

Red Action

BRUTAL

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AND UNASHAMED

The recent drop in the popularity of the Government, first suggested in the opinion polls and confirmed in the recent Brecon bye election has been the signal for a great rising of hopes among Labour Party members and supporters. At last they can see a possible light at the end of the tunnel. After six years of the most anti working class government in most people's memory there seems to be a chance that in a couple of years they could be on their way out, to be replaced by a Labour government which—if you believe Labour politicians—will sweep away the effects of six years of Tory blight like some great crusading force.

It's a lovely dream and no doubt one that is the basis of quite a few people's hopes for the future. Unfortunately for them, and for us as well, that's all that it is, a dream. Any idea that a future Labour government is going to somehow be able to turn the clock back as it were and make society again the way it was six years ago (was it really so great then) belong in dreamland.

The effects of the years of Thatcherism have already had such an effect on the quality of our society that it is going to need a far more dynamic effect than the Labour Party is capable of mustering to make any real change.

What do we mean by this. Let's look at how just one particular aspect of society has changed under Thatcher as an example of what we are talking about. Take and law and order or more specifically the police force.

CHANGE

No one with any experience of the police would deny that there has been a significant change in policing methods in this country in the last few years. For many, this was forcefully brought home during the recent miners' strike. Time and time again they used methods and acted in a manner—massed cavalry and baton charges etc. that very few people in this country had ever experienced before.

Now there is no doubt that quite a few people were disturbed by this trend towards more authoritarian policing methods, and would certainly hope than any future Labour government would reverse it. The question is would they be capable of doing so. Those that believe that they would be, presumably expect them to do it through legislative acts of Parliament. Through such measures as the abolition of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, which the Tories introduced to give the police such wide ranging new powers.

However, even if a Labour government were willing to take such measures—and many would

argue that they wouldn't be—the fatal flaw with this idea is the presumption that the change in policing methods has been caused entirely by legislative measures, and that the abolition of these measures will also abolish the new methods.

In fact the greater readiness of the police to use more authoritarian and brutal methods has been caused not so much by legislative changes as by subtle and unofficial changes behind the scene. Primarily by the way in which it has been quietly but most definitely been made clear to all policemen, that especially when they are carrying out the Government wishes, they are free to act in just about any manner that they wish, without any worries about possible consequences.

The miners' strike again provided a clear example of this. Who could forget the incident outside of the Orgreave Coking Plant when one policeman later identified, was clearly filmed and seen by millions repeatedly battering a fallen picket over the head with a truncheon. If the authorities had wanted to curb violence by the police here was a clear chance. If they had disciplined that policeman it would have been a clear indication to all police everywhere that they cannot be seen to act in that manner. Indeed at one time you would have expected that the fact that he had been filmed would have meant that he would have been sacrificed even if only for the sake of appearances.

SUPPORT

Today however, we live in a time when the economic system is in a growing mess and the ruling class, to protect their interests, are trying to push through great social and economic changes that will slash working class living standards. To force these changes through in the face of resistance by the workers such as that shown by the miners', they need the support and loyalty of a confident and powerful police force. That is why they will make no move that could jeopardise that support in any way. Not even the sacrificing of one brutal copper for the sake of appearance.



THE MESSAGE TO ALL POLICE EVERYWHERE IS CLEAR. BATTER AWAY LADS, YOU'VE NOTHING TO FEAR!

This is the sort of licence that the police have been enjoying for some time, and as they have become accustomed to the idea that they themselves are above the law, so they have become more arrogant, more brutal and totally contemptuous of what the public may think about their activities.

Never was this more clearly shown than by the events near Stonehenge back in June. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of police, clad in overalls and crash helmets, wielding shields and truncheons attacked and literally destroyed the peace convoy with such brutality as to shock even pro-establishment right wing journalists who were present. Even mobile homes with young children aboard them were smashed up and destroyed. Hysterical mothers held their children aloft to try and get the police to stop, but merely succeeded in getting themselves, their children showered with glass.

Even the presence of TV cameras did nothing to abate the ferocity of the attack. Why should it. Why should they worry who sees them acting in this manner. No one is going to do anything anyway.

This sort of policeman and the sort of police force that has been produced by the Tory policy of literally letting them get away with murder. They are arrogant, anti social and have come to see the sort of policing methods that we have been talking about as being natural and routine and will use them as a matter of course.

Any idea that some future Labour government is going to sweep all of this away with some

magic piece of legislation that will turn the police force into friendly bobbies on the beat is sheer lunacy. Younger police wouldn't even know how to act any differently it's the only form of policing that they've ever known. The only way to effectively change the character of the police force would be to get rid of all of those that have taken part in any policing activities which have broken the law. Seeing as this would probably entail sacking 90 per cent of the police force we can hardly expect to see them do that. We should not forget that past Labour governments have also played some part in making the police what they are today. It was a Labour government that allowed the Special Patrol Group to club Blair Peach to death on an Anti Nazi League demonstration and he was not the only one to die at the hands of the police during their last term of office.

LEGISLATION

Whatever people may expect and whatever Labour politicians may promise, the Labour party is incapable of implementing any real change because they have no influence where the power really lays, in the case of the police on the streets. It is for exactly the same reason that so many of their economic plans come to grief. Because real economic power lays not in Parliament but in the boardroom. Workers know this. They do not wait for the Labour party to win them better working conditions and pay. They organise themselves to negotiate and if necessary take industrial action. Only when working class communities organise in the same way to protect themselves from the growing power of the police will there be any chance of it being curbed.

TRIP TO BELFAST

On the evening of Thursday, August 9th, Red Action members and supporters will be travelling to Belfast for the weekend to take part in the anti internment demonstration. This is held every year to commemorate the night 14 years ago when thousands of British soldiers descended on nationalist areas throughout the north of Ireland, smashed their way into homes, and arrested 342 men. These men were then held for months without any charges being brought against them, and during this time many of them were subjected to various forms of torture.

