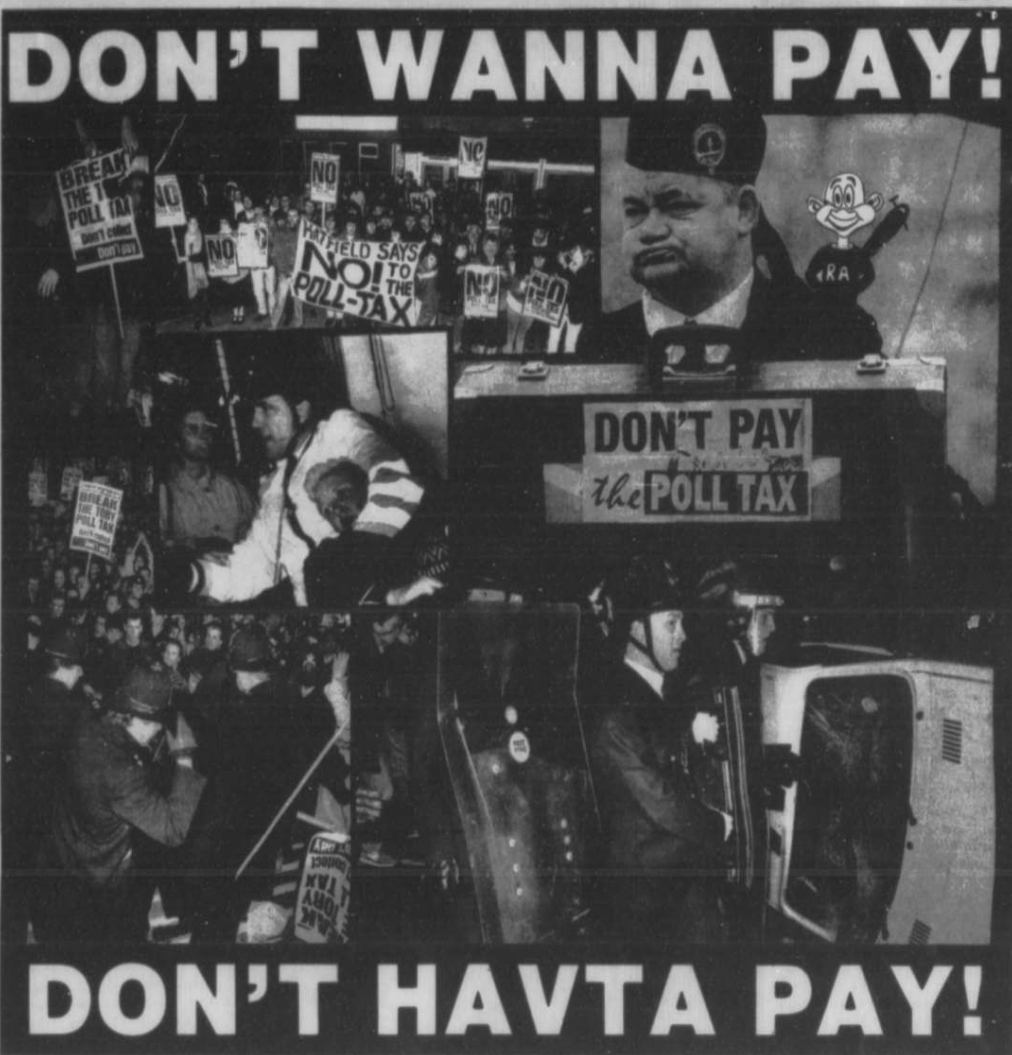


Red Action

Issue 55 - 35p

The Poll Tax is due to arrive on April 1st. For the first time in recent history a tax will be levied directly on people regardless of their income or ability to pay. Registration for the tax has already been completed without the formation of a mass campaign of refusal. However, ANTI-POLL TAX UNIONS have been formed in most parts of the country with the aim of organising a MASS CAMPAIGN OF NON-PAYMENT. In Scotland, where the Poll Tax was introduced in April last year, over 1,000,000 people have refused to pay - and not one of them has been fined, not one of them has been sent to jail. The authorities cannot even find 350,000 of them! Proceedings against those who refused to register are only now getting under way. If refusals to pay are implemented in England and Wales on the same scale then upwards of 7 million people will be involved. It is hard to imagine even this Tory government building enough prisons and recruiting sufficient numbers of police and bailiffs to cope with that lot. Pensioners will be amongst the hardest hit with many of them simply not being able to pay. Will the Tories be happy to be seen taking away their furniture or carting them off to Pentonville or Holloway? The Heath government in the seventies was forced by the miners to call a referendum on the issue of the three day week. The Tories lost. They are much more vulnerable now. Thirty Tory MPs have themselves voted against the tax. When the "conscience" of a Tory MP is stirred, you can be sure that an injustice of historic proportions is being perpetrated. Of course it is not their consciences that are being shaken. Their nerves are going; they know that in many constituencies such a monstrous tax will make any Tory unelectable. The Poll Tax issue represents the best chance for decades for the collective action of working class people to smash an oppressive government. If we succeed, the confidence that the victory will bring will have incalculable consequences. It seems increasingly likely that the Tories, in their greed to transfer wealth from the poorest to the wealthiest sections of society, which is the essence of the Poll Tax, have finally bitten off more than they can stuff down their throats. The last year has seen the overdue demise of a number of thoroughly nasty regimes throughout Europe. Red Action urges all its members and supporters to add one more to the list. FIGHT THE POLL TAX!!



subsequently impose it on England and Wales. They badly miscalculated. Scotland itself has a fine tradition of anti-government action at a popular level and since the introduction of the poll tax there in April last year, a spectacular campaign of mass non-payment and general obstruction has kicked the entire scheme into touch. In Glasgow 1 in 3 people have had warrants issued to them for non-payment. None of these has been executed (would you want to be a bailiff entering a working class housing estate in Glasgow to seize the furniture of a pensioner in arrears with the tax?). The actual number of those refusing to pay is actually far higher - warrants can only be issued to those the authorities can trace and thousands have gone missing. In Strathclyde as a whole, the Council has issued nearly 400,000 warrants against defaulters. There are 200 bailiffs for the whole of Scotland who will no doubt be looking forward to plenty of overtime - for long as they stay in one piece. Overall, 650,000 people in Scotland haven't paid a penny, and a further 550,000 stopped paying after the first instalment. The example will prove contagious. In Wales the Cardiff City Council issued 3,000 warrants for non-registration then withdrew them. Hackney Council in London has booked the Magistrates' Court for 18 months ahead to deal with its own highly optimistic figure of only 5,500 local defaulters. The entire administrative and judicial machinery is set to break down. Scottish Councils

now have the unenviable task of persuading those who have paid this year, to pay the increased charges for next year (up by 23% in Edinburgh) when 1 in 5 of the population haven't paid anything. What do you think will happen? The All Britain Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions estimates that non-payment will rise to 40 or 50%. This means that in Scotland, THE POLL TAX HAS ALREADY BEEN DEFEATED. With this example, the fight against the imposition of the Poll Tax in England and Wales can become the hammer with which to smash the Tory Government. CAN'T PAY WON'T PAY!!

RICH MAN'S HEAVEN

The Poll Tax represents just one step, though a crucial one, in the Tories' plans for fattening up the rich at the expense of the poor. The Poll Tax introduces the principle that taxation should be levied on people and not wealth or income. If the Poll Tax could be imposed, the Tories would argue that all taxes should be paid equally, since everyone draws equal benefit from the services they provide. There is no difference between this argument being used as it is now by the Tories, in relation to services at a local level, and the services provided at a national level. Such ideas are

already being kicked around in the Tory "think-tanks" (you may be able to think of a better name) such as the Adam Smith Institute. Income tax could then be set at a very low level or abolished altogether, and be replaced by indirect taxes (of which VAT is a current example) levied on the goods and commodities bought in the shops. Everyone would then pay the same (just as everyone pays the same tax on a pint of beer no matter how much money they have in their pocket) and, the Tories will say, they have the "freedom" to choose whether or not they pay the tax at all. Just as people now have the "freedom" to buy a Rolls Royce or stay at the Ritz. What could be fairer. Already we are halfway towards that situation due to the tax allowances, tax perks, and tax loopholes made available to those with lots of money and a good accountant. Remember Lord Vesty who paid £10 tax on an annual income of £10 million? Total government revenue would be massively reduced since it would be economically impossible to raise the amount that income taxes now provide by such means, so that huge cuts would have to be made in state services and provisions. Once such a system had been introduced, the next logical step would be to make all goods and services (such as education and health care) available only to those who could pay, and dismantle what remains of the welfare state after 10 years of Tory rule. It would be a rich man's heaven. And a nightmare for the rest of us.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

