

RED ACTION

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**“Everyone is
middle class now”**

Does New Labour think the poor are stupid?

EDITORIAL

Labour, whose victory was wildly celebrated by the conservative Left, is now roughly half way through it's first term. In an effort to cover their embarrassment at how things have turned out, these unwanted, unloved, but ever so loyal supporters, are obliged to continue to insist Blair remains the 'lesser evil'.

All despite Blair, rather pointedly, never making the slightest effort to conceal that he sees his party's future on the centre Right, or (with plans to cut jury trials, mandatory drug testing for offenders and 'anti-terrorism' extended to include all 'direct actions') arguably right of Centre. Historically the longer Labour is in office the further it moves to the Right. Given that it is guaranteed a second term (something that it has previously not managed) it is amusing to consider what political criteria the conservative Left (those still afloat) will be forced to employ in order to justify New Labour as the 'lesser evil' in five years time?

One thing's for certain, they certainly have not tired of New Labour yet. It only takes a half plausible cause, or a candidate such as Ken Livingstone to tug at the old loyalty and have them up and running. Even a paper that railed against what it describes as the conservative Left's 'auto-Labourism' on practically a weekly basis, is now seen to gush that "even if Livingstone ends up as the official Labour candidate - in the teeth of an all out pro-Dobson Millbank campaign - we [working class revolutionaries] should still mobilise for his candidacy, but against New Labour". Which is to say 'we mobilise for the New Labour candidate - against New Labour!'

increasingly for those of us looking on purely from a working class perspective, it is no longer what they think they are doing, but only what the Left are actually doing that counts.

This very process of resowing old illusions in New Labour, just as the mass of the working class are breaking with Labour, can "create the possibility of a mass working class movement, independent of Labour" we are told. (*Weekly Worker* 11.11.99) At a point when working class communities are increasingly standing their own candidates (albeit tentatively) the self-styled collective leadership advise they 'remain Labour's tail'. Or as *Weekly Worker* previously put it "it has been an enormous strength of bourgeois politics that the left wing of social democracy has been able to divert proletarian anger and aspirations for change into the safe channels of the Labour Party." So from that point of view, why now the evangelical zeal to re-anchor the working class to Labour? Because it has fallen to Livingstone to displace Blair from the mantle of 'the lesser evil', and "so to stand back for offering strong support would be a profound mistake".

There is little doubt that the shenanigans surrounding the selection of the Labour candidate is a source of huge personal chagrin for Blair. If indeed as the W.W. over optimistically forecasts the whole affair results in 'mass defections from Labour in London and a realignment of forces on the left', all to the good. But just because you envisage some advantage, does not mean you pitch in on the one side or the other. Much less because you deem it 'progressive' does it mean you are obliged in principle, as working class militants, to formally offer political support. This is, after all, a falling out amongst those inside the enemy camp, is it not?

'Class politics' is after all about picking sides. At no time this century can the choice have been more straightforward. And once set, that base orientation is decisive, governing all else. Everyone know this. All the breast beating in the world thereafter cannot conceal the reality of the Left continuing to operate unashamedly, day in day out, in the interests of one or other enemy faction. After an unbroken pattern lasting the entire century, is it too outrageous to conclude that here is where their hopes, aspirations, and ultimately loyalties lie? Which is why, increasingly, for those of us looking on purely from working class perspective, it is no longer what they think they are doing, but only what they are actually doing that counts.

LIBERAL REVISIONISM

The issue of *Socialist Worker* following the Soho bomb, carried an index of significant anti-racist events over the last fifty years, ranging from demonstrations of thousands to meetings of hundreds.

That neither a 2,000 strong march through central London to highlight the race attack epidemic on Remembrance Day in 1988, a 4,000 strong march (on which the SWP itself was heavily represented) on the same theme through Bethnal Green in 1991, nor a 10,000 strong anti-racist 'Unity Carnival' in nearby Hackney in the same year warrant a mention, is, few will be surprised, solely on account of them being organised by anti-fascist militants.