The allegations of torture were all investigated and established by the European Court of Human Rights. They included, prisoners being hooded and subjected to hours of white noise—a constant high pitched whining noise that is designed to disorientate the brain—prisoners being deprived of food and water for days at a time, and prisoners being taken into helicopters, made to believe that they were high in the air, and then pushed out while they were only a few feet from the ground.

HIGHLIGHT

For us, the August trip to Belfast is always the highlight of the political calendar. For those that like to think of themselves as political revolutionaries nothing can be as educative and informative as actually seeing and experiencing a revolution, which is exactly what the Republican struggle in Ireland is. A revolution albeit a long and tortuous one. As well as being politically worthwhile, few people that that

have visited nationalist areas in Ireland, have ever failed to comment on what a moving, humbling yet at the same time uplifting experience it is. If these sound strong and emotional words, we can only suggest that you talk to someone that has been there.

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

Whilst in Belfast we will be staying with, engaging in discussion with and socialising with members of the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

The fare is not cheap, in the region of £50. However if we get enough support we can arrange for a block booking which will considerably reduce the fare. Once again we urge all our readers to take this opportunity to experience an extremely informative and enjoyable weekend.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Not for the first time, Britain has been found to have been in breach of the European Convention of Human Rights, this time over the immigration rules restricting the entry into Britain, of husbands to be of women with British citizenship. The Convention has found that this breaches the rules on the grounds of sexual discrimination as men with British citizenship do have the right to bring their wives or fiancées into this country.

This is the twelfth time that Britain has been found to be in breach of the convention. Seeing as how the other seventeen countries that belong to the convention have only clocked up THIRTY NINE violations between them, it would appear that Britain is still leading the way in one or two areas.

In fact this particular area of Immigration regulations is blatantly racist and sexist. It is designed to discriminate against women and especially Asian women. The first ban was introduced in 1969 by jovial Jim Callaghan, the then Labour Home Secretary. Since then there have been a number of changes made by successive governments. In 1980 the rules were amended so that all foreign husbands were barred unless the wife was either born here herself, or one of her parents was born here. What this meant in practice was that white women were unaffected, whilst black women suffered discrimination that is all too common in the institutions of this country.

These rules have since been changed and foreign husbands off

all British women can now be admitted, BUT ONLY AT THE DISCRETION OF THE IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES, this means in effect that many British women with foreign husbands still do not have the guaranteed right to bring their husbands into this country.

EXCUSES

In the light of the European Convention's ruling, the Government is frantically looking for reasons and excuses for the rules. Already there have been mumbblings coming from the Westminster asylum. Talk of young men coming here to start families and take all the jobs. WHAT JOBS!

All this at a time when we are seeing Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka turned away to shouts of floods, swamps and tidal waves etc. In the sixties, the Tory candidate at a bye election in Smethwick, Birmingham, refused to disown supporters of his, who campaigned under the slogan *If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote for Labour.*

Could the slogan at the next election be something like Labour says he's black, we say he's a wog. Kick him out.



FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

In any conflict between two sides or factions, each side will employ propaganda, i.e., they will try to present their case in the best possible light and if possible exploit any apparent flaws in the arguments of their opponents. The intention is not to try and convince each other, but to try and win over the hearts and minds of the watching world.

For example during the recent miner's strike, the media bombarded the public with stories of picket line violence, Libyan and IRA connections, grossly inflated back to work figures, vilification of Scargill etc. All of this was very useful propaganda for the Government, National Coal Board and the police. On their side the miners produced a newspaper and leaflets, held morale boosting rallies and demonstrations, and had some access to the media to present their case. Although all of the national dailies were hostile, the miner's propaganda was effective and because of this, they managed to maintain moral and financial support from a significant section of the public right to the end of the strike.

CENSORSHIP

Would they have received this support if a tiny majority of the population comprising of government ministers, Fleet Street editors and top figures in the TV hierarchy, had been able to remove from the television and the press, any sort of questioning of government, NCB or police tactics in the dispute.

This is exactly the situation that has existed in the north of Ireland since 1971.

Since that time there has been an almost total eradication of any sort of objective reporting of events that have occurred there. To treat the army or establishment views or claims, with anything less than sympathy is providing the terrorists with succour. To suggest as Ken Livingstone did that the IRA might be anything other than psychopathic degenerates, is greeted with ritual hysteria and labels such as the one in the Sun about the most odious man in Britain. In such a hostile atmosphere it is not surprising that few journalists feel like sticking their necks out. Similarly some of the left wing press seem to ignore what is basically a war for equally unethical reasons.

The collusion between the establishment and the media is such that basically all news data is tailored to suit the needs of the Government, army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. As the public rely almost exclusively on the BBC

or ITN for information, they remain ignorant of what is really happening, and of opinion about it elsewhere in the world. They know as little as they did in 1969 and this suits the government fine.

Despite events such as Bloody Sunday, internment, plastic bullets etc, the authorities have fought tooth and nail to retain the image of the British soldier that was first splashed on the screens in 1969. Their squaddie is cheerful and polite, although often bemused by the antics of the natives. He does a difficult and dangerous job in the name of democracy. On patrol in the Loyalist Shankhill or republican Falls Roads, he will be offered tea and sympathy by grateful elderly grannies. This squaddie is also a product of the media.



ARMY VIOLENCE

Since the start of the latest conflict in Ireland the British army has faced a central problem. How to subdue nationalist protest, while at the same time trying to isolate and destroy the guerrilla armies of the IRA/INLA without (1) Alienating moderate opinion, (2) Shattering the British public's faith in its government's policy and (3) Undermining Britain's image internationally. One solution is to employ the brutal methods necessary but stop news of them getting out.

Because these methods i.e., torture, internment, forced confessions, shooting of unarmed civilians, violate normal democratic standards, the authorities respond to every incidence of them, with various cover up devices in an attempt to minimise the damage to their image. They will variously either pretend that the incident did not occur, lie about what did happen, or try and blame it onto someone else, usually republican.

