp in July. Between the meetings we had the chance to play football, volleyball, ping-pong and late-night matches of table football, which nobody involved will forget! In the evenings we had music, dancing and general partying, as well as a campfire, where we shared experiences with other youth from every corner of Europe.

The camp finished with a rousing speech... There was just enough time to sing the Internationale and have group photos taken before we had to say goodbye to our newly made friends and comrades and head home, with our heads still buzzing full of ideas."

Now not even Enid Blyton's 'Famous Five' had that much fun.

Colin O'Brien

AFA annual Cable St Commemoration

OVER THE weekend of 3-5 October AFA held its third annual Cable St. commemoration weekend of events. Events included a public meeting in Conway Hall, London, entitled 'Counter Revolution in Sight!' which heard from speakers of a number of campaigns around the country. Special guests were delegates from the German anti-fascist group, Rote Antifa (Berlin), who outlined the size of the challenge facing militant anti-fascists both on the streets and electorally. Formal discussions were also held with AFA representatives. A successful fund raising gig was held with the band 'Selector' and a film show which featured the UK premieres of 'All Power To The People (history of the Black Panther Party)' and the '43 Group.' The films were introduced by a veteran of the 43 Group and a former member of the Black Panther Party.



cont'd

West Midlands AFA

AFA recently took to the streets of Redditch in response to BNP attempts to establish a foothold in the area on the back of local opposition to a planned mosque. Media reports that the BNP had sizeable support there were exposed as a fabrication by an impressive AFA mobilisation which saw the estate leafleted and the BNP return to the press demanding police protection. An AFA spokesman said "We physically stopped BNP activities in Birmingham a few years ago and are more than willing to do the same again." The BNP have not been seen since. (see *Something We Said*, page 12)

Glasgow & Manchester RA

AFTER the recent relaunch Glasgow RA held its first public activity with a number of RA sales at Celtic Park, with 58 copies sold in a couple of hours. Manchester RA held a successful public meeting recently on the subject of the Irish peace process.

BACK ISSUES

BURY ST EDMUNDS

IN JULY 60 members of AFA travelled to Bury St Edmunds to oppose a proposed NF march. From the point of view of the fascists the whole thing was a disaster, with the 'race warriors' taking second prize in a number of skirmishes before and after the march, which was itself completely disrupted at one stage when a Red Action led ambush in a narrow side street caused the police to rush forward leaving the back of the march unprotected. The resulting free for all lasted a couple of minutes, during which time the NF lost a banner and a lot of their previous arrogance. The day ended on a high note when, while under police escort to the edge of town, we came upon a member of the Front's National Directorate and a few of his lackeys on foot. As we swept past, to the utter astonishment of the local plod, one of the political soldiers was felled by a cheeky denim-clad arm swinging a blunt instrument. The motorised cudgel carrier then sped off, hotly pursued by an outraged Old Bill, leaving NF chairman Nick Griffin holding his hands in the air as if appealing for divine intervention. Apart from the ritual condemnation of the days events in the local press by the NF and the Labour Party, there was in stark contrast a private endorsement from a veteran anti-fascist who actually lost members of his family in the concentration camps, and was himself arrested on the demo. He described the attitude and tactics of the anti-fascists as "inspiring." Sufficient vindication for anyone I would have imagined.

Red Action, issue 26, September 1986

'Vital Lessons'

Below RA presents the main address to a public meeting during the annual AFA Cable St commemoration weekend at which a founding member outlined why AFA is forced to adapt to changing circumstances to remain effective

Four years before Anti-Fascist Action came into existence, some of its founder members cut their teeth in a 'theatre of operations' in Islington, North London.

The Chapel Market area had been the scene of a 'Mexican stand-off' between the National Front and the Anti-Nazi League since the mid 1970's. Then in the summer of 1981 the local NF branch, one of the biggest and nastiest in the country (around a dozen of whom were subsequently convicted of a series of armed robberies, aggravated rape and an almost fatal stabbing of a Red Action member) decided, with support from the SWP for the local ANL branch waning, to up the ante.

What followed was a high intensity campaign of weekly paper sale and counter demonstration; attack and counter attack; that lasted almost exactly twelve months. When the dust settled the South Islington Branch of the National Front, even with the support of their own national leadership, was no more. The shock and humiliation created a domino effect throughout North London, with smaller satellite branches like Wembley and Willesden immediately ceasing operations. All attempted come-backs were vigorously, some would say ruthlessly dealt with, to the extent that the far-right were forced out of Islington, and then the whole of North London. And that exclusion order has lasted to the present day.

At first hand, the core organisers of the Chapel Market campaign learned a vital lesson: the fascists could be beaten at their own game, could be out-violenced; could be out-terrorised. Though it would be almost another decade before the approach would be applied by AFA on a national basis this knowledge would from the beginning have a decisive impact on the strategical thinking of the new anti-fascist organisation.