As far as the membership of the SWP are concerned these events never happened. In true Stalinist fashion, the role of AFA in anti-racist resistance has for the *Socialist Worker* readership been duly extinguished. 'Fascism and anti-fascism in Britain in the 20th century', is the focus of the November 1999 issue of *Searchlight*. Guess what? AFA's role in anti-fascist resistance is being extinguished as well! Under the title 'Anti-fascism in the 1980's' it generously allows "AFA major successes, particularly in street confrontations and in challenging Blood and Honour." Thereafter, while in varying detail it records the rise and fall of Blood & Honour, the rise and fall of C18, the BNP change of strategy and so on, any reference to an organisation pivotal (in fascist eyes anyway) to events is edited out. Even 'The Battle of Waterloo' in 1992 is described as a 'failed concert in London'. But no mention of who 'failed it'.

In the same issue, editor Steve Silver warns of the need, in light of fascist growth and cooperation internationally, for the "...anti-fascist movement to renew itself, re-analyse exactly what we are fighting and what strategies need to be followed". Difficult though to gauge 'what strategies need to be followed' when anti-fascist history is being so effectively cleansed - by anti-fascists. Difficult too to 're-analyse exactly what it is we are fighting against' when any serious questions in regard to 'ends and means', and what 'we' are fighting for is (in light of *Searchlight's* now formal collaboration with state security) - needless to say 'verboden'.



FRONT COVER:
Street urchins from the Victorian era.
(See article pages 6-7)

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

FACING UP TO A NEW CHALLENGE

AS WE face into the new millennium it is probably a good time to reflect on the dramatic changes that have taken hold of Red Action over the last couple of years. The most significant of these are the modest but extremely encouraging forays into developing a new form of working class politics. This has meant the membership has had to adapt to the challenges that this new arena of struggle has thrown up. Beforehand things were a lot more 'straightforward'...

Red Action and AFA members developed a camaraderie born out of adversity, of confronting an enemy who were more often than not superior in numbers. Facing at times the daily threat of serious physical injury or even jail as multiple court appearances piled up, meant that reliability was essential. Failing to show-up at a mobilisation might mean leaving your colleagues under-strength and potentially vulnerable in any street confrontation. The thought of having to look them in the eye at a later date was usually motivation enough to ensure few 'cried-off'. This commitment ensured that even through the most testing times, morale remained high.

Today that commitment is called for once again. OK, so the battleground may have changed and the expertise required, i.e. being 'first through the door', may have altered, but that is all. The *raison d'être* for Red Action remains the same as it ever was. Stripped to the bare bones that can be summarised as 'making struggle in pursuit of the advancement of working class self-emancipation'.

Red Action was never and has never been a single-issue organisation, although at times, with almost the entire responsibility for militant anti-fascism dumped squarely in our lap, it is understandable that we may have appeared as such. Sometimes it is necessary though, to remember why most of us entered into politics and joined RA in particular, in the first place. It was with the aim of not just preventing the disease of fascism but with working on a cure, which would ensure a steady and full recovery of class politics in this country.

We now need to refocus our attention and concentrate our energies. At the moment a relatively small number of members are busting a gut to make headway. Due to their efforts the first chinks of light are just beginning to appear, hinting at a possible breakthrough in the future. At the same time, less inspiring is the habit some members appear to have fallen into, of creating their own 'ratios of commitment', picking and choosing which and how many meetings, activities and events they attend, often with the result that their colleagues are being left shouldering the load.

Obviously this is something that will have to be addressed. While this new area of struggle may not open up our members to the same physical or legal dangers as before, it must be remembered nonetheless, that we are now confronting an enemy far more experienced, bigger, better-resourced and more ruthless than the Far Right ever were.

If we are to be successful in the coming period, it will mean remaining as committed as ever, it will mean utilising expertise and attributes that might have been shelved in the past, it will mean those who had been forced to take a back seat in the past now coming to the fore in this new area of struggle. As I have been at great pains to make clear in the past, everybody has a role to play and new members who feel they have something to offer should push themselves forward instead of waiting in line to be asked, after all this new arena is one where we are all still learning the game.

To my fellow RA members I say enjoy the festive season and return in the new year determined to play your part and play it to the full.