METHODS

In 1976 the European commission on human rights ruled that the sensory deprivation techniques (keeping prisoners hooded and blindfolded etc.) widely employed by the British forces were in fact torture, which often left permanent damage. The media response to this was typical. It turned its attention to the Irish Government which had brought the case.

Bloody Sunday the 30th of January 1972 is burned deep into the memory of the Irish but has left little imprint on British consciences. This is in great part due to the skill of the media. The first reports from the incident gave the following sort of impression:

"I was appalled, they opened fire into a dense crowd of people, there

was no warning" (A photographer present at the scene) *"It was the paras, perhaps twenty in all who opened fire first. I saw three men fall to the ground"* Simon Winchester, Guardian reporter. *"The paras seemed to relish their work"* Brian Cashinella, Times reporter. The rewriting of history was not long in starting. First the army invented a battle in which over 200 rounds were fired at them. Taking their cue from this, the media after a cautious start soon got into their stride. First blame the marchers *"13 killed as paras break riot"* reported the Guardian under a headline *"Death March"* The Daily Telegraph blamed the march organisers.

Having established that a "riot" took place the media then moved on to drawing the IRA into the picture. The Daily Mirror reported that *"The army fear that the IRA may try to start a new bloody battle at tomorrow's march in Newry wearing stolen army uniforms"*. The enquiry when it was eventually held found that "none of the dead or wounded had been shot while handling weapons (this information was not presented to the public). By the time the Daily Express was reporting that the *"main guilt lies firmly with the IRA"*.

It was left up to the Daily Mail to

somehow end up congratulating the army who "are going an impossible job, impossibly well".

By 1979, the Sunday Times could report that Bloody Sunday 1972 was when *"13 men died in shootings during a demo"*. The paras responsibility has now been written out of history.

TORTURE

In 1977 Castlereagh Barracks became the authorities' main interrogation centre and within weeks the torture allegations began. Employing the traditional tactics of lies and misinformation, the media and various establishment figures ensured that no action was taken for three years. Roy Mason—Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and RUC boss Kenneth Newman—now head of Scotland Yard claimed that the injuries suffered had been self inflicted. The Daily Telegraph soon invented a story about "prizes being awarded by the IRA according to the degree of self inflicted injury". It went on *"A man being interviewed, took off his shoe and struck himself on the head etc."* Needless to say, this report was greeted with unrestrained hilarity in republican areas.

Although in recent years the army has been taking a more secondary role to the RUC and the UDR (locally recruited part time soldiers) the media has continued to serve up the same mixture of fudging fabrication and distortion that served their predecessors so well. There is no reason for supposing that this will change unless Britain should be on the point of withdrawal or the IRA on the point of victory.

REPUBLICAN VIOLENCE

Violence dominates the British media's coverage of events in Ireland. They concentrate on reporting certain facts about incidents such as how when and where, and leave out much significant background information. In this way they contrive to make the violence appear as random as a natural disaster or accident. It also invariably makes it appear to be exclusively the work of Republicans. In this way the IRA has been blamed for numerous acts of violence perpetrated by Loyalist paramilitaries and the British Army.

After the death of Bobby Sands MP, the front page of the Times reported *The Roman Catholics buried Robert Sands yesterday. Protestants lamented their 2,000 dead from twelve years of terrorism.* The official figure for those that had been killed during the troubles up to the time of Sand's death was just over 2,000. Of these over 200 had been killed by the army, and over 600 nearly-all Catholic civilians by loyalists. The Express marked the event with a cartoon of a memorial with the words *1969-1981 They had no choice. 2,094 murdered by the IRA.*

HEADLINES

In December 1978 bombs exploded almost simultaneously in five English cities. The police desperate to be seen to be doing something informed the media that they were on the trail of an Irishman known as *Bald Eagle*. He was described as a provo bomb expert and later identified by the Daily Mail as one Cornelius McHugh. It later transpired that McHugh was on the dole in Belfast, and had never set foot in England in his life. Nevertheless the chase in England had begun with a nationwide alert for an Opel Kadett. After hundreds of reported sightings, Detective Constable Morley described in a TV interview and in the press, how he faced *Bald Eagle* and found himself looking down the barrel of a sawn off shotgun. In mid January, the car turned up in the South of Ireland, having been taken there four weeks before they started looking for it in Britain. The unfortunate Morley was suspended. These events show just how infinite is the capacity of the media and the establishment for invention and distortion.

One of the more bizarre results of this sort of reporting occurred towards the end of 1984 when the Sun ran two stories, on successive days, one about IRA threats to

kidnap royal babies, and the other about Princess Di's brother being forced to move house on the advice of the police. The Special Branch reported the Sun to the Press Council because they felt that the stories made them look incompetent.

On the 23rd of August, 1972 ITN carried a story about three tiny 8-year-old girls used by the IRA to push a pram containing a huge bomb towards a military post at the back of the Royal Victoria Hospital. The Daily Mirror had the story as a front page headline. The army press office later admitted that it was entirely untrue. The same was later admitted about the story headlined in the Evening News, of four girls in the market area of Belfast, who were raped and made pregnant by

the IRA. Another story to surface at this time, was the one about the IRA using live dogs as target practice. As a report by Time Out later established, dogs had indeed been shot, but by the army who were afraid that they might betray their presence of night patrols.

The IRA are regularly mentioned in connection with protection rackets, drug dealing, the mafia etc. These stories achieve credibility, because of both the public's ignorance of the true state of affairs, and the fact that libel laws do not apply to the IRA. They provide the papers with the lurid stories that they believe the public want to read, and they serve the propaganda purposes of the authorities.

In contrast to this, the Republican movement has from the earliest days, adopted a policy of telling the truth, even when this has provided ammunition for their enemy's propaganda. As a senior Republican said *"The IRA realised very early on, that telling the truth was the best policy because it gave them credibility."* The IRA admits all of its actions, even those that go wrong and where innocent people are hurt because they know that if they do this then people will believe them when they do deny actions that are attributed to them.