In July 1985 around 300 people crowded into Conway Hall, London, following calls for the setting up of a new anti-fascist organisation, AFA. Though the same Chapel Market organisers

had been instrumental in bringing the meeting about, for much of the time, in expectation of a fascist attack, they along with other working class militants, were physically outside the hall. This meant that the agenda was set by others. It was to prove a serious strategical error and the second vital lesson

By 1986 the NF were beginning to attract an estimated 2,000 to their annual Remembrance Day parade. It was an obvious focus for AFA. A little later the music based neo-nazi Blood and Honour group was formed. As well as arranging huge underground gigs in eastern Europe involving thousands, they also began to apply a stranglehold on the sections of the music scene domestically in a case of 'play for us or don't play.' Indeed for a time the merchandising aspect of the B&H operation saw Carnaby St become 'the cultural centre' for fascism in Europe. A number of shops were dealing lucratively and openly in B&H records, T-shirts and other fascist paraphernalia.

In May 1989, B&H launched their most ambitious upfront project yet: a music festival featuring seven bands called the 'Main Event.' Roughly a thousand tickets at £10 a head were sold in advance (Camden Town Hall was the venue of choice) and punters were promised 'money back if not delighted.' Even though AFA had itself effectively collapsed, the all-important stewards group was intact. The stewards recognised that if the B&H redirection points could be taken, serious political, organisational and financial problems would result. May 27 was a blow from which they never fully recovered. September of that year saw the relaunch of London AFA (LAFA) with the militants for the first time firmly in political control. From now on instead of going to the Left it was announced that 'the future orientation would be to working class communities, with the class message, backed up by a democratic structure' (the need for such a revamp gives you a fair idea what it was like previously).

By 1990, the NF's Remembrance Day parade had from the 1986 peak of 2,000, been systematically whittled down to a motley and beleaguered 200. So LAFA switched its intentions to the renascent British National Party in London's East End. This time the strategical aim "was to create space for a credible working class alternative [to the far-right and Labour] to develop. Space was created, in the by now traditional manner. BNP meetings were attacked, pubs picketed, paper sales harassed, key activists ambushed. Most significantly, for the first time, the same strategy was being implemented nationally. First in Glasgow and Manchester, later Scotland and the North West. However, as with East London it became increasingly evident that there was no one on the left with the will, ability or

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ambition to fill the vacuum militant anti-fascism was creating.

By 1993 the emergence of Midlands AFA saw the final sanctuary of the far-right contested. It was the final straw, both for their 'march and grow' strategy and their attempts to 'control the streets'. By now the BNP were on the end of a terrific pounding from Edinburgh to Southampton. In September of that same year they made an electoral breakthrough with the election of a councillor on the Isle of Dogs. And in April 1994 they publicly announced that 'there would be no more marches meetings punch-ups.' The April declaration was to prove the end of an era. Between 1985-1994 AFA had been the decisive force in bringing the NF to its knees, crushing B&H; seeing off C18 and fighting the BNP to a standstill nationally. And this phase of anti-fascist struggle was as it turns out the easy bit!

Due to the unrelenting war of attrition described, the absence of an electoral presence by the far-right leaves Britain practically unique in Europe. To this day few in AFA fully appreciate the havoc wreaked by that campaign, on fascist infrastructure and morale. Even though AFA organised major marches through fascist strongholds and put on carnivals attracting over 10,000 people the basic approach remained 'militaristic.' The reason was simple. As a tactic it was devastatingly effective and AFA was good at it. Such was the attention to detail, the single mindedness, (some would say fanaticism!) that the ill-named National Action Party, a would-be fore-runner to C18, never even survived its inaugural meeting! (set up and wound up on the same day: something of a record?)

Yet today despite, or because, of the absence of a political and electoral outlet for the far-right, racist poison is spreading of its own accord like a stain. Increasingly the far-right can be viewed as more symptom than cause. That being the case militant anti-fascism is facing a new and more insidious threat

Approaching the millennium we find ourselves in a country whose citizens believe it to be scrupulously fair; but where one in three admit to being openly racist; where the level of race attacks have been likened to political terrorism and whose youth is judged the most reactionary in Europe; a country where the disproportionate numbers of ethnic minorities that die in police custody has been condemned by the United Nations and where electoral support for the far-right has risen probably in excess of 1,000%. A country where the former social democrats are attacking the working class and the organised Left is collapsing. Such a country has many of the hall-marks of a doomsday scenario already in place and militant anti-fascism needs to both diversify and reposition itself - and quickly.

The far-right may have been driven into a tunnel but too many are still waiting at the entrance: too many are waiting for a second Waterloo. But there isn't going to be a second Waterloo, at least not on our terms. Having successfully applied the first vital lesson, (that the terrorists could be out-terrorised), we must now take on board the second vital lesson, which is to set the political agenda rather than deal with the consequences, or the failure of someone else's. In Europe mainstream anti-fascism does not believe the working class even exists, while here conventional anti-racist strategists regard the working class as the enemy. And if as appears to be the case bellowing 'Right for Whites!' is no longer the epitome of fascism, then screeching 'Refugees welcome here!' is equally inadequate as a strategy for anti-fascism.