Steve Potts



THE BIG ISSUE

ONE PAPER described it as "a nauseating spectacle" while another compared the appointment of Martin McGuinness to the position of Minister of Education as the "political equivalent of child abuse". Difficult to assess whether the gnashing and wretching is because McGuinness is alleged to be an 'IRA Godfather', or simply because he failed the 11 plus. Where there is consensus on both the Left and Right, is that the acceptance of ministerial office represents the final 'embourgeoisment' of Republicanism both north and south. "The republic" according to the *Observer* "is now richer than the North, has no time for the fantasy of a socialist republican Ireland". While Trimble along with the socialist Left in Britain crows "that once terrorism is left behind you're left wondering what the party [Sinn Fein] actually stands for". The widespread hope and belief, allowing for the odd spasm of doubt, is that republicans, have at the end of the day, despite all the twists and turns finally 'been fooled by the fancy diplomatic language'. Which was why Trimble was widely congratulated for his 'masterstroke' in convening another Ulster Council Meeting in February to ratify decommissioning. Objections from the IRA that this was outside the terms of the Good Friday Agreement were dismissed by the *Guardian* as an organisation "outmanoeuvred by Mr Trimble, indulging in one last whinge". Which is nice.

However, far from being the genius he is painted, all Trimble has actually done is pencil in yet another potential crisis for the peace process, his party, and of course himself, for February. Moreover with 'IRA guns under the cabinet table', what in practical terms is Unionism's reason for being is now the pressing question? Equally, the prospect of SF, already the fourth biggest party on a 32 county basis, entering government in the south while "appalling" is again clearly far from 'fantasy'. All in all it does make you wonder "how" as Michael Collins once asked "these fellas ever ran an Empire".

BIG ISSUE PREDICTION: Unionists backs to the wall - backs to the future.



ANNUAL
CABLE ST
EVENTS

Oct 7-10: In a departure from the normal format of public meeting/rally, the

annual Cable St Commemoration was marked this year by a public debate on the relevance of 'race and class' as part of an effective strategy to counter the steady growth of racism and fascism. Following the 11 million votes plus for the Far-Right in the Euro election; 'Never Again?' was the question posed. Among those on the panel were *Guardian* feature writer Gary Younge, academic Roger Hewitt plus representatives from the Anti Nazi League and AFA (full report page 5). The public debate was the highpoint of four days of AFA-sponsored events, which included the showing of Ken Loach's acclaimed series *Days of Hope*, at the Lux Cinema, E. London.

ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR Oct 16: The biggest ever turnover from an AFA stall at the Anarchist Book Fair, some £350 in total suggests a

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NOT WAVING...

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

OF LATE the *Searchlight* team have circumnavigated the difficult questions that arise from any credible analysis of the state of British politics, and it's possible consequences for the Far Right. However on November 10th *Searchlight*, in conjunction with B'ham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit (BRAMU) hosted the first of three one day conferences entitled 'Combating Fascism in the Community'. Most of the 'workshops' were of no particular interest to AFA, and were as far 'off the mark' as not to warrant attention. However, one of the early seminars set out to summarise a recent history of fascism and anti-fascism in the Midlands, the discussion being led by *Searchlight* assistant editor Nick Lowles. Along the way the nervously honest Lowles made a number of interesting statements that confirm *Searchlight* magazine's tendentious avoidance of political reality.

Under the 'younger, more dynamic, media friendly' Griffin 'the quality of intake is getting better - attracting people with more money from a less overtly nazi background.' The BNP, according to Lowles is now 'much more effective, and led by much more able people'. He also cited a 41% membership growth in the last twelve months, estimating a paid membership of around 1,500 (in spite of the fact that the BNP issued 2,000 postal ballot papers for the Tyndall / Griffin contest). He went on to outline the BNP's orientation towards community politics, be it in the Green belt or the inner cities ('the BNP have been making a big issue of paedophilia' - the alternative view of course is that paedophiles are a big issue because communities say so, and rightly so, and the BNP just set their sails to the wind).

Searchlight conclude that most of the new recruitment has come through the internet - 'where the BNP can relay their message untested.' No mention of AFA, and no actual examples of how that 'contest' was fought.