A group of people in Hatfield, including Red Action supporters, have formed a local branch of the Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Branches exist in all major towns throughout the county, and are linked by delegates to a county-wide committee which is in turn a member of the National Federation. The purpose of each Union within the federation is the organisation of a campaign of MASS NON-PAYMENT. At the time of writing, in early March, the Hatfield APTU has set up a stall and collected signatures in the town centre for the past four weeks: around 750 pledges of support for the campaign of non-payment have been collected each day, making over three thousand so far. Posters have been printed and distributed for display in windows and for fly-posting. A 1,000 badges were sold in a week! Leaflets have been distributed to every household in the town outlining the reasons for opposition to the tax and calling people to attend a public meeting where a formal membership structure has been set up. People are invited to pay £1 for a membership card which pledges non-payment of the tax and support for associated act-

ivities such as a common fund for the payment of fines, collective action against bailiffs etc. At the time of writing nearly 500 people have signed up - a figure which we hope to double in the near future. Those accustomed to political work of this kind will know that such efforts are usually met with indifference and scepticism. But on this issue, everyone involved has been startled by the strength of the response. Instead of having to generate a response, there is a sense of harnessing extremely strong feelings and opinions that already exist. For members of a left wing group much more accustomed to challenging reactionary attitudes and ideas the sense of mobilising mass working class support is exhilarating. Of course there is little to be gained for the organisation in a narrow sense. The SWP sensed this and instructed their members in Scotland to ignore community-based campaigns and to regard payment or non-payment of the poll-tax as an irrelevance. As one writer put it in the SWP's internal bulletin "there's nothing left in the poll-tax for us" (1989 no. 3). Given the scale and persistence of the response in Scotland against the tax however, SWP members were eventually re-instructed to get back into community campaigns. Unsurprisingly many members of the SWP, as their internal bulletin reveals, were astonished and demoralised by this pathetic display of self-serving incompetence. Many SWP members jumping back on the non-payment bandwagon had already paid their tax! Red Action has always stated that it exists to promote the interests of the working class, not those of the party, and therefore wholeheartedly supports the mass campaign of non-payment without seeking gains for itself. We therefore urge all members of Red Action to get stuck in to their local campaigns, and if necessary, initiate the organisation themselves. Commitment and experience are vital to a long-term campaign such as the protest against the Poll Tax entails. We therefore urge all members and supporters to adopt the following tactics:

- * Delay registering for the tax for as long as possible - if you are not a householder then it may be possible to avoid registration entirely. £50 fines are levied on those refusing to register and in the absence of a mass campaign of non-registration being as obstructive as you can short of being fined is probably the best tactic.
- * Help overload the administrative machinery by claiming a rebate if you are remotely eligible - send all the time-wasting queries that you can invent however ludicrous to your local Community Charge Unit.
- * Tear up the direct debit form when you receive it - or fill it in with plausible-looking nonsense.
- * Attend the London National Anti-Poll Tax Demonstration on March 31st
- * Tear up the poll tax bill when it arrives in April - or if preferred fill in with plausible-looking nonsense as above.
- * Get involved in your local Anti-Poll Tax Union. If nothing exists in your area form an ad hoc committee and organise opposition.

VICTORY IN SIGHT

The Tories did not have to be told that any attempt to introduce the Poll Tax in N. Ireland would be met with systematic and determined resistance that would set a dangerous precedent for mass action in the mainland. They preferred the humiliation of being seen not even daring to try! They were nonetheless arrogant enough to think that they could divide and rule by introducing the tax first in Scotland (and no doubt hoping to learn from their mistakes)

EITHER WELFARE OR WARFARE

A theme common to all commentaries on the events of 1989 in Eastern Europe has been that capitalism has been vindicated and Marxism "disproved". Is this actually the case?

In the first place "capitalism" in the sense that Marx analysed it, and in the sense in which it appears in the ideologies of the right-wing sank out of sight during the great slump of the 1930s and has never resurfaced. Trade union structures and elaborate systems of welfare have been extracted by working class action which work in direct contradiction to the unfettered capitalism of which Marx wrote - no "capitalist" system would remain stable today without them. Moreover, there is no major economy in the world today which does not incorporate both elaborate centralised financial mechanisms which are designed to run precisely counter to the celebrated "market forces", and a huge "state capitalist" sector - primarily composed of a state funded arms industry. The current US defence budget runs at \$292 billion and is part of a total federal budget of over \$1,200 billion - larger than the entire economy of West Germany which is the fourth largest in the world. As was predicted in the last issue of Red Action, furious debates are being conducted in the West as to the future of these "arms economies". Thatcher and her cronies are pushing the patently absurd line that the threat from the East is greater than ever, while even senior military chiefs, such as former NATO chief Field Marshall Carver have admitted that defence forces one third of their present size are perfectly adequate to contain any future military threats. What Thatcher quite rightly fears is that if defence spending is cut to levels objectively demanded by the world situation, (i.e. by a lot) then whole sections of British industry, (British Aerospace, Ferranti, Marconi, Vickers, etc. etc.) will be wiped out, leading to much higher levels of unemployment. The Labour party, whose conversion to "market forces" has been recently announced, has kept quiet for the same reason. It too knows that without immense state expenditure on arms, market forces left to themselves would allow the enormous resources that they currently employ to simply rot - including the members of defence unions who sponsor Labour MPs. Within the confines of the economic situation as defined by contemporary capitalism, there are no opportunities for private investment to employ them at a sufficient rate of profit. In America too, President Bush has been obliged to announce a cut in troop numbers in Europe (not even he can see any feasible role for them), but has simultaneously announced that spending on the scientifically discredited "Star Wars" programme will increase! The reason for this apparent paradox is not difficult to discern. Stationing troops in Europe does not inject capital into American industries and does not therefore provide Macdonald-Douglas, Boeing etc with the vast guaranteed profits that they are used to receiving. Cut arms expenditure (even if the weapons systems it produces are known to be completely useless) and the economy heads straight for a massive recession. So spending has to be maintained even when its rationale has become more ludicrous than ever.

It is obvious that when bourgeois pundits allege that the planned economies of the Stalinist era and their current successors have failed, they are overlooking the fact that the centralised state direction of the economy, both in Russia and Eastern Europe, pulled feudal economies into the economic mainstream of the 20th century despite the immense devastation of a world war. The Russian space programme, the most technically sophisticated area of all modern production, is actually ahead of the American! The Russian economy is still much larger than the capitalist "miracle" represented by Japan.

It is also a stubborn fact that so-called "capitalist" economies have achieved their most impressive rates of growth during times of war i.e. when state direction of the economy replaced the magic of market forces. This is particularly well illustrated by the history of the US during WW 11 which went into the war in the grip of a recession that capitalism was totally unable to resolve, and which emerged as the dominant economy of the post war world. Highly centralised state directed economies have then, been enormously successful in providing the industrial base of modern production. It may be the case that they fail to cope with the demands of modern diversified consumer production. This however this is not the fault of planned or socialised economies as such, but only of undemocratic centralisation.

It is again highly significant that when bourgeois economists point to the successes of capitalism, they refer only to the dominant economies of the Europe and Japan. Yet capitalism has existed in most parts of Asia, Africa and South America for far longer than the communist regimes in Europe. So why isn't the extreme poverty, inequalities of wealth, low or negative growth and general economic incompetence of these countries cited as positive proof that capitalism doesn't work? For they are just as much a part of the capitalist system as America. Inflation in Argentina at the moment is running at 4,000%; in Peru at 3,000%; in Brazil, the wonder economy of the continent, at 1,500%. Growth in the economies of Latin America is falling at a rate of 1% a year. The Third world as a whole owes \$1.32 trillion to the economies of the First World. These are the countries which supply the raw materials and commodities to the wealthy economies of the West. Without them the economies of the dominant countries of the world would immediately collapse. In effect they are providing huge subsidies to these richer nations which can only be extracted due to the First World's vast superiority in financial and military resources. It isn't the case that the

BRAZILIAN GOLD MINE

It isn't the case that developing economies are not capitalist enough but it is rather that their remaining poor is essential to the wealth of the 'advanced economies'.