Eight year old Stephen McConemy killed by a British soldier's plastic bullet

LOYALIST VIOLENCE

By May 1981, Loyalists had been responsible for over 600 of the 2000 deaths during the current troubles in Ireland. Very few people in this country are likely to be aware of this due to the way that these incidents have been handled by the media and authorities. Loyalist attacks on Catholics have been a feature of the Northern Ireland state ever since its inception in 1922. After a lull in these attacks in the late fifties and early sixties, they began again in 1966—three years before the Provisional IRA even came into existence.

Catholic schools and churches were petrol bombed as was a catholic bar killing an elderly protestant by mistake. An eighteen year old Catholic barman was beaten to death, and another man who had been singing rebel songs, on his way home from the pub was killed.

ATTACKED

In 1968 a civil rights march of mixed Catholic and Protestant campaigning for such basic issues as one person, one vote and an end to discrimination in housing, was ambushed and savagely attacked by Loyalists. This attack was even more notable for the fact that many of the police escorting the march joined in the attack.

It is an established but little known fact that the first bombings during the present violence were in fact carried out by Loyalists—including at least one policeman one Samuel Stevenson.

On the 15th of August 1969 crowds of Loyalists, including among them some B Specials (an armed reserve police force that was almost one hundred per cent protestant) rampaged through Catholic areas burning over 150 homes. Five Catholics and one protestant died that night.

The IRA did not themselves commence military operations until late 1970, after all of these events—and many other similar ones—had occurred. However, by 1972 this had been conveniently forgotten by the media. The Guardian was telling its readers that *"IRA violence was increasingly bringing in Protestant extremists also"*. The IRA was the cause of the violence rather than a product of it.

Belfast, for which The Times produced "evidence" to prove that it was an IRA error. Seven years later a Loyalist, Robert Campbell, was convicted of the murders of the 15 dead.

Another example of this was seen, when a Catholic butcher—Joseph Martin—was shot dead the day after hunger striker Frank Hughes died on May 15th 1981. The Observer proclaimed *"IRA kill Catholic butcher"*. The News of the World followed up with *"Shopkeeper who defied the IRA is killed"*. They reported that he had refused to close his shop to honour Hughes, and was killed as a result. Local traders claimed that he had in fact closed his shop, and the IRA pointed out that it bore all the hallmarks of a sectarian attack. The UVF later claimed responsibility.

In October 1976 the vice president of Sinn Fein Mrs Marie Drumm, was shot dead as she lay in a hospital bed. The reaction of the British press bore a marked contrast to their normal response to acts of violence in Ireland. *"The IRA's grandmother of hate was shot dead as she lay in a hospital bed"* crowed the Daily Mirror. Instead of the usual descriptions of the killers as violent murderers etc, they were merely described as being "cool". The most sordid response was probably that of the Sunday Times who could find nothing more objective with which to conclude their article about the incident, other than to point out that *"by removing the final m from her surname and spelling Marie Drumm backwards, you are left with Murder I am"*.

Most of the information for this feature came

from 'THE PROPAGANDA WAR' by LIZ

CURTIS a read we highly recommend.



● In the Newspeak of the establishment press, Salvadorean FMLN militants (left) are described as guerrillas or rebels whilst IRA Volunteers (right) are described as terrorists; in reality, they and their causes are one and the same — freedom fighters for national liberation and socialism

YANKEE GO HOME

The hijacking of an American TWA airliner and the shooting of American service personnel in El Salvador were given massive publicity throughout the world. Unfortunately however, many people seemed to draw the wrong conclusions as to the causes of these events. The explanation that Reagan and his supporters gave, that these events were just part of the ongoing struggle between good and evil—with the Americans of course as the goodies—was one that many in the west accepted. If this view were to become a widely held one, we could confidently expect in the case of any future such events, military intervention, either by the Americans themselves or by one of their many proxies all over the globe. However this view of these events is a totally false one.

The TWA hijacking did not happen out of the blue. It was a calculated response to three years of Israeli and American terror in the Lebanon. There was no outcry in this part of the world when Israel moved into the Lebanon. No outcry when they arrested and detained thousands without trial, and then broke international law by moving them to Israel. The Americans could have used their influence to stop all of these events if they had wished to. They didn't and so we can assume that they approved of them. Unfortunately for the people of the Lebanon, American involvement did not end there. The American warship "New Jersey" spent days shelling from just off the coast, destroying many towns and villages and killing dozens of men, women and children.

WHERE WAS THE OUTCRY IN THE WEST AGAINST THIS TERRORISTIC BEHAVIOUR

It is against the background of these events that the Shi-ites took 40 American prisoners and it is easy to understand why they did so. America only listens when it is its own people that are under threat. American hypocrisy reached its crescendo, when the Shi-ites executed a marine amongst the hostages. Remember this man was part of the war machine that had indiscriminately killed men, women and children, as well as destroying the homes of many others. What did they expect for him, the freedom of the city?

The Americans have also acted against the Greek government, supposedly because of the fact that the Shi-ites got on the plane at Athens airport. The fact is that Reagan has been waiting for an excuse to move against Greece because its reformist socialist government is not pro-American. If you don't support the Freedom loving yanks, then you have to be shown the error of your ways.

This attitude is not confined to the Mediterranean. Some American personnel were killed in El Salvador (what were they doing their you might ask) and Reagan goes nuts. For the last few months, the El Salvadorean army backed up by American military advisors and equipment, have been killing

hundreds, and making thousands homeless in the Northern part of this country, in a major drive against people whose only crime is to try and rid themselves of an American backed tyrant. These people of course are the baddies who deserve all that they get unlike the American serviceman whose death is a cause for outrage.

Of course the biggest and baddest of all the baddies at the moment are the 2.8 million Nicaraguans and their Sandinista government. Because these people had the gall to rid themselves of an American backed tyrant who killed and oppressed them, they must now pay. At the moment, the Americans are content to leave the actual fighting to the anti Sandinista guerrilla force known as the Contras. The sort of activities that the Contras indulge in was graphically described by Paul Laverty just back from Nicaragua.

"In my first week in Nicaragua, the Contras assassinated seven children under the age of eleven..."