The national BNP focus for next May's elections, Lowles reckoned, would be the Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall areas. 'The BNP have set themselves a target of gaining a West Midlands seat within the next two years', he stated. 'A victory like this would make people think that a vote for the BNP was no longer a wasted vote, and open the doors for the future.' Yet when asked five minutes later whether he believed there would be a repetition of Europe here he replied, 'I say no - although they will probably secure members and votes from London, West Midlands, the northwest, Dewsbury, Halifax and West Yorkshire.' Allowing for areas missed off the list, such as the southwest and north-east, that's just about every city and conurbation in England covered anyway. A glaring contradiction from his earlier dirge.

If *Searchlight* can privately admit that 'anybody but fascists' is not enough to address working class grievances then they should do so publicly, consequently severing State ties, and abandoning their liberal bourgeois clientele in the process. Instead their analysis is so diluted and censored the reader could be forgiven for thinking that British fascists are inept to the point of virtual extinction. 'The BNP will not enter the British mainstream', he reported confidently, because of 'the inevitable conflict between urban racism and middle England. Also Britain hasn't got a tradition of fascism. Our own nationalism is geared towards competing within Europe'. Perhaps this confused and hastily beat together analysis explains why *Searchlight* and all their minions don't actually have a plan, because they feel they don't need one. However, Nick Lowles returned to his confessional to conclude the seminar with a single line postscript, 'We need to offer political, economic and cultural alternatives to the BNP.' A series of fund-raising cheese and wine evenings perhaps, followed by some hearty after dinner endorsement of the prevention of terrorism bill; there, that should do it.

Bob Martin

number of things. One, the campaign using anarchism as a flag of convenience in order to discredit AFA, appears to have suffered a serious loss of credibility following the disclosure by RA that the real focus of the inquiry into the manipulation of the AFA Northern Network was not anarchism per se but Nick Lowles, the new *Searchlight* editor. Secondly, the gradual reawakening of interest in militant anti-fascism, indicates that at least this section of the Left no longer buy into the *Searchlight*/ANL fable of the 'BNP on an ever downward curve'.

**POINT
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contd**

GLASGOW: October: In response to a BNP recruitment campaign in the Southside of the city, AFA leafletters had an early morning start, when over 2,500 leaflets were distributed door to door in the tightly packed streets of the Croftfoot, area of Glasgow. A fifteen strong team completed their task in little over two hours.

A police attempt to intimidate RA sellers at Celtic Park failed when the notion of 'specific complaints' from other Celtic fans in relation to RA being 'pro-IRA' was effectively challenged by the sellers. In response to the charge that the 'pro-republican' nature of the material 'was likely to provoke a breach of the peace', a seller pointed out to the officer that he had actually 'walked past *Republican News* sellers' on his way over, and if he had come a little earlier he would have 'had to pass Republican Sinn Fein paper sellers as well and you can't get more 'extreme' than that!' Despite the disruption, up to seventy RA bulletins were sold with the sale being supported by new members travelling from Dumbarton and Fife.

BIRMINGHAM Nov 10: Despite being denied a stall, AFA members made a decisive intervention during a seminar jointly hosted by *Searchlight* and the B'Ham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit. In the workshops AFA reps took on all comers from Black Nationalists to the ANL exposing and winning the arguments hands down. (further report *Not Waving...*)

Nov 20: A one day conference entitled 'The North of Ireland, What Next?' was considerably enlivened by a Red Action presence both during and after the event. Highlight of the event was a stinging attack by the TAL editor on the representatives of the Brit Left who accused the SF representative of 'selling out'. Noting the 'ridiculous pretence of their pretending to be more radical than Irish Republicans while at the same time supporting a Labour party that has possibly a worse Human Rights record in Ireland than even the Tories!' Later the TAL stall in particular did a roaring trade.

BACK ISSUES

AT WAR WITH RED ACTION

Hepple notes that "White's worst words were left for Red Action, who always come up in BNP conversation. 'The worst of the lot, total scum. When you bump into them, you know it's a fight for survival; some of them are even skinheads!'" Nor is this obsession exclusive to White. Hepple himself admits that faced with the prospect of confronting the aforementioned left him feeling, "distinctly uneasy". The occasion was the trial, at Southwark Crown Court of Edmonds, Lecomber, Blezzard and four AFA activists, following clashes in Brick Lane in 1991. All six were charged with violent disorder and affray. About a dozen heavies were considered sufficient to escort Edmonds to court.