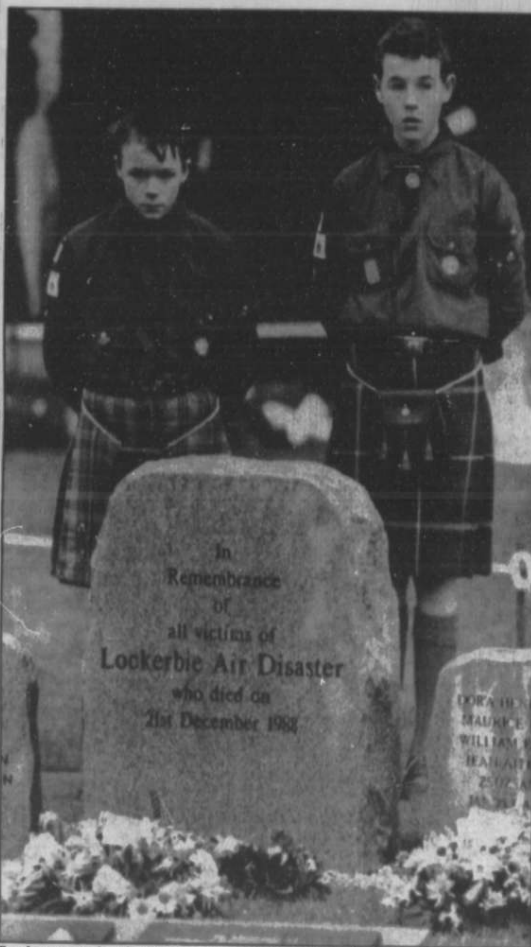
poorer parts of the capitalist world are not capitalist enough as is implied by the bourgeois economists who call them "developing" economies. It is rather that their remaining poor is essential to the wealth of the "advanced" economies. They remain poor because their products are paid for at rates far below their true value in markets monopolised and controlled by the dominant sections of the capitalist world. The population of the US consumes one third of all available world resources; if everyone on the planet were to enjoy the same living standards as the average American there would have to exist seven times the quantity of raw materials, i.e. metals, oil, wood, rubber etc etc than actually does exist. When capitalism is judged as the global system that it is in reality, it has to be seen as necessarily exploitive, crisis-ridden and wasteful - exactly as Marx claimed it was.

What then can be expected in the case of the economies of Russia and Eastern Europe if they are opened to the capitalist "freedoms" of the West? The most obvious model is that of the Latin American economies where under the management of the IMF and the World Bank investments from the wealthiest capitalist countries export profit through the creation of a small, wealthy middle class who control a heavily exploited working class earning barely enough to keep alive. Already the IMF and the central banking systems are demanding that industries in former communist states should be "rationalised" which means that they sack the people who work in them -

one estimate puts the number of unemployed in a privatised economy in Poland at one in three of the population. All welfare provisions that currently exist are to be abolished under this scheme; subsidised housing and food must be phased out together with free health care. Huge inequalities of wealth are to be created, with only the professional middle class and the new ruling class that collaborates with the capitalists and politicians of the West profiting. Those of the working class who keep their jobs will have to work harder to keep what they have (for where else are the new profits to come from?) and those without jobs will have to scavenge in order to live in poverty and squalor as millions do throughout the capitalist economies of South America, Africa and Asia. It is expected that few illusions about the superiority of the capitalist system will survive the experience.

Finally, it is the Marxist analysis of historical progress - the sudden overthrow of apparently stable ruling classes by the mass of the population - that has been vindicated by the events in Eastern Europe. The liberal model of gradual, reformist and peaceful progress guided by the ruling classes themselves has been shattered. Our own ruling classes know that the same forces that dismember communist party dictatorships in the Eastern Bloc are equally capable of dismantling state and capitalist exploitation in the West. Contrary to the interpretation touted by hacks in the western media, the events of 1989 must be seen as adding a massive impetus to the socialist cause.

IT'S A FAIR COP GUY!



Two boys remember the 259 passengers and crew and 11 residents

In Red Action issue no 49, an article appeared on the Lockerbie bombing of PanAm flight 103 on December 21st 1988. It was put by R.A. that the conclusions made by the politicians and media of the western world at the time, were based on naive and ignorant assessments of the available facts, for as we pointed out at the time, what would the arab world have to gain from the bombing of a civilian airliner and in whose interest would it be to discredit them. The reader was left to draw his own conclusions, however more recent events have shown this conspiracy, to blame the Palestinians is becoming overwhelmingly evident.

In December of last year the life sentence of Mohammad Abu Taleb in a Swedish court for convictions on various bombing charges (not that of flight 103) has once again confirmed the west's belief that the Palestinian connection existed all along and that investigations by Scottish police have conclusively linked the Palestinians with the Lockerbie bombing. However if one is to look at these conclusive facts, one gets a very distinct feeling of, dare one say it, a fit-up, perhaps it is just a little bit too neat and tidy to be credible.

The police say that the Lockerbie bombing was masterminded by one Ahmed Jibril a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (General Command) (PFLP-GC). He was regarded by the police as a very dangerous and professional operator. It is believed that he and Abu Taleb were connected and were co-conspirators in the Lockerbie bombing. Jibril the organiser and Taleb the perpetrator.

It turns out the reasons for these assumptions are that Jibril's PFLP and Taleb's, Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (P.P.S.F) had respective 'safehouses' in Germany and Sweden. These houses were used to smuggle friends and

family of Jibril into Sweden to live. Basically they were in the act of transporting illegal immigrants from one country to another. All this was done under the watchful eye of German and Swedish police surveillance on both houses. And most importantly of all this high profile activity was being carried out whilst they were in the supposed meticulous and highly secretive planning of the bombing of flight 103. It must be said this does not exactly seem the high profile, attraction seeking activities that such an experienced and efficient organisation would be indulging in at such a time.

Even more astounding was the fact that when these 'safehouses' were eventually raided at the end of October 1988, police discovered a Semtex bomb hidden inside a Toshiba radio-cassette, what is so remarkable is the fact that a completely identical radio-cassette of the same make was used in the Lockerbie bombing some seven weeks later, one might say its almost uncanny, others might say who would want to make things so obvious. However these amazing co-incidences do not end there. After these police raids in Germany and Sweden Abu Taleb was still at liberty, however he was placed under police surveillance on November 1st. It would have seemed perhaps obvious to this highly trained and very slick operator that he had to watch his back and keep a low profile, but apparently not.

According to police a man travelling under the name Abu Taleb turned up in Malta, went to a tiny boutique and purchased various items, an old jacket, 2 pairs of trousers, in different sizes, he also bought a packet of blue cotton babygrow and an umbrella. The owner clearly remembered the customer (who wouldn't). It would hardly seem the actions of a man trying not to be noticed. And lo and behold all of these items were found in the wreckage of Pan Am flight 103 and proved to be from the same suitcase as the radio-cassette bomb. Of course all of items of clothing still had 11 of their distinctive labels on them, making them easily traceable to the boutique shop in Malta. And so another piece of the jigsaw falls on so conveniently into place.

Perhaps the final 'icing on the cake' in this sequence of events is that when police eventually raided Abu Taleb's flat they found a calendar on the wall, and amazingly enough the date of December 21st had been ringed, there you have it, bang to rights. It has not yet been confirmed that Taleb replied when arrested 'Fair cop Guv.'

One thing must be obvious, is that Abu Taleb was either one of the most incompetent and inept operators to fall from the middle-east, or he was set-up as the fall guy by other concerned parties. Once again one has to ask in whose interest was it at the time, during an intense political climate between Palestine and Israel, to discredit the Palestinian political organisations.

All in all can conclude is that it was a highly complex and meticulous set-up and who would have the use of the state machinery to create such a sham, and which state so despises the Palestinian cause it would go to such lengths to blow up a civilian airliner merely to discredit another country. The list could be endless, perhaps not. One thing is pretty certain, and that is Abu Taleb is highly unlikely ever to be tried for the bombing of Pan Am flight 103, as some things are probably best kept in the dark. Well at least for some. As we said before it is up to the reader to draw their own conclusions.

SUSPECTS?



Taleb: a case that is convincing yet very odd



Shamir: not talking

"It has not yet been confirmed that Taleb replied when arrested 'ITS A FAIR COP GUV'"

A BAND AID FOR A JUGULAR WOUND

As Red Action predicted at the time of the last great famine in Ethiopia in 1985, the agony of the Ethiopian people is about to be repeated. Despite the unprecedented scale of the charitable endeavours of Live Aid and associated organisations in raising £500m for famine relief, the people whom it kept alive then face starvation now. Between 500,000 and 1 million people died in the 1985 famine; relief agencies estimate that up to 4m are threatened at this time. Could there be a more convincing demonstration of the fact that charitable work alone, no matter what its scale, is no answer to the problems created by the unequal distribution of resources between societies?

It has been argued that it is the repressive and irresponsible nature of the Ethiopian government that is to blame. Yet the cycle of famine extends beyond the current military government of the Dergue. In 1972-73 200,000 died of starvation in northern Ethiopia under the crackpot Emperor Haile Selassie, a longtime "friend" of the West. Since then drought years have followed each other with far greater severity. So it isn't the particular regime that is to blame.

Could it be that the famine is the result of a natural process, several years of drought, for which no-one is to blame? Is it the case that a famine happens in the manner of other natural disasters, earthquakes, floods and bolts from the blue? Disregarding the fact that aid agencies have been predicting the current famine from at least August 1989, it is clear that if Red Action could quite clearly predict the recurrence of famine several years ago, other people could too. Given the enormous resources of technology in relation to the production of food, such that several times the present population of the world could be fed, and that relatively low-grade food and water projects could prevent the recurrence of famine in Ethiopia (and other countries where mass starvation is a permanent threat), the attitude that regards mass starvation as a natural process, like birds falling from the trees during a hard winter, is as ignorant as it is callous.