In my last week, I counted eleven coffins all farm and road workers, three of who had been decapitated... On April 4th, an 18 year old student was castrated and his genitals stuffed in his throat. His eyes were burned with battery acid, most of his teeth removed with a bayonet, and his tongue was cut out. They left him that way to die

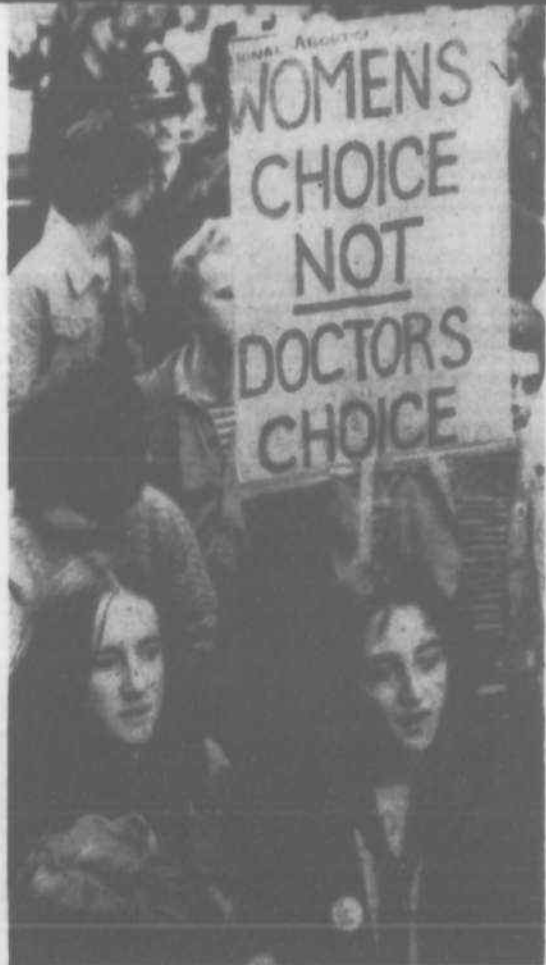
This is the sort of movement and the sort of people, that the American government is funding to do its dirty work for it. If the Contras fail to topple the Sandinistas in the next year or so, it can only be a matter of time before the Americans invade.

All of these events are occurring because of the John Wayne attitude that prevails in Washington. America had decided that its will must be imposed on the rest of the world by one means or another. It is this gunslinger doctrine that calls for attacks on Nicaragua and El Salvador for attempts to destabilise Lebanon, and for support for the state of Israel and any government which is on the side of the good old U.S. of A.

This is the real cause of all of these troubled events. American interference into the affairs of other countries and other peoples, and it is only when these people have rid themselves of this interference that there will be any chance of peace in these lands.



THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE



There are some social and political issues that divide people not just into groups left and right, or pro and anti socialist, but also divide opinion within those groups as well. Abortion is one such issue. It is a fact that there are some people that hold opinions that we would agree with on many issues, but who because they personally disagree with abortion, find themselves lining up with the reactionary anti abortion movement on this one.

MORAL

The reason for this is not very hard to find. It is because the anti abortionists have in many cases managed to present the argument as being a purely moral one about whether abortion is right or wrong. About whether you personally agree or disagree with abortion.

In fact this is not the issue at all. The argument between those that support the right to abortion and those that seek to restrict that right is not about establishing the moral correctness or otherwise of abortion. It is about establishing the right of an individual to make up their own mind about it, and to

act according to their own conscience.

In a phrase it is about A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE.

Those that support the right to abortion are seeking to make that right available only to those that want it. They are not telling those that disagree with abortion that they are wrong and that they should change their mind or should practice abortion themselves.

The only ones that are trying to impose their own opinions on others are the anti-abortionists. Because they happen to disagree with abortion they want to deny anyone else the right to make up their own mind about it.

No one is trying to force them to agree with abortion, but they are trying to force everyone to disagree with it.

That is why we in Red Action totally support a woman's right to choose. Not because we think abortion is a good or bad thing. We have never even discussed it in those terms. To do that, to start to give examples to try and prove it moral or immoral is to totally miss the crucial point. Everyone has the right to agree or disagree with, and to practice or not practice abortion. But no one has the right to try and force someone else to live according to their morals.

ANTI FASCIST CONFERENCE



One of the more memorable political events of the last few years is the story of the Anti Nazi League. This was launched in 1977 by a mixed grouping of political activists and anti racist/anti fascist groups. The reason for its formation was to counter the growing menace of organised facism/racism particularly the fast growing National Front.

The Front at this time were beginning to enjoy unprecedented success. They were pursuing a policy of concealing their more blatantly nazi traditions in order to present a more respectable image and attract a wider base of support. The success that this tactic was beginning to bring them can be gauged by recalling that in one bye-election they received over 2,000 votes, a fantastic number for a fringe organisation. The more optimistic fascists were beginning to talk in terms of being Britain's third political party in the foreseeable future.

TREND

This was the trend that the ANL set out to counter. The main tactic that it employed was a massive propaganda drive to expose the jackboot and swastika activities of the Front's leadership. This proved to be a massive success. The Front's electoral performance plummeted, and the pressures that this caused within it were eventually to cause it to split into three groups. The ANL itself proved to be success beyond anybody's wildest dreams, drawing tens of thousands of people out in emotional displays of anti racist solidarity.

However the demise of the Front at the ballot box led many involved with the ANL to draw the conclusion that Fascism posed no menace in this country at present. Also many of the political activists involved, who by virtue of their experience had become the ANL's leadership, had seen it not merely as a movement to fight fascism, but also as a vehicle to recruit new members to their own organisation. As the number of recruits began to lessen, so they were less willing to devote time and resources to it.

DEMISE

The combination of these factors meant that the ANL was allowed to slip into oblivion. For the last three years there has been no effective organising body for the Anti Fascist movement in this country.