Primarily because one way or the other, whatever the



(picture above)
Armed robber
Keith Howson, right,
Islington NF secretary
sentenced to 10 years



**we must
begin to
systematically
fill the
existing polit-
ical vacuum,
in working
class commu-
nities, that we
have created
by our own
efforts**



(middle picture) Keith
Howson, right, 10 years armed
robbery posing with Gary
Nolan, second right, who
unsuccessfully perjured
himself at Snaresbrook Crown
Court, leading to the acquittal
of three anti-fascists in 1982.
(bottom) Islington NF organ-
iser James Field, son of black-
shirt Jimmy Field and brother
of Danny Field NF enforcer
convicted of aggravated rape,
8 years.

outcome, the buck will eventually stop with militant anti-fascism. And if for any reason militant anti-fascism proves incapable of handling that responsibility or simply surrenders the initiative, the far-right will have a clear run. That is an inescapable fact. So let's make no mistake about it. Militant anti-fascism is effective anti-fascism. It is effective or it is nothing. AFA's founding statement: "to confront the fascists physically and ideologically," has so far only been partially implemented. Part one has been successfully completed, now we must address part two. Part two: 'confronting the far-right ideologically' means confronting them with a *political alternative* [RA emphasis]. Which means we must begin to systematically fill the existing political vacuum, in working class communities, in whole swathes of London and elsewhere, that we have created by our own efforts. We have won the 'war' - lets not lose the peace.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

PART 2

With the proponents exposed as state-friendly provocateurs and dupes, **A. Shaw** analyses the political logic behind the campaign against the strategy of working class community orientation

Following an extensive inquiry that established a relationship at organiser level with the 'state friendly Searchlight.' AFA was forced to suspend two of its branches, Leeds and Huddersfield in February 1998 (see Red Action issue 1 vol 3). The very same individuals had been the subject of a previous inquiry initiated and conducted by London AFA but were on that occasion afforded the benefit of doubt.

In 1995 they involved themselves in discussions regarding AFA support for an independent working class strategy. At a Northern Network (NN) meeting in September 1995 'Simon' in particular doggedly challenged the legitimacy of AFA involvement with the project.

Subsequently two documents were circulated from Huddersfield AFA listing grievances, spotlighting problems real and imaginary, and passionately demanded answers 'in the name of militant anti-fascism' (see *Editorial*). Within both documents (composed and structured in a question and answer format in the London AFA response) Huddersfield AFA make a case for AFA 'supporting the SLP; remaining a single issue organisation; supporting Class War; all and every progressive political party; no political parties of any description; the Direct Action Movement and so on.

In hindsight out of this apparent confusion a methodology can definitely be detected a sort of 'Tweedy Bird,' 'What if... was that not... I thought I saw... I did! I did! I did! technique.

A prerequisite of this stratagem is that the operative comes from an 'apolitical' position of supporting everything and yet nothing ('Simon' for instance maintained his neutrality to the last. Despite repeated questioning as to his political beliefs he was unwilling or unable to say precisely who or what he supported, whether he was a socialist or anarchist or communist - eventually even - why he was an anti-fascist).

But while presenting himself as everyone's potential ally/recruit (at one stage he travelled to an anarchist meeting to defend RA against 'red-baiting') he was perfectly placed as a magnet and conduit for all grumbles. By exploiting every weakness, dignifying every cretinism and misrepresenting ever so slightly all positions including his own, he could (and did briefly) marshal a united front of contradictory views that effectively polluted real debate and paralysed genuine internal democracy. Three years on, a second look at the logic of the HAFA line given political developments is both intriguing and instructive not least that it is now known the author was a tout.

Huddersfield Anti-Fascist Action (HAFA): AFA's strength is its broad base and simple anti-fash (anti-fascist) message.

London Anti-Fascist Action(LAFA): One of AFA's strengths in its formative years was its limited platform; the single issue. However, during the Isle of Dogs campaign the single issue exposed AFA's limitations. AFA had nothing to say on the principle business. With the election of a Labour government the Isle of Dogs scenario could be repeated on a national scale and all our good work in the last decade would be undone at a stroke.

HAFA: If AFA sets up or becomes part of a new political party, this would create divisions amongst AFA militants and alienate sections of the dispossessed white working class youth who both ourselves and the fash try to recruit.

LAFA: A political party with all the connotations that suggests, is not on the agenda. What must be recognised is that it will happen with or without AFA. Consider a situation where a 'socialist' Labour government are attacking the working class, where the right and the BNP are attacking Labour, and AFA are attacking the BNP. Working class youth dispossessed or otherwise are not likely to be overly enamoured for long with the working class credentials of any group whose sole activity results in Labour being allowed a free run. To pretend to a UN like neutrality would play into the hands of the fascists; it would be also be false, dishonest and tactically inept.

HAFA: Huddersfield AFA believe that our non political stance has been the major factor in our success. AFA is a broad based organisation that has survived ten years while containing a wide variety of view points... the simple reason is that politics have been kept out of the movement.