The answer must be that famine on this scale is a political phenomenon. As REST, one of the leading relief agencies has said, "The US used food as an extension of their foreign policy in 1985 in an attempt to show up the russians". That is, the food aid given then was a cynical propaganda effort. There was not and could not be within the capitalist system, any attempt made to eradicate the causes of famine which are a direct consequence of enormous imbalances in the global distribution of wealth. At the core of capitalism is the demand for exploitation - that those who are in possession and control of productive resources are able to compel those who are not to exchange the few resources they do have - often nothing more than their labour - on



An enduring MYTH of the eighties.

unequal terms. The poor of the Third World now owe the rich of the First World 1,300 billion dollars - together with the interest of course. When this is taken into account, the Third World pays the First World \$52 billion a year. That is \$52 billion after all new lending has been subtracted from the account! The poorest actually subsidise the wealthiest. The name given to this process is "making a profit". Even though there now exists more food in the storehouses of the West than would be required to feed all of those currently starving in Ethiopia, and farmers in the US have for years past been paid by their government to **destroy** food, only a token amount, for propaganda or political purposes, will be handed over as "charity". The reason for this is simple - people starving in Ethiopia don't have any money. If they can't pay, the businesses and governments of the West would rather see them starve. And since there is no profit to be made in supplying the materials to make such people self-sufficient in food production, and food producers in the West would suffer a loss in profits if they were, they won't do that either. The media connives in this situation since farm projects are regarded as insufficiently sensational to qualify as "news" while people on the edge of death from starvation on the other hand, are "perfect" television. The situation is exactly the same as if the people in your home town were dying in the streets of starvation and the manager of Tesco's said that rather than damage the firm's profits, he would let food rot on the shelves before giving it to people who couldn't pay. Just as the problem is political in nature, so the solution has to be a political one. There will always be famine in the world while the basis of production is for profit rather than need - and no amount of Bob Geldof's, hypocritical "charity", or even the donations of compassionate individuals will ever change the fact.

ANOTHER CUNNING PLAN

"We read with some interest your article attacking Hands Off Ireland, The Road to Hell... in the latest issue of Red Action (issue 53 undated). First let us state that we are pleased that you have taken the space in your paper to present your criticisms of HOL and in particular the involvement of The Leninist in that campaign. Having said that we consider your article to be **absolutely wretched, a tired lacklustre hypocritical whine from beginning to end.** We will deal with just some of your distortions of detail...."

The above is the introduction to an eight page rebuttal of some of the criticisms RA made in relation to its brief involvement in HOL.

The most recent announcement from Hands Off Ireland/Leninist is that they intend holding a march somewhere in London, place and time as yet unspecified to celebrate the Easter Rising in Dublin 1916. Normally RA would respond briskly to an invitation to attend, as we have, we believe, a commendable record in support, physically and financially, similar initiatives from a host of disparate organisations and committees through the middle and late eighties.

Having said that at the time of going to print we will almost certainly not be supporting this particular effort.

We will of course not be alone in this, as other rival organisations to HOL such as the Troops Out Movement, Labour Committee on Ireland, Irish Freedom Movement etc., will in all probability rubbish it or in practise, ignore it. Such a response can be predicted because of the latent sectarianism apparently inherent in the make up of organisations on the left in Britain. To avoid a similar accusation being laid at our own door we will make some effort here to explain our current position.

In edition 53 of RA under an article entitled "The Road to Hell", we made a number of points in relation to our involvement in the Leninist initiative HOL, which included some severe but justified political criticisms of their basic approach and attitude to solidarity work on Ireland. There is little doubt that a genuine solidarity movement is desperately needed but HOL promises as predicted to mimic some of the worst "three men and a dog efforts" of its less than illustrious predecessors. The responsibility for this latest stillbirth clearly lies with the Leninist, whose behaviour from beginning to end has been short-sighted, self-serving and plain dishonest, eventually forcing both the Irish Republican Socialist Party and Red Action to withdraw.



ON THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

They answer in reply (Leninist 82): "The Leninist has never excluded any organisation from HOL. The campaign is open to all who accept it's principles...Yes we believe that an Irish Solidarity Movement (just like the TUC Trade Unions, Workers Councils) must be led by communists, and that means The Leninist, but in no way does that imply that this leadership is **bureaucratically imposed.**" (of course not, who would ever suggest such a thing)

The glaringly obvious problem with that particular argument is simply this, if individuals involved in the IRSP or indeed Red Action were so convinced that The Leninist had all the answers, then it is probable that we would actually not be members of either Red Action or the IRSP, but would instead transfer our membership and allegiance to the Leninist. Even if we had accepted that their role was that of born leaders, the very least we might have expected of them was for them to try and at least convince us of the natural superiority of their strategy by discussing with us exactly what HOL planned to do, or rather what the Leninist planned to do with Hands Off Ireland.

Not a bit of it, as they are fond of describing themselves as the "general staff of the working class", our allotted role in the scheme of things was pre-determined, presumably we might be allowed to rise through the ranks on merit, but ideally never above the rank of non-commissioned officers. In the meantime it had been quite impertinent of oiks and ruffians like us, and presumably the IRSP to rise above our station.

Once the honeymoon period was over the future scenario seemed pretty clear WITH RED ACTION INCREASINGLY PLAYING THE ROLE OF BALDRICK TO THE LENINISTS BLACK ADDER.

(Such pronouncements lend considerable weight to the suspicion, that far from providing all of the answers, they have somehow failed to address even the most basic questions.)

Having provided one example of arrogance, now in the interest of balance, a sample of their touching innocence, or complete cynicism if you prefer. In answer to the accusation that HOL is already "dead in the water", with The Leninist as the founder and sole remaining participants from the nine or so groups that had shown at least some initial interest, they replied, "Though we will continue to attempt to draw in other organisations on the left, we see no problem in continuing HOL even if we were the sole organisation involved."

If this had always been the case, why then extend invitations to all other groups, to form an alliance under one banner in pursuit of a common goal ie a genuine Irish Solidarity Movement, as The Leninist did in October 1988. The single and only motivation for taking such a step, is never done of politeness, or as an example of political good manners, and never ever done from a position of strength, but always in the recognition of the basic inadequacies and weaknesses of your own particular group. Put simply, on your own you are not up to it. So in the intervening 9 months having finally alienated the remaining two organisations, one with a creditable and consistent involvement in Irish work, the other the IRSP whose military wing, the Irish National Liberation Army is currently engaged in a war of liberation, is there any trace of doubt or even a hint of self-criticism on the part of the Leninist? Absolutely not, on the contrary, from their point of view the prospects of success have never looked better, reminiscent of the adoring parent announcing to the other spectators as the Boy Scouts filed past "Oh look. Everybody's out of step but my Johnny." What in effect was the end of HOL was regarded by them as little more than a minor setback.

While we hope we have outlined at least a couple of the basic reasons why further involvement in HOL was untenable, we have not explained why we intend to withhold our support from the march at Easter. surely such an occasion is a good thing in itself, regardless of the motives of the organizers, and in any case it can do no harm. On the last point we would beg to differ.

The very last thing the nationalist people in the North of Ireland, or indeed the British working class, need is yet another party front presenting itself as the vital but missing ingredient, with a new improved magic formula or "yet another cunning plan" that will, at a stroke, solve all the previously intractable problems associated with the many and various initiatives, Time to Go. being the latest apparent casualty that has plagued all solidarity work in Britain over the last 20 years.

HOL have announced that they intend to march like the IFM in August up the Holloway Road. In successive years the T.O.M. Bloody Sunday Commemorative March has either gone from or to Kilburn. The selection of the route is itself an admission that HOL like the IFM or TOM intends to conform rather than confront reality. Lacking the resources, human or financial to do different is not in itself a crime, but where all involved are undeniably culpable, is not only that after 20 years of war, and almost 3000 dead, they still don't have the equipment necessary to make any impact, but that their organisations are neither equipped or even designed to make any difference. **AND NOTHING WILL EVER CHANGE OVER HERE OR OVER THERE, WHILE THE SPONSORS OF THESE ORGANISATIONS, CYNICALLY REGARD ANY ACTIVITY ON IRELAND, NOT AS A MEANS TO AN END, BUT AS A SELF-SERVING END IN ITSELF.**



It is time that the commitment of volunteers such as the one pictured above, is matched by a commitment by the left in Britain to at last set about building a genuine solidarity movement.

The response of the Leninist was predictably shrill, launching as they imagined scathing, though not always political, attacks ie ("When we performed 'Twenty Years' for the first time, members of Red Action felt very threatened by it, not its politics but the mere fact of theatre. They got embarrassed and childishly giggled. (Workers Theatre Movement interview, Leninist '82), on both Red Action and the I.R.S.P.