However even though the electoral threat had been removed the fascists in this country never went away, as many of those from the racial minority communities could well testify. For these people, there has never been any let up in the continuing saga of

harrassment, physical attacks, and damage to property including fire-bombings. It is this that has led some groups within those communities to take the only action that will protect them from these attacks, i.e. physical defence of their communities. The trials of the Bradford Twelve and the Newham Seven and Newham Eight are a result of this.

The fact that people are forced into actions such as this, is proof enough that there is still a need for an organised anti fascist movement in this country. No one is claiming that it would be possible to launch something on the scale of the Anti Nazi League again but as anyone that has attended anti fascist demonstrations over the last three years would testify, there's still a significant number of people who are ready, willing and eager to oppose fascism, and need some sort of organising body to give their efforts maximum effect.

To this end a number of groupings and individuals involved in the anti fascist movement have come together to try and form this body. A meeting of interested parties has been called for SUNDAY JULY 28th in the



CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON WC1 at 2pm. Unfortunately because of the way that the timing of this paper has fallen, this meeting will have already occurred before many of those that read this paper see it. However this meeting is not meant to be an end, but a start. If you do first read this after the 28th July, you will be able to find out more by contacting PO Box 273 Forest Gate, London E7.

Red Action pamphlet

We are Red Action

A SHORT HISTORY OF RED ACTION, WHERE DID IT COME FROM, AND WHY?

30p

First published two years ago, this pamphlet, although slightly out of date now, still gives a good insight into the discussions and events that lead to the formation of Red Action. Available from the box number, price 50p inclusive of postage and packing.

Also available: Red Action badges and T-shirts. Badges, 20p each. T-shirts, £3.50. When ordering please state, whether, small, medium or large.

SUPPORT RED ACTION



Red Action is an organisation founded by working class people to work for the furthering of the cause of Socialism. Membership is open to all who accept our political principles and pay a weekly subscription. Every member has an equal vote on all Red Action policy and decisions.

If you support our aims but do not wish to become a member, you can become a supporting member. This does not entitle you to vote, but you will receive:

1. A free subscription to the newspaper.
2. A regular internal newsletter that will keep you informed of what is going on in the organisation.
3. Notification of any Red Action activities in your area.

The cost for this is £10 for one year.

Subscriptions to the paper are still available separately. The cost is £3 pounds for ten issues. Please remember that producing a paper is a very uneconomic business and we are always very grateful for any donations, and especially grateful to anyone who can take extra copies to sell.

PO box 158
Hatfield
Herts

Flying column

The fury that erupted over the events in the Heysel Stadium back in May were certainly very revealing in at least one respect. Namely the way in which many sections of the media and establishment perhaps speaking a little more freely than usual in the highly charged atmosphere, revealed the pure class hatred and contempt that lies beneath the reasonable and respectable image that they usually like to convey. An editorial in the Sunday Times described football supporters as a *slum people watching slum sport in slum stadiums*. The liberal Guardian suggested that they were *boozed up cretins* and Anthony Burgess in the Daily Mail wondered what had happened to England's lower orders. It was left to distinguished columnist Brian Walden in an attempt to redress the balance to ironically provide the most conclusive evidence. He wrote with conviction that *the working class are not animals. Mixing with them does not infect anybody with an incurable disease*. It may not be blindingly obvious to him but the working class indeed the majority of the population has been aware of this for some time. I wonder at which class he felt it necessary to direct his lecture. Perhaps the wealthy and privileged unrepresentative minority. The class he knows best, the one to which he himself belongs. By the way I wonder whatever happened to phrases like socially disadvantaged communities."

I was interested to note that the ancillary workers at the hospital which cared for the Tory victims of the Brighton bombing have been told that they must take a twenty five per cent pay cut in order that the costs for their work is more competitive with private enterprise. Otherwise say the health authorities, they will have to bring in private firms to do the work in line with the Tory governments policy. What is it that the Tories say. Something about hard work and free enterprise bringing its due rewards.

Startled by the media speculation about right wing infiltration of the football terraces, I sent forward my snout to investigate. His research revealed that there is indeed a group who (1) Have been involved in fights at football grounds up and down the country for years. (2) Were responsible for much of the violence during the miner's strike, and (3) are currently being funded by an extreme right wing organisation. They are hated and feared by all decent football supporters who refer to them as The Police. Paul Foot eat your heart out.

Dear Red Action,

Having read the last few editions of your paper, I have decided that I would like to become a supporter of your organisation. I think that your paper is one of the best that I have read. I very much agree with your down to earth approach to Socialism. I have shown your paper to many of my friends at work and they think that it is good too, although they do not really agree with you about the IRA. I myself have got no time for the army, but I do find that it is very difficult to try and argue that you should support the IRA. It tends to make people think that you are being over extreme. Anyway apart from that everything that you say goes down very well with me and my mates. Keep up the good work and good luck.

Best wishes, Brian Elliot,
London SW17.

A Red Action member comments:

We take this opportunity to reply to Brian's letter, because in it, possibly without even realising it, he has raised some points that are very significant for everybody on the left. As Brian himself suggests, there is no doubt that Red Action's uncompromising and often stated support for the IRA/INLA, alienates more potential supporters, than any other single aspect of our politics. The propaganda smokescreen that has been built around the issue of Ireland in this country (see article inside) has been so effective that there are very few people even among those that are sympathetic to a lot of socialist ideas, who see the IRA/INLA as anything other than murderous terrorists.

ARGUE

It is this situation that has prompted some of the left to argue that while we should of course support the ideal of a united Ireland in principle, to call for a clear pro IRA/INLA line at this time, will only alienate many of those that might support you on other issues and all you will end up doing is attracting those very few people who already support the IRA/INLA. The correct thing to do they argue, is to concentrate on the other issues and get the people around you involved in your organisation. In this way, so the argument runs, you can then start to explain the politics of Ireland to them, and in the long run you will actually win more people over.

At first glance, this is a very plausible sounding argument. In our view however, a closer

inspection reveals it to be anything but.