LAFA: This line of argument is naive and totally inaccurate. AFA has always been "political" internally and externally. At only its second national conference in 1986 one group was expelled, while two others walked out in sympathy. In 1987 there was allegations of vote rigging and racism. By 1988 the organisation built mainly on the back of students and Labour party types had virtually collapsed. Proposals that AFA propaganda implement a class message, a democratic structure, led to further accusations of racism, from conservative elements resistant to change.

The logic of this argument caused ten, (mainly paper, or state funded organisations) to withdraw. Had AFA not adapted to reality, the AFA of the 80's would have become the ARA of the 90's. AFA, is now we believe at the crossroads once again.

HAFA: If we back the IWCA this will put AFA in dispute with other pro-working class organisations. We do not see how criticising other working class organisations is going to help AFA's cause in fighting fascism.

LAFA: This is hardly accurate either. In the past AFA itself has vigorously defended its position and tactics. Not only attacking the entire Trotskyist movement but has also been justifiably and bitterly critical of other anti-racist /anti-fascist groups. You have to ask yourself is AFA stronger or weaker through the proclamation of its position and activities through *Fighting Talk*, leaflets, media etc. If AFA is justified in proclaiming precisely where we stand, it is unrealistic to expect the IWCA not to do so.

HAFA: Our [AFA's] role is to maintain the vacuum, not to sit in judgement and decide who is not to fill it.

HAF A: Our [AFA's] role is to maintain the vacuum, not to sit in judgement and decide who is not to fill it.

LAF A: This statement, is, not to put too fine a line on it, complete bollocks. In the first place it is naive to believe that the vacuum can be maintained indefinitely. A new Labour government will change everything. It will be a massive shot in the arm for the far-right...

HAF A: We accept AFA members should be involved in the wider struggle...we should work towards promoting autonomous working class organisations...we believe that it is necessary for the vacuum to be filled by left wing groups but why the IWCA? Why doesn't AFA directly back Class War or DAM both groups which act in working class interests and have just as much claim to our backing as the IWCA?

LAF A: With all due respect to the organisations mentioned, neither is involved in AFA nationally. As for working in the interests of the working class, there is no evidence that the working class agree with you. And like any other left group they are handicapped by their own histories, reputations and ideologies. Because of these factors they can never hope to fill the vacuum, and so must also recognise that on their own they will never make a difference. What is true of them is true to one degree or another of the entire British Left. The simple fact is that the Left has failed. The IWCA is designed to learn from the mistakes of others.

HAF A: Why shouldn't AFA if they do decide to back a parliamentary group back the SLP, a party which obviously has much greater resources, more grassroots support and a much higher profile than the IWCA?

LAF A: Why shouldn't AFA fold into the ANL, an organisation with much greater resources, numbers, higher profile, etc? The reasons are the same. The SLP like the SWP/ANL is controlled from the top down. Influence within the organisation is impossible to achieve. The SLP is working to the same tried, tested and failed formula. The IWCA on the other hand is actually designed for AFA. It is non-ideological and wide open. It is non-sectarian. It will be built from the bottom up. The involvement of AFA members in the IWCA would be a compliment rather than a deviation from vigorous anti-fascist activity

HAF A: The 'Filling the Vacuum' [FTV] article states that since the BNP are trying to present a respectable face we must follow them and fight them via elections or we will be criminalised.

LAF A: In regard to the 'BNP and respectability,' FTV says the *direct opposite* [RA emphasis]. "...the BNP declared in April 1994 that here would be no more marches, meetings, punch ups. A year on this must now be regarded as a serious change of strategy... something *other* [RA emphasis] than an effort to court respectability." There is a big difference between a concern for respectability and the ability to operate successfully. Furthermore that the BNP are on the point of decisively changing strategy is no longer a matter of speculation. Lecombers' argument is to switch the arena from the streets to the estates. No longer then a battle for control of the streets, but instead a battle for hearts and minds. And of course once you begin to lose the political argument, even by default, you eventually lose the physical argument.

HAF A: This statement that (we must fight elections, etc) would suggest that the IWCA is prepared to abandon AFA's "No platform policy" ie that anti-fascists will not share a platform with fascists.

LAF A: To repeat, the IWCA has no policy on this, or on any other issue to abandon. "No platform" never meant only anti-fascists physically sharing a platform. It is a metaphor for a basic denial of free speech to fascists, or those that might wish to debate with them. It is not a liberal concept. In the past AFA has even

LAF A: This statement, is, not to put too fine a line on it, complete bollocks. In the first place it is naive to believe that the vacuum can be maintained indefinitely. A new Labour government will change everything. It will be a massive shot in the arm for the far-right. There is also the strong possibility that the Conservative Party itself will split either from the left or the right. The BNP are themselves planning to take advantage of the new opportunity. At the moment AFA is still in pole position. Is it seriously being suggested that we must sit still while everybody else is involved in manoeuvres? As working class militants we cannot and will not stand on the sidelines wringing our hands hopelessly. AFA is not a club. Militant anti-fascism is not a hobby, it is a means to an end. The means are physical opposition, the end, working class power in working class areas. The physical side has proved itself effective many times over; the new situation demands that the politics do as well.

broken up debates hosted by people like the Labour party.