Hepple comments that "I didn't really know what to expect, but if any of the stories about Red Action were true, I felt we were a bit undermanned... we were on the verge of falling asleep outside the courtroom when the first group of left-wingers turned up. These were not physically impressive, consisting of various people brandishing copies of crap papers like *The Leninist*. Marvellous, we thought just a rabble of wimpy reds. The next moment the smiles turned to horror as quite a different group of around twenty large characters turned up. I found this rather amusing to say the least, but I was also rather worried. I remembered that none of these guys would really know that I was really on their side. I don't know if this was the much feared Red Action, but I suppose that it was. This was the only time I saw the BNP thugs terrified. They all looked pale and worried and were muttering on about the need for reinforcements..." No further comment necessary.

(from a review of *Searchlight* mole Tim Hepple's *At War with Society*)
Red Action, issue 67, Spring 1994

IS ANTI-RACISM WORKING?

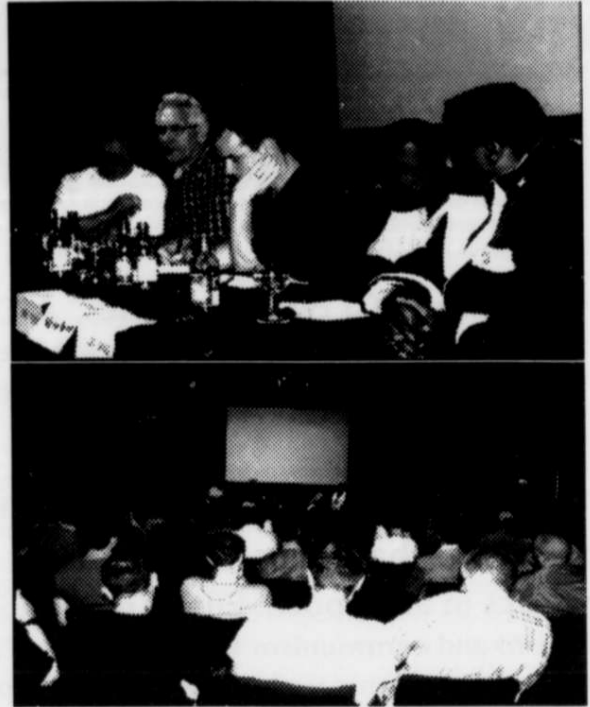
Anti-Fascist Action hosted an afternoon of film and discussion at the Lux Cinema in East London. Following the films, which included the first public screening of the controversial *Routes of Racism*, a panel of speakers debated the question - 'Is anti-racism working?'

As part of the annual weekend of events, AFA staged an Anti-Fascist Film Festival in conjunction with the Lux Cinema. The series of events culminated in a film show and debate with speakers invited to question current anti-racist policies. The three films provided a powerful backdrop to the debate highlighting the devastating consequences of fascism, sectarian bigotry, and racism.

It was the last film, *Routes of Racism*, which provided the most direct springboard for the debate. Set in Greenwich in South East London, Roger Hewitt's film, based on his study of the same name, explored the effects of anti-racist policies on people living in a borough which has seen three racist murders in recent years. Young white working class people, and local youth workers, questioned the traditional, liberal approach to anti-racism. Many interviewed for the film, argued that anti-racism promoted double standards. It was argued that this clumsy application of anti-racist practice created a perception among some, that Black and Asian people are favoured over Whites. The film highlighted how, in this context, young people increasingly expressed their anger and frustration through racism and racist attacks. The second half of this thought provoking film gave a voice to the victims of race attacks who talked movingly about their experience, fear and anger at being terrorised by local race attackers.

The debate was wide ranging and dynamic. The speakers, Dr Roger Hewitt, Gary Younge from the *Guardian*, Weyman Bennett from the ANL, and AFA's Gary O'Shea, debated a range of themes. There was substantial agreement with the film's content and the broad debate increasingly centred onto issues of class and race. It was noted that in many working class areas, people of all different cultures and backgrounds do successfully live alongside each other. However, genuine problems do exist and it was argued that these should be faced honestly. It was good to hear a debate on race give proper consideration to the issue of class. While there was a range of perspectives on this issue, it was agreed in broad terms that race and class are interwoven and as such any response must face up to both issues.