In fact the whole concept of being able to *play down*—in effect hide—any part of your politics in order to recruit those that do not agree with that part and then win them over at some later date, is in practice a total fallacy. Once any political position has been hidden for the sake of recruitment, the day of its revelation will inevitably have to keep being put back, because not only is there the next generation of potential recruits to be appeased, but also the bringing out of the hidden politics is going to alienate those within the organisation that have been recruited under false pretences.

So the unpopular politics stay hidden and what happens then is that the organisation starts to recruit more and more people that have not fully understood or do not really agree with the hidden parts of its politics. Eventually you may even have a majority of members like this, and what then in a democratic organisation, is to stop them changing the politics to reflect their view.

FAR FROM THE ORGANISATION CHANGING THEIR POLITICS THEY MAY WELL CHANGE THE POLITICS OF THE ORGANISATION.

This then is the great danger that faces any organisation that goes out to just recruit as many members as it can, without ensuring that they fully understand all of its politics. Of course you could recruit people in this manner

and ensure that they had no adverse political effect on your organisation if you were able to ensure that they exercised no political influence on it. But in this case the cure is no better than the illness, because the only way in which you could achieve this would be by suppressing democracy within the organisation. It would mean that you would have to have a system whereby a group of politically reliable people maintained all of the positions of power and influence in the organisation. What you would have in effect here is an elitist clique, and the great danger with that is that once the clique has been established there is no way to exercise any authority over it, if it should start to act in its own interests rather than that of the organisations.

The history of the socialist movement right up to today is littered with all to many examples of where this has happened.

FALSE

So all in all a policy of playing down or hiding any section of your politics for the sake of what is really only false support—false because to win that support you are denying what you really are—is a step down a path that is fraught with the gravest danger for any organisation that wishes to maintain both its politics and its integrity.

In actual fact it says something about those that argue for this policy that they only ever seem to apply it to Ireland. Why is this after all as a principle it could be applied to any aspect of politics. Racism for example. There are millions of people in this country who without being rabid racists are still to the right of the revolutionary left on racism. Why not play down racism in order to recruit those people and then change their ideas afterwards.

Of course not. Anti racism is one of the bedrock principles of revolutionary socialism and no revolutionary socialist would want to risk bringing into his/her organisation those that may not have fully understood this, and all left groups correctly take a hard and demanding position of the issue of racism.

What we would ask is why should it be an different where

Some people may consider the lifestyle of the Falkland Islanders before the war to have been simple, uncluttered and even idyllic. The liberating squaddies hardly famed for their own intellectual depth, were not impressed and immediately nicknamed them *Bennies* after the character in *Crossroads*. Apart from this clashing with the image of the gallant Falklanders built up by the media, their officers did not like to be reminded that their "glorious victory" seemed to consist of nothing more than capturing a few wind swept islands that cost three million pounds a day to maintain, and seem to be populated almost exclusively by sheep and half wits. They ordered the men to stop it. The natives are now referred to even more ambiguously as *Stills*. Still Bennies. Get it.

The Honorable Peter Morrison, Minister of State was recently presenting some junior youth trainee awards. "What have you done to win" he asked a group that had built a low temperature warning device. "We have designed a hypothermia warning alarm" they replied. "What's hypothermia asked the minister genially. "It's what kills off 9,000 voters a year" cried a voice from the crowd.

A Red Action member recently appearing in court on a charge of assaulting the police pleaded guilty on the advice of his solicitor. He drew a fifty pound fine plus ten pounds compensation which was a very good result, even considering that the copper had hit him first. On leaving the court the defendant and victims paths crossed. Approaching the officer, the RA members somewhat pugilistic features broke into an impish grin as he asked the officer *Do you want the ten quid now and then enquiringly playfully he continued "If I give you twenty quid can I do it again."* Plod just grunted *"People have gone down for less"*. Some people have no sense of humour.

A brief exchange inside Belfast's council chamber recently, neatly sums up what is going on in the 17 of Northern Ireland's 26 local authorities, where Loyalists are for the first time, having to sit down with the 59 elected representatives who support the IRA. A Unionist red faced with anger, his white knuckles gripping the microphone, pointed across the room at the Sinn Fein contingent sitting below a portrait of Queen Victoria and yelled. *"They are evil gunmen who have crawled out of the ghetto of West Belfast... evil human pus and part of the Republican poison in this city. The Sinn Fein members sat looking blankly until one of their number raised his hand as if to make a point of order. But I come from North Belfast he objected, to the amusement of his colleagues.*

Ireland is concerned. Why should it be any more acceptable to compromise your political position on the issue of Ireland that it is on racism or any other issue for that matter. Yet that is exactly what those that call for a softly softly approach,

is the issue of Ireland somehow less of a bedrock principle of revolutionary socialism.

DIFFERENT

In fact very few would actually argue that this was the case, yet some still call for a much lower key approach on Ireland. The reason is not hard to find. It is the armed struggle of the IRA/INLA. The cause of Irish freedom itself is so obviously just, that no thinking socialist could attack it on principle and indeed few try. It is when they try and come to terms with the reality of how the struggle for that freedom is being waged that they begin to experience an aversion. It is an aversion that causes them to make all sorts of qualifications to their support for that struggle and to find all sorts of reasons for not identifying too closely with it. It is an aversion that for us merely proves that they have not really come to terms with the realities of revolution.

Revolution has never been, and in the foreseeable future never will, be anything other than the armed overthrow of one class force by another. Any organisation that describes itself as revolutionary and does not clearly point that out to those that it influences is either deceiving them or deceiving itself.

REALITY

That in a nutshell is why we give such clear and unequivocal support to the IRA/INLA. Because it is a revolution in practice in total contrast to the abstract theorising about revolution that dominates the left

in this country. It is a reality that all true revolutionaries will have to face up to one day so what is the point of trying to hide it away for short term popularity.

Those that do and those that instinctively shy away from this reality merely prove that for them, revolution is no more and probably never will be anything more than an abstract theory.

Miners who are now faced with instant dismissal for calling a scab a scab have come up with an ingenious solution to the problem. When their former colleagues now arrive for work, they are greeted with a chorus of *Sausage Chips and Beans*.