HAF A: The suggestion is made that Combat 18 is a state controlled counter gang... this may be the case but while C18 are making attacks on innocent people we don't believe that we can stand by on the grounds that it may be an intelligence conspiracy.

LAF A: What it [FTV] does say is that "the *ideal solution* [RA emphasis] for the state would be for AFA to get locked into a clandestine gang war with C18." As for attacking innocent people, etc, this is largely propaganda (C18 have done very little) though with the political turmoil following a Labour government this may change. That being the case AFA would probably be far more concerned in them attacking people who aren't so innocent!

HAF A: To summarise as a group we feel that:

We would be interested to hear the IWCA's explanation for saying they have the backing of AFA without any mandate from large sections of the movement. The whole area of expanding AFA's politics has not been adequately discussed. If agreement is reached that AFA should support more explicitly political groups, there is a need to clarify the exact nature of this support. Will we back just one group? Should we back any group that we believe is acting in the best interests of the working class? What position will AFA take in regard to disputes between these groups?

LAF A: AFA's politics is not expanding and cannot expand. That is why a new organisation (the IWCA) has been brought into existence. How much support AFA provide in practice will depend on whether or not AFA members accept the analysis put forward on the previous pages. In 1990 at a public meeting in East London AFA declared that "the success of the far right is due to the fact that the left are not seen as a credible option. AFA are committed to creating the space in which one [a credible alternative] can develop." Six years on we have created the political space. The IWCA is designed to be that credible alternative. We believe that it has the potential to do so. Fascism is not the cause of the Left's failure it is the consequence of that failure. Political support for Labour leaves the left unable to address itself honestly to the primary cause. The essential contradiction is support for Labour and the working class. The interests of the two are now clearly irreconcilable. The far-right capitalise on this. Establishing a working class alternative is the best, indeed, the only guarantee in the long run, that the cycle of constantly being forced to respond to ever increasing fascist initiatives can be reversed.

In regard to who AFA should back, etc, AFA should back the organisations who are at the sharp end of the class struggle; the organisations who have grasped the nettle and are attempting to make a difference. That must always remain our remit. If in the long term this proves to be an organisation other than the IWCA so be it. If we in AFA are agreed that the vacuum needs to be filled, then the following are the only questions that remain: If not this way how? If not us who? If not now when?

(the article above is an edited version of the London AFA document, 'If not this way how? If not us who? If not now when?' Original available on request. send s.a.e. to: BM BOX 37, LONDON, WC1N 3XX)

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Community Resistance

BIRMINGHAM Newtown

New Labour capitulate

ON 23 OCTOBER ward councillors in Aston publicly announced that no fewer than 200 "rat-runs," alleys used by muggers and street-gangs, were scheduled to be closed in the Newtown area before Xmas. This move comes 18 months after the launch of the Newtown Independent Residents Association (NIRA) who as part of their offensive against Labour, launched a militant campaign to force alley closures, after a mugging epidemic had swept through the area. The closure scheme is a capitulation for New Labour locally, who were effectively waging war on residents for demanding action, right up until the climbdown. It's been almost 20 years since the first requests to close the alleys were made through official channels. But the council only took notice when the community rallied behind NIRA and launched their own alley blockade. Arrogant Labour lackeys have publicly applauded their own "innovation" for implementing the proposals. Designer Labour councillor Stacey proclaimed, "the closure of alleyways is most welcome as the residents have campaigned long and hard for it." Why then were the Labour group so quick to obstruct, vilify and criminalise NIRA, outlawing activities and trying to lean on local activists, including intimidating home visits, a series of bans, threats of arrest and harassment? NIRA's "no-nonsense" approach to politics has thrown Labour, the police and the hoods into turmoil.

In the case of the alleys NIRA took the battle directly to their door. Still reeling from their public humiliation New Labour have unconvincingly tried to disguise cowardly plagiarism as innovation. Essentially though it heralds another outright victory for the residents of Newtown.

N. LONDON Islington a stark choice

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by Islington's Labour council that they intend to make cuts of £60 million to services has provoked outrage. In a leaflet distributed by the local Independent Working Class Association to 200 tenants associations, community groups and advice agencies, the IWCA said "ordinary people are faced with a stark choice: Either we accept our status as second class citizens or RESIST. Resisting, means identifying the facilities we consider vital to the survival of our communities and then considering how best to safeguard them, determining our own future - ward by ward, estate by estate, block by block." It went on to point out "In the future that will mean standing and electing our own candidates."

In a separate letter, carried in all the local press, the IWCA demanded that the head of housing, Richard Greening "have the courage of his convictions and seek the support of the people of Islington for his privatisation programme [of council housing] through the ballot box," by holding "a referendum of the borough's 30,000+ council tenants."