AFA had invited a broad range of speakers to respond to the fundamental question posed by the film: 'Is anti-racism working?' Importantly, AFA showed its willingness to open up a debate, long suppressed. Sadly, AFA's willingness to engage in such a public debate was not matched by all. Two confirmed speakers, Kumar Murshid (National Assembly Against Racism) and Lee Jasper (1990 Trust), ducked the debate at the last minute. Whether this reflects a lack of bottle or incompetence (as apparently Jasper in particular is known for failing to attend his speaking engagements), it is clear that their non-atten-



Above, panel L to R: Gary O'Shea, Roger Hewitt - [Chair] - Gary Younge, Weyman Bennett

dance prevented all voices in the debate from being heard.

Gary O'Shea highlighted the impact of liberal immigration policies, which expected deprived communities to accept refugees with no additional financial help. He argued that the arrival of new refugees should be matched by new resources and funding, 'in order to grease integration'. The alternative was to set the the 'poor' against each other.

Precisely because he faithfully followed the ANL line that 'the war is won' Bennett seemed most at sea in the subsequent two hour debate. He played down the growth of the Far Right and race attacks, arguing that we have now achieved an anti-racist majority. The key strategy for the ANL as outlined by Bennett was to 'prevent the Nazis becoming respectable'. In response the AFA speaker stressed that anti-fascism's real task was the need to deny the Far Right the opportunity of presenting themselves as they have done so successfully in Europe as the 'radical alternative'. As ever, the ANL demonstrated their capacity to bury their heads in the sand, almost literally in the case of Bennett who on one occasion actually turned down the opportunity to comment!

The AFA statement that 'multi-culturalism, though a fact was not a strategy, at least not a progressive one' Younge felt might be 'dangerous'.

Overall the debate was interesting, and positively received, both by the speakers and the full house at the Lux Cinema. A member of the Socialist Party, was even heard to say 'he enjoyed it!' Again it shows that AFA is taking a key role in constructively challenging current anti-racist practice. AFA continues to champion a debate in an area where many have feared to tread, placing class at the centre of the race debate. AFA rightly presents the genuine extent of racism and race attacks, and the potential of the Far Right to capitalise on this situation. This debate was another important and positive step forward for AFA in this area.

If we are all middle class now it follows that...

THE POOR ARE STUPID

In the first of a two part series, A. Shaw explains how, like their Tory predecessors, Labour's education policy is designed not to confront a discrimination that begins in the classroom - but to justify it.

'Nature or nurture' is a cyclical question that goes to the heart of politics in any epoch. Entire philosophies, fascism and communism for example, are almost entirely based on coming down firmly on one side or the other. One might assume New Labour, despite the gnashing of teeth since their election, would nonetheless fall fairly comfortably inside the camp of the good guys. One would be wrong.

Government policies across a range of issues - welfare, crime, housing or education all point to the same startling conclusion: Labour has not just abandoned socialism, but at heart a belief in democracy itself. Emboldened by this subliminal message, it is the new Labour storm-troopers, the triumphalist middle classes, rather than fulminating old colonels in the letters pages of the *Telegraph* who are thinking, discussing, and occasionally broadcasting the unthinkable. "Film crews and investigative journalists are jamming into the sink estates and failing schools of the nation, and sending us back terrible reports about how the excluded are getting on. Three weeks ago for example the BBC screened *The Eyes of a Child* which took a series of terrible cases of deprivation, and then made the claim "that these children speak for five million others. The implication was that some kind of massive redistribution was required" fumed outraged *Independent* columnist David Araanovitch. "Poverty" was, he went on to explain at length, "about far more than money." He had, he insists, been poor himself and 'it never did him any harm'. "Giving more money directly to the parents of children where there were no dads except criminal ones and mothers, feckless drug addicts" he pontificated "would be to simply line the pockets of pushers, publicans and betting shops in Bradford and Leicester. I cannot, (obviously confident in the knowledge that he wasn't) have been the only one whose treacherous alter ego whispered "eugenics" into their minds ear. Are the poor like that because they're poor?" he wondered. "Or are they poor because they're like that?" (17.9.98)

Or as Donald Trump put it recently "My entire life, I've watched politicians bragging about how poor they are, how they came from nothing, how poor their parents and grandparents were. And I said to myself, if they can stay so poor for so many generations, maybe this isn't the kind of person we want to elect to higher office. How smart can they be?"