However in so doing they revealed both a degree of arrogance and innocence which we in our criticisms had up to that point only hinted at.

The central criticism of both the IRSP and RA was that the Leninist set up HOL as a front for their own group, a sort of poor man's Irish Freedom Movement, which is first and foremost a forum for building the organisation of its sponsor the Revolutionary Communist Party.

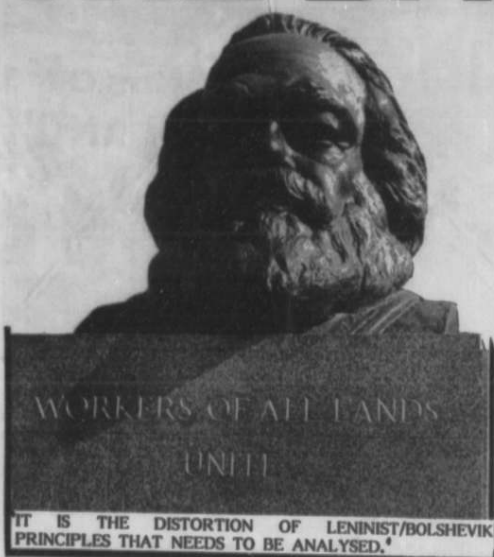
The relative success of the IFM is something individuals in the Leninist regard with a mouth watering envy, and so with scant regard for either imagination or political principle, they intend to adopt similar tactics, hoping in vain for a similar return.

Rather than concentrate for the moment on what they say about R.A. lets examine instead what they say in their own defence with provides a far greater insight into their theory and practice. In refuting an accusation from the IRSP that their behaviour was both 'cynical' and 'arrogant' and that decisions taken at the first HOL conference especially the setting up of a 7 member national committee containing four members of the Leninist - a blatant inbuilt majority, was completely unacceptable.



"THE U.S. USE FOOD AS AN EXTENSION OF THEIR FOREIGN POLICY IN 1985 IN AN ATTEMPT TO SHOW UP THE RUSSIANS."

THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS



IT IS THE DISTORTION OF LENINIST/BOLSHEVIK PRINCIPLES THAT NEEDS TO BE ANALYSED.*

An attempt has been made within the pages of Red Action to drive a wedge between the political theories of Marx himself, and their later development by, in particular, Lenin. This needs to be answered on two levels; first, by examining Lenin's own revolutionary theory; and second, on the level of revolutionary practice i.e. primarily by reference to the implications of theory for the events of 1917 and the bolshevik seizure of power. The first point concerns the nature and role of a revolutionary party. It was plainly Marx's life-long opinion that at least one of the factors demanding the formation of a working-class party was the need to develop the clarity of revolutionary ideology in the proletariat which would otherwise remain at the level of trade union or reformist consciousness. In the Manifesto he says that this requires the participation of an alienated fraction of bourgeois ideologists (such as Marx himself). This view is at the heart of Lenin's own

conception of the party as a "vanguard". Both Marx and Lenin held that the proletariat was the sole class capable of overthrowing the rule of the bourgeoisie. Given the greater political maturity of the contemporary working class (corresponding to the development of capitalism) the idea that the "self-emancipation of the working class" requires the participation or leadership of bourgeois elements is a conception that all members of Red Action would want to reject. Secondly, the quotation from Lenin cited in the article the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" in RA edition no. 53, concerning the mode of "dictatorship" does not prove what the writer asserts, that Lenin understood by the term a "dictatorship of the minority". Here, Lenin only excludes the petty bourgeoisie from participation; the workers in the dictatorship of the proletariat remain a majority (for they are more numerous than all sections of the bourgeoisie), but not an

overwhelming majority of a kind that would make dictatorship of any kind unnecessary. In the actual conditions of 1917 Lenin relied upon a coalition of the industrial proletariat and the lower strata of the peasantry. In his most thorough contribution, in *The State and Revolution*, Lenin writes: "the repression of a minority of exploiters by a majority of former wage slaves is relatively simple.....and coincides with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a special machinery of repression begins to vanish." Lenin's analysis of the role of the state follows that of Marx himself very closely throughout. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, his position remained clear: "Comrade Workers! Remember that you now administer the state. Nobody will help you if you do not unite and take all the affairs of the state into your own hands." Bolshevism practice faithfully followed the bolshevik theory articulated by Lenin. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly immediately following the October revolution, the Bolsheviks gained a majority of all votes cast in the major industrial areas, i.e. a majority of the proletariat as it then existed in Russia. The Bolsheviks weighted votes heavily in favour of the proletariat as against the peasants (and so against the principles of formal democracy and in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat), and entirely disenfranchised the most powerful sections of the bourgeoisie. Later, in 1921, Lenin admitted that he had assumed that, "the immediate transition to the building of socialism" was an immediate reality, but that events had proved him wrong. Much could also be said concerning his excessive and disastrous reliance on bureaucratic formulas and machinery in response to the

conditions of the class struggle in Russia in the post civil war period. Yet in 1917, what had been the alternative to the revolutionary seizure of power by the Bolsheviks? Is it being proposed that the menshevik analysis of the revolutionary possibilities prior to 1917 was the correct one and that some form of bourgeois democracy should have been worked for and accepted by revolutionary elements? Lenin himself considered that: "the position is clear. Either a Kornilov dictatorship (i.e. a right-wing military dictatorship) or a dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest strata of the peasantry". It may even be that in parts of eastern Europe today, the choice eventually resolves itself into a similar alternative. The Mensheviks argued for a democratic regime based on elections on the principles of formal democracy to a representative legislature of the western type. Yet the collapse of the representative institutions established by the first, February revolution, and the disintegration of the Constituent Assembly in 1918, indicates that Lenin was right, and that a third path, given the backwardness of Russian society, was not a possibility. Looking at the matter in the most direct way possible it must be asked: what other choices were open to an organisation representing the revolutionary proletariat in 1917? If the party that Lenin led, with at the very least, a superb sense of tactics, is to be condemned as anti-socialist or anti-working class, then the inescapable conclusion is that the revolution of 1917 was a mistake, and that RA, when funds permit the purchase of a time machine, will throw its weight behind some opposing faction. The Mensheviks apart, the only alternative would have been an anarcho-syndicalist one. But in Lenin's own words written in 1917: "The difference between

revolutionary Marxists and anarchists lies not only in the fact that the former stand for huge, centralised communist production [undoubtedly Marx's own position] while the latter are for decentralised, small-scale production. No, the difference as to government authority and the state consists in this, that we stand for the revolutionary utilisation of revolutionary forms of the state in our struggle for socialism, while the anarchists are against it". The choice therefore, is between a Marxist position and an anarcho-syndicalist one. Finally, the article ends by alleging that Lenin did not foresee the situation in Russia as a result of the civil war period, and the failure of the several revolutionary movements in Europe. As a result of these factors, a "counter-revolution came from inside the ruling party, which was not itself overthrown, but which overthrew the workers' state". This obviously assumes that as a direct result of the bolshevik revolution of 1917, and therefore of the theory and tactics of Lenin himself, there was a workers' state to overthrow. The conclusion is inescapable: A revolutionary party adhering to the principles of leninism succeeded in establishing a workers' state. Moreover: "The principles of revolutionary socialism were first distorted under the strain of the protracted emergency. Then the distortions themselves became the principles". It is surely precisely this process of the distortion of leninist/bolshevik principles that needs to be analysed, without making the assumption that leninism itself is a distortion of marxism.

The conclusion must therefore be that an unqualified rejection of leninist theory and practice cannot be justified in terms of Marx's own theories: that to equate Lenin's contribution to revolutionary politics with that of Stalin (or of Trotsky) is an oversimplification; and finally, that socialists can profit by critical examination of the legacy of both Marx and Lenin. This does not mean that the creation of a leninist-type party is desirable in contemporary european conditions. No such party could hope to relate to the mass of the working class. Nonetheless it has to be recognised that Lenin did succeed in creating an organisation that in the specific conditions of tsarist Russia both upheld the principles of Marxism and achieved power with a mass following amongst the working class. No party on the british left has yet managed to solve the problem of how to combine Marxist principles with a mass following.



F GORDON

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MARX V LENIN

In attempting to make a further neat equation between the political theory of Karl Marx and V.L.Lenin, G.Honeycombe makes no less than three elementary errors all in one paragraph. First, it is simply inaccurate to claim that the Communist Manifesto see the moving over of a section of the bourgeoisie as a (vital) requirement rather than just an inevitable development. Totally incorrect to even suggest that without "ideologists or intellectuals from outside the class" the working class would remain only at the level of trade union consciousness, and attribute this theory to Marx, when it was undeniably the exclusive property of Lenin, and had absolutely nothing in common with the view of Marx or Engels on the subject of intellectuals.