Members of North London Fight Against Council Tenancy Sell-offs (FACTS), held another public meeting of 100 plus in the Clerkenwell area. Local people expressed not only their opposition to privatisation but a mounting dissatisfaction with their local councillors, the Lib-Dem 'official opposition.' The meeting also made clear the anger felt by local people towards the growing army of the 'trendy middle-classes' colonising the area.

N. LONDON Camden don't give a fuck

WITH THE Chief Executive of Camden council, Steve Bundred, travelling to a meeting of the Islington Fabian Society to urge Labour councillors to "just get on and do it" and implement the £60M cuts package; FACTS campaigners proved that the Labour establishment are not the only ones who have links across the boroughs.

FACTS campaigners have addressed a number of meetings on the Bacton and Wendling estates in Gospel Oak, Camden. The council have put forward a number of schemes including demolition and privatisation of the estates, as part of a 'redevelopment' of the area; over 1,000 people could lose their homes. Following a meeting on the estates where councillors were repeatedly shouted down and even threatened with physical violence, tenants sent a deputation to the town hall for a full council meeting. One Wendling tenant shouted at councillors, "You people live in semi-detached houses and don't give a fuck about your citizens!" Despite sheepish reassurances from the council's head of housing, Brian Weekes, that privatisation was not on the agenda, tenants representatives demanded it in writing, "We do not trust you" they told him, "You have a hidden agenda."

Cllr Weekes later showed his true colours at a special Camden housing conference. Addressing an audience of over 250 people, less than 30 of whom were tenant representatives (the rest were Town Hall officials, representatives of housing associations and developers), he attacked tenant reps, accusing them of causing "trouble," to the cheers of senior Labour councillors. He declared that "some tenants who want homes will have to look elsewhere," conveniently confirming the IWCA analysis of Labour's inner-city strategy.

Now & Then

Because of Chile's 100 year old history of parliamentary democracy, it used to be called the England of South America. Perhaps a more suitable cliché would be to say that England is now the Chile of Europe. "There's a good deal of similarity between the economic policies of Chile and Britain" according to Cecil Parkinson. In his last speech Allende warned that the holocaust in which he died would cover the ruling politicians who had not fulfilled their duty and defended democracy, with shame. Everybody knows that politicians have no shame and even less inclination to defend democracy. Capitalism, as Pinochet demonstrated, does not need democracy to function. In any case, according to Sir Ian Gilmour "Conservatives do not worship democracy, democracy is a means to an end... if it is leading to an end that is undesirable or inconsistent with itself, there is a theoretical case for ending it."

Red Action, issue 48, Dec/Jan 1988.

Chile's vaunted economic miracle was brought about by the so-called Chicago Boys, a group of Chilean disciples of American economist Milton Friedman, who were given free rein to put their theories into practice. They encouraged generous incentives for foreign investors and the privatisation of businesses that the Marxist Allende had nationalised. This resulted in an average annual economic growth of seven per cent for the past 14 years. There are economic problems - Chile has the worst income disparity in Latin America. This performance brought Augusto Pinochet many admirers, among them conservatives including Margaret Thatcher, who sent an aide to Chile to spend six months studying Pinochet's economic reforms before she embarked on her own in Britain. A few years back, when searchers discovered more than 100 victims of military executions, doubled up in coffins in a mass grave Pinochet joked darkly, "Whoever buried them served the Fatherland well, by saving on nails." This sort of remark makes it hard to refurbish Pinochet's reputation.

Sunday Telegraph October 25 1998

REBEL MUSIC

Steve Potts investigates the growing cottage industry that seeks to profit from the 'peace dividend'

While in Belfast recently I picked up a CD by Bik McFarlane and Terry O'Neil, *Something Inside So Strong*. McFarlane, leader of the IRA prisoners in Long Kesh during the '81 hunger-strikes and 'Cruncher' O'Neil, a well known North Belfast republican activist; have produced a mini album with a number of well picked songs including the title track that has become Sinn Feins' unofficial anthem and *Song For Marcella*, which Bik wrote in jail for his comrade Bobby Sands.

The songs are sung with a heartfelt passion and sincerity with the proceeds being donated "towards campaigns highlighting the issues of Irish political prisoners of war." It comes as a breath of fresh air against the backdrop of a boom in the production and sales of 'Irish rebel music' that is fast threatening to become a cottage industry.

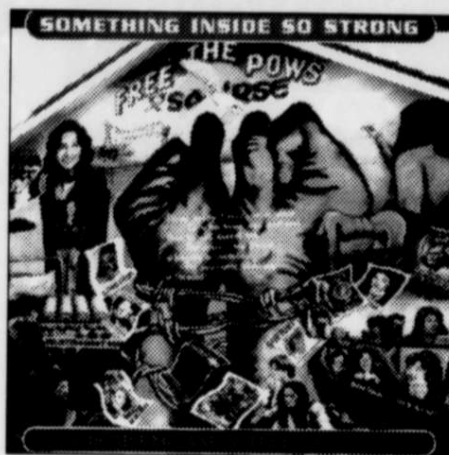
Irish people have a long and rich cultural tradition of articulating their struggles through the medium of song, ensuring that their political heritage is passed from generation to generation. This is particularly the case in Glasgow where folk bands performing Irish ballads have played an important role in keeping alive the historical roots of the Irish emigrant population, especially amongst the young people who frequent the bars around Glasgow Celtic football club before and after a game.