In 1983 a study by the Labour Research department showed that of the 41 peerages and knighthoods awarded to directors of private companies since 1979, no fewer than 28 had gone to directors from companies which had between them given some two and three quarter million pounds to the Tory Party. Out of the 18 companies that had given over ninety thousand pounds, 14 had directors honoured by Mrs Thatcher. Charles Forte, Marcus Sieff of Marks and Spencer, Victor Matthews of Trafalgar House and Arnold Weinstock of GEC are just some of these that have lavished riches on the Conservative Party and received peerages, which is all very right, proper and exactly how things should be.

For million tonnes more wheat and barley than Britain needs or can export will be produced by the county's farmers this year. The surplus will go into store joining a similar amount left over from last year. The bill to the British tax payer for the storage alone, will be close to one hundred million pounds every twelve months. This is on top of the three hundred and fifty eight million pounds spent on subsidising farmers to grow the crops in the first place. Apart from highlighting some of the contradictions inherent in the capitalist system, these figures also help to put into perspective the well publicised campaigns such as that of "Band Aid". In relation to what could easily be achieved, their efforts as representatives of the collective conscience of Britain appear to be merely cosmetic and do nothing to solve the problem of world starvation. In fact it is about as much use as applying a strip of the equally famous sticking plaster to a severed artery.

WE ARE RED ACTION

Red Action is an organisation founded to work towards the ending of the capitalist system of production, and the establishment of a socialist one.

CAPITALISM: The working class form the overwhelming majority of society. They produce everything, but not for themselves. It becomes the property of the minority upper class. A worker would have to pay many times his/her wages to buy back the goods that they produce in that time. It is legalised robbery. This system also allows the minority to decide what should be sold and when on the basis of their personal profit rather than social need. It is this that allows food to rot in butter and beef mountains, while people go hungry, and buildings to stand empty while people are homeless. Capitalism also allows a small minority to own all of the resources and means of production on which we all depend—raw materials, factories, machinery, etc. This means that materials can be, and often are, wasted on socially useless projects while people die for the want of medical equipment that could have been produced. Private ownership of these resources also allows the owners to deny to society the use of them as they wish. It is that, that causes people to be unemployed while the machines on which they could be producing the things that they need stand idle.

SOCIALISM: A socialist society will be one that millions of people will be involved in shaping. Therefore no one group of people can say exactly what that society will be like. However, there are certain features that would have to be present in society, before we would consider giving up the struggle for socialism.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION: Only this will create a basis whereby the whole of society can collectively decide how best to employ all of its resources, mechanical and human. In this way wastefulness, whether by the production of socially useless things, or by enforced idleness of machines or work force would be eliminated. When all resources are used in useful production instead of just a part of them as at present, the amount of labour required from each individual would be much less than at present. Development of new technology would further reduce the labour requirement. Society will stand on the brink of an era of leisure and plenty that past generations could not even have dreamed of.

CONTROL OF SOCIALIST SOCIETY: In capitalist society all of the institutions of social control—army police force judiciary—are run and controlled by unselected representatives of the upper classes. The majority of people have no say in their appointment and no control over their actions. We believe that in a truly socialist society the need to police people will eventually die away. Whatever form of social control may be necessary until that stage is reached, all of its representatives will be elected by and subject to dismissal by, the community that they represent.

FREEDOM AND EQUALITY: All of those that contribute to a socialist society will receive equal reward. All of society's facilities—leisure, education, medical, etc—will be equally available to all. All questions of personal morality—homosexuality, abortion, divorce, contraception, etc. will be the prerogative of the individual and free from any state sanction.

CLASS STRUGGLE: Real Socialism cannot be achieved through parliament. The Labour Party does not try to end capitalism, merely to give workers a better deal within it. If they did attempt to take real power from the ruling class and give it to the workers, they would suffer the same fate as other parliamentary movements that have tried to do this. The ruling class would use its control over the forces of the state to crush them. To achieve Socialism, a Socialist movement has to be ready to overthrow capitalism by force. The law is made and administered by the upper class and used by them, as a weapon in the class struggle. We see an reason to recognise or live by those laws. We support the right of the revolutionary armies, the Irish Republican Army, and Irish National Liberation Army to engage in armed struggle to free their country. The war in Ireland is caused by the British presence which is only maintained by armed force. Only armed force can remove that presence and stop the war.

THE EASTERN BLOC: The Eastern Bloc countries and China, Cuba etc, are used as examples to try and prove socialism to be undesirable. In our view although capitalism has been overthrown in these countries, none of them have succeeded in building true socialism. In others, because external pressures—economic boycott, threat of American invasion etc—has meant that there has been neither the political and economic stability, nor the necessary economic resources needed to begin the construction of a socialist society. We do not accept that the regimes in many of these countries have made significant advances from primitive beginnings in the most difficult of circumstances, and may continue to advance as they develop modern industrial economies.

The period of capitalist growth and expansion during the 50s and 60s raised working class living standards considerably. Mainly because of this the working class that emerged from that era showed little interest in revolutionary socialist politics. They became the domain of intellectuals and professional thinkers. A cultural gap between the left and the class had been created. The organisation that emerged in this period modelled themselves on the Bolshevik Party in turn of the century Spain where a small intellectual leadership wielded great authority over a highly disciplined membership. This form of organisation has proved incapable of breaking down the gap between the left and the working class. Also history has shown us many examples of how easily in such an organisation a corrupt leadership can use its authority to maintain its power. Seeing the need for a different form of organisation, Red Action was formed in 1981. The primary aim is to take revolutionary socialist ideas into the working class who are cynical and suspicious of the left. To do this, the organisation must itself be revolutionary and not to exploit revolutionary principled and consistent in its politics and not just raise and drop issues when it suits it. It must be as democratic as possible. It must be ready to work with other socialist groups in a non sectarian overthrows. We are not that party, but neither are those groups that claim to be it. We will work to keep alive a tradition of militant working class action until such times as enough working class militants can be brought together to form that party.