Three it was mistaken to allow such an elitist comment for if it were accepted that political ideas were developed by intellectuals independent of the economic struggle of the economic struggle, then the role of the working class would be a strictly subordinate one and the truly revolutionary class would not be the working class but alienated intellectuals. On page 45 and 46 of the Communist Manifesto, which is easily researched, it outlines three reasons why and when educated elements of

the ruling class would be forced over to join the working classes. Marx's concern was never how the working class movement 'gains' intellectuals, though this is a common assumption, but how workers movements might be reinforced by politically educated individuals breaking with their own class. The coming over of a small section of bourgeois intellectuals, is seen only as occurring shortly before the revolutionary victory, almost in fact when the victory of the working class has been assured, a victory more-over without their guidance. Special or extraordinary individuals might be expected earlier, but even when they approached the workers movement they were regarded by Marx and Engels with mistrust and suspicion, and neither were inclined to exaggerate their virtues, they were nevertheless far from blind to the needs they could fill. One important overall feature of the attitude taken by Marx was that it required "a fight on two fronts". On the one hand Marx recognised that there was a positive if limited role for them, without falling into the opposite traps, of inviting them without scrutiny of rejecting them without just cause.

On the second major point we return again to the controversy surrounding the

phrase "the dictatorship of the proletariat", following the article that appeared in edition 53 of this paper and followed up in No.54. He points out quite rightly that one quote does not prove that what Lenin understood by the term "a minority" dictatorship, and concludes that in any case the Bolsheviks had no alternative and so any further analysis should only concentrate on the distortions of Bolshevik ideology by Stalin, rather than the deformities of Marx's revolutionary socialism implemented by the Bolsheviks themselves. Surely only if the allegations can be easily justified or refuted, which they cannot then further deeper investigation of this critical period and the respective roles played by Trotsky, Lenin Bhukarin etc., is critical. It is neither needed nor intended to be an idle academic exercise in Leninist demonology, but a vital task, if the theoretical basis for the structure of a new revolutionary party, the relationship between the leadership and the rank and file and the organisation and the class, is even to be attempted.

To do otherwise and just repeat Stalins crimes parrot fashion, as the Trotskyites have done for sixty years, like a marathon exorcism, has achieved nothing, and instead has contributed to the almost total alienation of the working class, with

the far left marginalised to the point of being almost extinct.

In the first place it obviously needs to be repeated to be remembered that it was not in fact Lenin as myth has it, that introduced in to the programme of Russian Social Democratic Party in 1902, but a character called Plekhanov, then seen as the leading light, a former Narodnik and of course future Menshevik theoretician. The proposal was presented in this form to the conference "An essential condition for the social revolution is the dictatorship of the proletariat, ie the conquest by the proletariat of such political power, as will enable it to quell all opposition by the exploiters". The program formulated the idea in terms that had now become standard; the suppression of counter-revolution (in contrast to Marx's definition, ie working class rule, or the operation of the workers state as a whole) during the following debate on 'dictatorship' v 'democracy' a future Menshevik addressed the 'fundamental question' "Should our future policy be governed by certain basic democratic principles, admitted to have absolute value, or are all democratic principles to be governed exclusively by what is profitable for our party. I defin-

itely declare for the latter. There is no democratic principle that we could not make subservient to the interests of our party...We must regard democratic principles from the point of view of the speediest possible achievement of that goal (revolution) from the point of view of our party's interests". Translated into everybody's language this is a crude form of the 'end determines the means' ignoring the consideration that the means determine what the end will be. Plekhanov rose, and spoke in support of the speech and went further, "The principle should be applied to representative assemblies in general".

The same point of view should be adopted by us on the question of the duration of parliaments. If on the impulse of revolutionary enthusiasm the people were to elect a very good parliament...we should try and make it a long parliament, and if elections turned out to be unfavourable, we should try and dismiss it, not in two years time but if possible in two weeks."

what compromises the objective criteria for a correct understanding of Marx's teachings, and the correct practical conclusions following therefrom, G.V.Plekhanov limited himself to the statement that it was all set out "clearly enough it seems" in "his" (Plekhanov's) works." In other words when "we" seize power democratic rights (freedom) would be withdrawn from opponents, and a dictatorial regime would be imposed upon the victorious party, or just its leadership. There is no mystery about where he got this notion, the conception of a dictatorship had long been the unquestioned orthodox of Blanquist and Bakunist (the father of anarchism incidentally) who had long provided most of the training of Russian revolutionaries.

He did not get it from Marx old term, the relationship was the other way round, this was the standard conception, which he then imposed on Marx's term, when he heard it. Engels response, Voden records was contemptuous, he thought that Plek-

ably the rest of the Bolshevik Party in the workers state was exercising it only indirectly, Marx's class meaning of the term, was now almost totally buried under the police aspect.

When the revolution was hanging on to life against the fourteen invading armies of the imperialist intervention, all of whose leadership claimed only to be defending democracy, (nothing changes) against dictatorship, any attacks by the left outside Russia at such a time was regarded as outright treachery, its Bolshevik defenders were more concerned with current vindication than Marxist theory.

In countering an attack from the German reformist Karl Kautsky as to why we need a dictatorship when we have a majority, Lenin retorted

"If we argue in a liberal way, we must say: the majority decides the minority submits. Nothing need be said about the class character of the state in general...A majority is a majority and a minority is a minority. This is exactly how Kautsky argues." Following this line of argument on the same vein V.L.Lenin leapt rather than stepped over the abyss 2...The ancient state was essentially a dictatorship of the slave owners. Did the dictatorship abolish democracy among and for the slave owners? Everybody knows it did not."

This was the model for a class dictatorship which at the same time a class democracy, a democracy for the ruling class only; but this model concerned a case where the ruling class was a minority of the people. Ruling in the interests of a minority. By adopting this as his model for the dictatorship of the proletariat Lenin "forgot" that Marx and all other Marxists had always insisted that this was precisely the respect in which a workers state was basically different from all previous ruling classes.

Once again it was another revolutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg the staunchest defender of the Bolsheviks against their reformist critics (K.Kautsky etc) in the rest of Europe on whom she laid total responsibility for the isolation of the Russian workers state. "If the rule of the Bolsheviks is a distorted expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat...that is only because it is a product of the behaviour of the German Proletariat itself, in itself a distorted expression of the class struggle". However it was also Rosa who pounced on some of the fundamental (theoretical) errors involved in Lenin's rationale for the dictatorship that was actually being erected, for one thing this rationale, was Kautsky's right wing social democrats theory turned inside out.

"The basic error of the Lenin Trotsky theory is that they too, just like Kautsky oppose dictatorship to democracy. 'dictatorship or democracy' is the way the question is put by Bolsheviks and Kautsky alike. The latter naturally decides in favour of a democracy that is a bourgeois democracy, precisely because it opposes it to the alternative of the socialist revolution. Lenin and Trotsky on the other hand decide in favour of dictatorship in contra-distinction to democracy and thereby in favour of the dictatorship of a handful of persons, that is in favour of a dictatorship on the bourgeois model. They are two opposite poles, both alike being far removed from a genuine socialist policy. The proletariat should and must undertake socialist measures in the most energetic unyielding and unhesitant fashion, in other words exercise a dictatorship but a dictatorship of the class not of a party or a clique

Presumably the rest of the Bolshevik Party in the workers state was exercising it only indirectly, Marx's class meaning of the term, was now almost totally buried under the police aspect. When the revolution was hanging on to life against the fourteen invading armies of the imperialist intervention, all of whose leadership claimed only to be defending democracy, (nothing changes) against dictatorship, any attacks by the left outside Russia at such a time was regarded as outright treachery, its Bolshevik defenders were more concerned with current vindication than Marxist theory. In countering an attack from the German reformist Karl Kautsky as to why we need a dictatorship when we have a majority, Lenin retorted "If we argue in a liberal way, we must say: the majority decides the minority submits. Nothing need be said about the class character of the state in general...A majority is a majority and a minority is a minority. This is exactly how Kautsky argues." Following this line of argument on the same vein V.L.Lenin leapt rather than stepped over the abyss 2...The ancient state was essentially a dictatorship of the slave owners. Did the dictatorship abolish democracy among and for the slave owners? Everybody knows it did not."



THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION OF 1917, GREATEST SERVICE, WAS THAT IN RUSSIA THE PROBLEM WAS POSED BUT IT COULD NOT BE SOLVED IN RUSSIA.

dictatorship of a class that means in the broadest public form, on the basis of the most active unlimited participation of the mass of the people, of unlimited democracy."

Having never expanded on the phrase themselves there finally is a definition that Marx and Engels might have been in total agreement with. As was said earlier, Lenin was not the chief culprit, others such as Trotsky Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin in the Bolshevik leadership went much further, were less cautious more brazen and in attempting to justify in Marx expedient measures while waiting to be relieved

by the expected European revolution. They took the theoretical lead in gutting socialism of its organic enrootment in the mass of the people. When Stalin took another lead, the lead in organizing the social and economic counter revolution in class power, the legal base in theory had already been laid.