Despite it's underground nature and working class audience, the potential has nonetheless always existed for large amounts of money to be made from this scene. In recent years, with the war in Ireland over and CD production technology relatively cheap, the scene has significantly expanded with more and more eager to reap the financial benefit of the 'peace dividend.'

Even long before the peace process had commenced though, a number of republican supporters had begun to express disquiet over the attitude of a number of the bands playing the Glasgow scene. At first this had centred around the issue of the fees charged for benefit functions. During the height of the bombing campaign in London, those working in support of Irish POWs had attempted to organise a benefit social within the 'belly of the beast.' Quotes for bands had varied from between £600 and £800. Charging £5 a ticket, it meant that organisers would have had to get 160 people into the venue before they could even think about raising any money for the prisoners!

Clearly, somewhere along the way the relationship between the bands and the wider struggle had become extremely distorted, to almost perverse proportions.

Afterall, the popularity of Glasgow's Irish bands centred around the fact that they sung about the Irish war, the IRA and it's prisoners. Yet at the same time they expected to be rewarded handsomely for playing in support of that very same cause. Some republican supporters asked why? They did not expect payment for organising or stewarding events. And certainly those in the firing line, the volunteers and POWs whom the ballads are written about, weren't making any money while they risked their lives. Yet many of the bands, who were little more than well-rehearsed covers



Something Inside So Strong, £7 CD & £4 tape, available from Siopa na hEalaine, 51 Falls Rd, Belfast, Ireland. tel: 01232 243 371

bands, insisted that they had to be paid; it was afterall, how they made their living.

Finally the Celtic fanzine, *Tiocfaidh Ar La*, went into print criticising the band 'Athenrye' who had encouraged female members of their audience to come up onto the stage and remove their tops in exchange for a t-shirt. The arrogant and contemptuous response by Athenrye went some way to reveal the size of the egos that were now doing the rounds on the circuit; ironically probably aided by *Tiocfaidh Ar La*, who had previously dubbed them "THE NEW IRISH SUPERGROUP" in a genuine attempt to promote the scene.

As questions continued to be asked about the funding of Athenrye's drug habit, their numerous exotic holidays abroad and their expensive choice of vehicles, the true extent to which they had degenerated became clear. When faced with the prospect of 100 republicans swelling the audience of their next gig they pleaded with leading Glasgow gangland boss, Paul Ferris (recently sentenced to 10yrs for gun-running) to 'mediate' between them and the incensed activists.

While many in Ireland are attempting to come to terms with both the physical and psychological scars of nearly 30 years of conflict, it is clear that others have 'had a good war.'

Lately an increasing number of Glasgow bands have begun playing republican functions in Ireland and others have been donating proceeds from CD's to POW welfare. Hopefully this will quickly become a growing trend.

If you want to pick up an Irish rebel CD my advice is go for the real thing. It may not be as well produced or slickly packaged, but why listen to those who profited from history when you can listen to those who made history?

why listen to those who profit from history when you can listen to those who made history?



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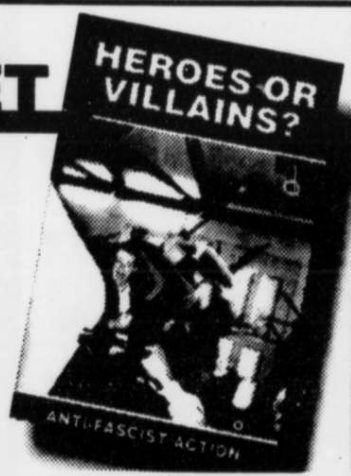
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A Word In Your Ear...



THE RISE AND FALL OF THE RAY CHADWICK PARTY

FOR MANY it is an art form, and we would be the last ones to underestimate the capacity of lefties for self delusion. Judged in terms of clinical insanity the Spartacist League have for my money, always been tops. But recently, the liberal press have become concerned at what precisely 'the Revolutionary Communist Party are about.' "LM [formerly *Living Marxism*] is professional and well-organised. The magazine is glossy, well written and cleverly edited; it is distributed largely for free and carries no adverts, yet it seems to have no shortage of money... Where do the politics come from?" (George Monbiot *Guardian* 27.10.98).

An LM source quoted in the *Observer* went some way to answering the question by explaining that as far as they were concerned "the difference these days between the right and the left doesn't amount to a hill of beans."