This discovery is not intended to be a quick theoretical fix for Red Action or indeed a belated vindication for our existence, nor should it be regarded as a sort of cure all for the massive crisis in confidence afflicting the far left in Britain or

Bolsheviks as charlatans, which they were not, but to point out that it should not be regarded as heresy or high treason to suggest that they were not omnipotent either.

The 'Bolshevik' revolution of 1917 greatest service was that in Russia the problem was posed. But it could not be solved in Russia. Tactical and theoretical mistakes were made, the real duty of contemporary socialists, is not to spend time finding or indeed inventing excuses for the actions of the leadership, but instead do as they would have done, take lessons and draw conclusions and so benefit from the massive sacrifices made by working people in the name of social revolution.

The one real advantage revolutionaries always have over left wing reformers or right wing conservatives, is that they have to lie, we do not. It is vital to recognise that truth and reality are our greatest allies. To plan a strategy based theory or build a movement on anything less than the objective truth is to consciously choose to embrace eventually either failure or defeat.

The far left in Britain who as regard respect for the truth, consistently set low standards for themselves and then often fail to live up to them. display a similar

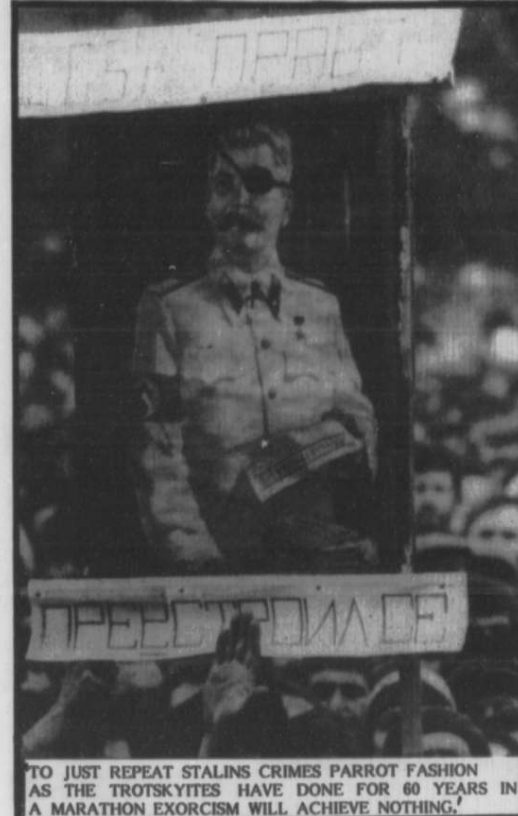
In response groups like the Socialist Workers Party, offer as an inducement various political get rich quick schemes, which only require nimble footwork, for jumping on and off passing bandwagons, or slogans like the Revolutionary Communist Party's rallying cry 'Preparing for Power'. When translated into reality is capable of leaving even the strongest revolutionary party "Buried under the well deserved laughter of the enemy world". Throughout their political life one idea is central, there are the leaders and there are the led. Students already encouraged by society to believe that 'they are among the chosen' and motivated by a political ideology that convinces them that a similar relationship exists between the revolutionary party and the working class naturally consider themselves ideally suited for the dominant role. This does them a disservice, but more importantly has caused almost irreparable damage to the concept of a revolutionary organisation of and for the working people. We need vision not hallucinations for all 'Leninist-type' party's and throughout their campaigns and in their propaganda, either implicitly or explicitly is the notion that they regard the working class as the vehicle by which the revolutionary party (themselves) takes power, rather than see the relationship as it should be seen, with the roles reversed. Here the revolutionary organisation offers itself as the facility for the broadbase of the working class to take power. As a consequence all future policy would then be governed by one basic democratic principle admitted to have absolute value. All future policy would then be governed exclusively by what is profitable to the long term interests of the working class and the speediest possible achievement of the ultimate goal, social revolution, rather than at present be in conflict with or dominated by the short term interests of the party.

Red Action definitely declares for the former and unequivocally rejects the latter.

G O'HALLORAN

RED ACTION ARTICLES

All signed articles are that persons own view, and may not necessarily reflect Red Action decided policy.



TO JUST REPEAT STALINS CRIMES PARROT FASHION AS THE TROTSKYITES HAVE DONE FOR 60 YEARS IN A MARATHON EXORCISM WILL ACHIEVE NOTHING.

Significantly it was this passage Lenin was to quote a decade and a half later, when suspending the constituent assembly in 1918. How would Marx and Engels have reacted to the injection of a special anti-democratic content into a phrase, which when used in future, would be totally alien intent and meaning from the original concept, and the very opposite to the way in which it was ever employed by themselves.

In 1918 a young Russian social democratic emigre visited Engels. Plekhanov the leader and theoretician of the relatively new Russian marxist group had given him a letter of recommendation. Over 30 years later A.M. Voden wrote up his memoirs including his talk with Engels. Voden writes, "During their discussions Engels asked how Plekhanov himself stood on the question of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', I was forced to admit that G.V.Plekhanov had repeatedly expressed his conviction to me that when "we" come to power of course "we" would allow freedom to no one but "ourselves". However in response to my question who exactly should be taken to be the monopolists of freedom, Plekhanov answered: the working class, headed by comrades who correctly understand Marx's teachings and who draw the correct conclusions from these teachings. And in response on

anovs perspective would either wreck the movement, either by a split or by turning Russian social democracy into a sect, which amounted to the same thing. As G.Honeycombe himself states "Bolshevik practice faithfully followed the Bolshevik theory as articulated by Lenin". But one vital area the major influence was not by Marx as the Bolsheviks themselves all believed, but by a certain G.V.Plekhanov. First ominous related incident to record after the Revolution in 1917 was the expulsion from the Bolshevik Party of its trade union leader A.Loovsky. According to Lenin's draft resolution in January 1918 he had to be expelled for holding opinions. "He expressed opinions which radically diverge from those of the Party and of the revolutionary proletariat in general, but coincide on all major points with the petty bourgeois negation of the dictatorship of the proletariat". His crime? He refused as head of the trade unions to go along with the central committees perspective of integrating the trade unions into the state machinery. In November 7 of the same year Lenin spoke to an anniversary rally of the Cheka staff who dealt with internal state security and told them "The important thing for us is that Cheka is directly exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat". Presum-



STUDENTS ONLY REQUIRE NIMBLE FOOTWORK FOR JUMPING ON AND OFF PASSING BANDWAGONS

the socialist movement internationally it is still a small corner of a big subject. The purpose is not to drive a artificial wedge between Marx and Lenin as has been suggested, it must be obvious for all to see, or at least to those that want to see. That on this subject at least, a gaping chasm already exists nor is an attempt to present Trotsky Lenin etc and the

disregard for reality. The students they attract in large and disposable quantities are impatient, not necessarily out of vulgar careerism, but because many life alternatives are pulling at them. A strategy of a long investment and plugging away and waiting like workers who plug away and with most of their lives holds no attraction for them.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE FLAME

The significance of the release of Nelson Mandela, the worlds most famous prisoner of war, cannot be underestimated. By unconditionally pardoning this communist/terrorist they have turned white South African perceptions completely on its head. It represents a genuine step forward, it is in fact irreversible as there can be no going back. However history has recorded similar U-turns, by other regimes, it has all happened before, so it is neither a case for real euphoria or surprise, instead for black people once the celebrations have subsided, the watch-word must be caution.

The reason being that despite the ridiculous attempts to present De Clerk as "a man of integrity", a facilitator enabling history to take its course, perhaps pursuing a personal vision of justice by right wing analysts, the simple truth is that economically it was a case of bend or break, either bend now or break later. The initiative was not one of magnanimity but determined purely by self interest, it does not represent a change of heart on behalf of the ruling class merely a change of tactics. The lessons of Rhodesia, where the regime moved too slow, too late, and were eventually over run, have been well learnt, the ruling class in South Africa do not intend making the same mistake.

Despite Thatchers insistence that "minor gesture sanctions" had made little impact, and should now be lifted, (if they made no impact why are they so important?) the picture from inside South Africa is not surprisingly different. The most authoritative internal study on the impact of economic sanctions by the Trust Bank in October 1989 admitted "that the full effects of sanctions and disinvestment will begin to be felt only during 1989 and that real living standards will drop by 12%". The S.A. Broadcasting Corporation radio service declared that sanctions can no longer be brushed aside as irrelevant or easily surmountable sanctions have had an influence and a serious influence on our economy". President De Clerk himself declared that "without contact and cooperation with the rest of the world, we cannot promote the well being and security of our citizens".