The flurry of interest by the media in what 'the RCP thinks' is related to LM being sued for libel by ITN, regarding claims by the magazine that footage of starving Bosnians in a Serbian concentration camp was 'faked.' According to LM the starving were not inside the wire trying to get out, but outside - possibly trying to get in! Not unnaturally when the story broke in 1997 they were very publicly supported in this by all right-thinking Serb nationalists. At a press conference called by LM a number of witnesses or 'well heeled fascists' as one journalist introduced them were dutifully wheeled out. One of them later presented himself as a witness for the defence in the trial of a genuinely serious nutter and now convicted war criminal called Tadic.

Now, in normal circumstances a typical lefty group would already be running for cover. But quite clearly the RCP were never normal. So the question now being raised is were they ever lefty? But to be fair 'keeping strange company,' is for the RCP hardly novel.

THE NEXT STEP

FOR INSTANCE, during the 84-85 miners strike, the initials R.C.P. were translated by some as the Ray Chadwick Party after the breakaway UDM leader, because of the RCP's call along with the entire right wing press for a ballot in the midst of the strike. Later they were run out of Yorkshire for producing a pamphlet detailing *How We Lost The Strike* some six months before the strike actually ended! (My own feeling is that the 'We' in the title proved as provocative as the prediction).

During the eighties, they opposed sanctions against South Africa. Along with *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil, LM dismissed AIDS as 'a gay plague.' It argued in 1988 that even though racism was 'more prevalent in Britain than anywhere else in Europe' the activity of AFA was still "disturbing": far better according to them "to let the minuscule right rot." Additionally, they pronounced that opposition to the Poll Tax was futile; the NHS was an instrument of the 'repressive state,' that ETA were 'fascists,' the Greens 'heirs to the nazis,' 'that higher education was synonymous with intelligence,' that Africa would be 'better run by multinationals' and announced plans for 'a new anti-imperialist movement for Ireland as the IRA had sold out' (the latter rather predictably ending in tears).

Then at the General Election of 1987 with the entire Left united emotionally behind Kinnock, the RCP with by now typically bad taste, announced the launch of the Red Front with the backing of among others... er... hum... Red Action. Brief though the encounter was, it confirmed existing prejudices, propelling both in even more violently opposite trajectories. Within a couple of years the RCP declared that 'there was no constituency for their politics' and their weekly paper *The Next Step* was kaput.

Overall what is striking is not the glaring inconsistencies; the staggering u-turn followed by the ruthless purge, as is the norm. Rather the reverse. In the entire decade between 88-98, not a single rumour of disagreement surfaced, never mind 'the split,' to signal the dawning of the transformation from doctrinaire revolutionary to 'enlightened' capitalist. The explanation for the apparently seamless metamorphosis - apart from the fact that the jolly japes, hilarious wheezes and witty provocations of the '80's have become the principles of the late '90's - is reasonably straightforward.

COMMUNIST ARISTOCRATS

EVEN while formally 'communist,' it was no secret that the social composition of the RCP was always middle class and according to some critics even 'aristocratic.' It's group instinct as a consequence proved 99% of the time, to be unerringly right-wing. Consequently the only evident eccentricity, recently rectified, was in the initial choice of title. No doubt future developments will continue to prove a source of great anguish for many liberals, with even cries of dirty tricks from some. Not us.

These days more than ever, we operate at totally different ends of the market, (ownership of art galleries for them; membership of rogue's galleries for us) and truth be told, there has never been that decisive differential between them and the rest anyway. In revolutionary terms class orientation is the key investment; working class instinct the invaluable revolutionary dividend. The next step, without that foundation, will always be in the dark. As the now RCP trajectory has so brilliantly illuminated, disaster like success does not happen over-night, or by accident but has to be diligently worked at until it becomes habit.

Something We Said!

In his rejection of what he called tribalism, the Prime Minister implicitly insists that a class bias is something of which politicians should be ashamed. The horny handed sons of toil knew which side they were on. Who speaks for the dirty overalls now? Labour MP Roy Hattersley *Guardian*, Oct 98

The Third Way is a purely political concept. The increase in numbers and power of middle income groups means that government choose to meet their needs first. The Third Way is a justification of that necessity.

American sage JK Galbraith *Guardian*, 17.10.98

They [the poor] have no voice, no influence and no social leverage; their case has been largely abandoned by a Labour Party that has wanted to build a new constituency among the middle class.

Economist Will Hutton *Observer*, 18.10.98

We are taking this dispute to court as a last resort. We are concerned that Camden banning our meetings could have a snowball effect and other councils could ban us too. This is part of a whole drift to the right. It wouldn't have happened ten years ago.

AFA spokesman Joe Reilly *Time Out*, Sept 30 - Oct 7 1998

Racism is getting worse. In a recent European survey over a third of Britons admitted to racist opinions. The Stephen Lawrence commemorative plaque has been attacked twice. And significantly the accused in the Lawrence case were not actually members of any far-right group.

Michael Mansfield QC *Radio 5 Live*, 5.10.98

Just as local muslims are entitled to the protection of the police, surely it must also be the same for BNP members.

W. Midlands BNP press officer, Simon Darby, *Redditch Advertiser*, 31.10.98