Obviously in reference to citizens he meant only whites but for many in working and lower middle classes, a drop in living standards previously unheard of indicated that something was going badly wrong. It hit them in the pocket but also hit their confidence in the system of apartheid that up to now had guaranteed their privileges. They demanded action. The choice was straightforward. Either to reverse reforms, increase repression, introduce the "Argentinian factor" the wholesale use of death-squads etc, a policy advocated by the right; or discover a formula to end repression apartheid and sanctions, their status as a pariah state - and still maintain power. Eventually events outside of S.Africa resolved their dilemma by making the decision for them.

Internationally, apart from sponsoring two guerrilla armies in Mozambique and Angola, they were fighting SWAPO in Namibia. This along with internal security meant a huge drain on the economy, isolated and without international investment.

On top of that the previous air of invincibility surrounding the South African war machine was destroyed in one decisive encounter inside

Angola during 1988. The battle itself was insignificant militarily, except that the South Africans were forced to retreat, leaving their dead behind, their defences destroyed by the superior air power of the Cubans. The outdated machines employed by their S.A. Air Force were no match for the more expensive and sophisticated aircraft supplied to the Angolans by Cuba.

Two things became clear at once. One: the South Africans were overextended and clearly running out of money, two: perhaps even more significant, was the dramatic impact on the consciousness of all in the Southern Hemisphere, simply by the sight of a whiteman's army being chased by black soldiers. For the first time blacks realised that not only had they moral right on their side, but discovered overnight that military might was now on their side as well. "Might is right": an explosive combination in any circumstances. Cuban commanders were of the opinion that the South Africans were there for the taking and that they could go all the way.

For Pretoria it was painfully obvious that a military solution was no longer an option, for them anyway, nor indeed was it an experience they could afford politically to have repeated. Hence the hastily arranged negotiations over Angola and Namibia without, and the course set for the unbanning of the ANC within.

Western expectations that the release of Nelson Mandela etc would mean in return the end of the armed struggle or the lifting of sanctions were always unrealistic. This 'concession' was the necessary precondition for talks to begin, decency would not allow a 'democratic' government to do business with a terrorist organisation or its terrorist leader. So at the stroke of a pen yesterday's bogeyman becomes tomorrow's sophisticated diplomat.

What have and are regarded as barriers to 'progress' the ANC's continued support for the armed struggle, and sanctions on the other hand the states detention of 3000 POW's and the refusal to lift the state of emergency are in fact bargaining chips to be traded off against each other. In the process preparing their own and each others constituency for the inevitable compromise and disappointments, before advancing to what most commentators, liberal and conservative alike, consider the "most contentious" of all the ANC demands "for one man, one vote".

"Before South Africa's 5 million whites even consider giving 26 million blacks an equal vote, they will also demand assurances about the future of South Africa's economy"(Newsweek). The acceptance of formal democracy one man, one vote, is almost a side issue, it is unlikely that Mandela or the ANC would or could accept anything less than majority rule, the fundamental concern is the redistribution of wealth after the inevitable demise of the system of Apartheid now no longer in tandem with the capitalist system it was designed to protect.

The ANC's Freedom Charter states that it will nationalise the mines, banks and the 'commanding heights of the economy'. Mandela himself

while denying that he was a communist admitted that he was influenced by the ideas of Karl Marx, but then of course so was Gandhi, Mandela says he always believed that "some sort of

socialism" would be necessary to meet the needs and aspirations of the black majority. Socialist Worker meanwhile expresses the worry that "in the past leaders of racist black resistance to racist rule in Africa have spent years in prison or leading struggles, only to agree deals which fell far short of what



many of their supporters were fighting for." Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia and Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo in Zimbabwe, all followed this path.

Certainly this is true, but betrayal of national liberation movements is not restricted to the African continent however in the case of the ANC they could fulfil all of their programme, the complete Freedom Charter, a humble enough document in its ambitions, and still bitterly disappoint their supporters without even the whiff of actual betrayal. The ANC's commitment is to dismantle apartheid, not capitalism, they are a nationalist movement whose stated aspiration is for black participation within the system, not workers emancipation or its demolition.

Sinn Fein's An Phoblacht congratulated Mandela on not choosing to tone down his politics on the armed struggle in repayment for his release "Mandela's authority is so great at the moment that the ANC would probably feel bound to obey him, if he took the road to compromise".

This may or may not be the case at present, but certainly after overseeing the collapse of apartheid with his authority enhanced and practically invulnerable to pressure from inside or outside the ANC, the role of 'moderate statesman' may be the one assigned to him after all. This time not between black and white, but between labour and capital. One thing is clear that when compromises are made, it will be done at the expense of the working class.

There are no doubt many historical analogies that offer useful comparisons, though perhaps the experiences of Spain and Ireland offer the most invaluable lessons. In Spain in 1936, Fascism was presented as the ultimate evil and had to be defeated at all costs. Only a coalition of all classes could achieve this "only after victory shall we be allowed to defend the political and social problems of the various groups composing the Popular Front." This was the central strategy from the Stalinist led Com-

unist Party to the Anarchists in 1935. In order to keep the bosses in the coalition, the workers organisation had to agree to forego the most urgent demands of the Spanish peasants and workers, the breaking up and division of the huge ranches and workers control of industry. However the workers

all the large estates and equipment. Property titles mortgages etc, went into bonfires, village committees elected etc. When the militias advanced it was with the security that every village behind would now fight to the death for the land that was now theirs. The message is clear, people do not fight for abstract concepts, such as 'freedom', 'democracy' or 'national liberation' without clear evidence, or at least the immediate prospect of, tangible material benefit for themselves, what applies in Ireland and Spain yesterday is directly applicable in S.Africa today. As in Spain where 'democracy' had first to be defended at all costs, today in South Africa 'Apartheid' has to be defeated at all costs, it is a convenient scapegoat, an odious distraction that exploits racial division, but in itself a symptom rather than a cause, a useful camouflage that disguises the fact that capitalism is the real source and main beneficiary of the brutality, injustice, inequality for which 'Apartheid' is allowed to carry the exclusive blame.

Certainly Apartheid must be dismantled, but the organised workers must not hesitate to issue their own demands, even while this is being done. One obvious demand is for parity in pay and conditions with white workers for the same work. They will be told, that they must wait, that it is premature, that they are being selfish.

They will 'provoke a white backlash' etc, in this way will they learn the reality behind the slogans. They must protect their interests jealously, any attempted interference with gains already made must be slapped down without inhibition. By nature magnanimous they must learn to be selfish, for in reality as time will show, it is the people of no property (rather than the leaders of the ANC) who will prove the real guardians of freedoms flame. When any alliance of which they are a part begins to serve any class interest separate to their own, they must immediately declare their independence, mobilize their own support, under their own leadership and march under their own banner. Already surrounded by enemies on all sides, from

"You are the sons of peasants and workers." shouts a militiaman "You should be here with us fighting for the Republic where there is democracy and freedom." The retort was prompt, "What did the Republic give you to eat? What had it done for us that we should fight for it?"

Similarly during the war of independence in Ireland in 1918, the workers were told "National liberation comes first. Labour must wait". When smallholders and landless seized large estates, mostly owned by absentee unionist landlords, and divided them up among the workers, in many cases the IRA forced them to hand them back. It is highly significant that in many areas where the IRA acted as such a counter-revolutionary force, the people were least active in the struggle for national liberation. In contrast where the IRA collaborated with the people in the confiscation and division of land, they were behind the national liberation to a man. The same lessons applied in Spain where the province of Aragon was the living embodiment of victorious struggle against Fascism, there the anti-fascist militias of the C.N.T., P.O.U.M. did not just champion the abstract concept of democracy but instead marched as an army of social liberation. Every village wrested from the fascists was transformed into a fortress of revolution. The militias turned over

the black counter-revolutionary Inkatha to the openly fascist white A.W.B. and regardless any ceasefire between the armed wing of the ANC and the state, if they already have weapons they should keep them, it would indeed be prudent to acquire more.

This analysis is not an example of ultra-leftist rhetoric, or an adherence to dogmatic Marxism, but an indispensable lesson from the civil war in Spain and the war of independence in Ireland. And it is this, that national liberation cannot be divorced from social emancipation and to create an artificial division between the two risks the very grave danger of achieving neither one nor the other.

As early as 1899 James Connolly, republican and international socialist, saw what would happen to a national struggle that was separate from the social struggle. In a bitter article entitled 'Let us Free Ireland' he wrote, "Let us free Ireland says the patriot who won't touch socialism, let us all join together and CRUSH THE BRUTAL."

Saxon. Let us all join together says he, all classes and creeds. And say the town workers, after we have crushed the Saxon and freed Ireland, what will we do? Oh then you can go back to your slums, same as before Whoop it up for Liberty?"

And say the agricultural workers, after we have freed Ireland what then? Oh then you can go scraping around for the landlords rent or the moneylenders interest, same as before. Whoop it up for liberty?"

After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch socialism, we will protect all classes and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party under command of the sheriff, will wear green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown. And the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic Now isn't that worth fighting for?"