Strikingly similar sentiments underpin the New Labour mantra that 'poverty is no excuse' for bad schools. And if poverty is not an excuse, investment or lack of it, is not the solution. No point in throwing good money after bad if at the end of the day it is merely 'a pointless exercise in social engineering'. After all any society no matter how egalitarian will ultimately

be structured with a top a middle and a bottom. In brief the collapsing comprehensives will have to manage as best they can with what they have got. In any case aspiring middle class children, you know the 'bright children', should not be held back by having to share lessons with "budding Burglar Bills" was how one candid *Guardian* letter writer put it. But as always, the real issue revolves around who determines who the 'bright ones' are? "Paradoxically" as the *London Evening Standard* put it "bright children from deprived homes may have stood a better chance of getting to the best State schools when they could take the 11-plus". (29.11.99) Now so far as New Labour is concerned the estate agent is best placed to decide.

For all the obvious reasons, why some schools succeed and some fail, goes right to the heart of the debate on how and where British society as a whole is being steered. On the surface the problem is 'trendy teaching methods according to everyone on the Right, a shortage of resources according to everybody on the Left, it's the teachers (Ofsted), it's Ofsted (teachers), it's culture of low expectation, it's an overdose of intervention (the teachers unions), it's the abolition of grammar schools, the existence of private schools, the rigging of exam results, the shortage of nursery schools... and so on. And yet despite the intense debate, the real answer according to British reporter of the year Nick Davies "is torn like a fox between hounds". "The banal reality" according to Davies "is that the single factor which more than any other determines a school's performance is it's intake - the children who go there." A school that is based in a run down working class area will struggle with it's children, while one based in an affluent middle class area will prosper. "It is a simple thing" according to Davies who conducted an investigation for the *Guardian* "and every teacher knows it." (14.9.99)

Worse, the problem appears endemic. Of the 13.3 million children in Britain, on any available measure, 4.6 of them live in poverty, and they are all enrolled in schools. The evidence that poverty undermines education is overwhelming - and has been for years. Yet governments, particularly this one, deny it. By obscuring this simple reality "the public discourse on our schools" claims Davies "entered the realm of the absurd and became lost there." The reason it could so easily do so, he might have added, is that the discourse on class entered the same realm first. And stayed there. As a consequence, the conflict over schools, mirrors perfectly the wider contradictions in society. No less than the Treasury in it's fourth report on the modernisation of Britain's tax and benefits system confirms it. On 'difficult to let estates' it

reports primly, 'one in four children gain no GCSE's (the national average is one in 20) and rates of truancy is four times the average... There is considerable evidence that growing up in a family that has experienced financial difficulties, damages children's educational performance'. The same report concludes that poverty has trebled since 1979 (now higher than Greece and Portugal) to the point where a third of Britain's children now live below the poverty line. In Davies' opinion "this torrent of poor children poured into the classroom at exactly the same time as standards of behaviour and achievement slumped". The poverty deliberately created under Thatcher, invaded the comprehensive system like water flooding a ship, reaching into every weak point. Of course the poverty artificially created under Thatcher also created the notion of a burgeoning middle class; 'middle England', the social base on which New Labour vaingloriously sits. So even if it means over a third of the population are regularly born into a poverty they are more less or destined to stay in, far from dismantling it, Blair is, it appears, determined to see this state of affairs politically, socially and culturally consolidated. His 1997 battle cry of 'Education, education education' ought to have been one with a universal appeal. It was not. Nor was it intended to be. It was instead a pledge, not only to retain middle class privilege in education, but to enhance it at every possible opportunity.

Way back in the late 1960's a 'national comprehensive' network of schools was created to supposedly provide a free secondary education for all students of all backgrounds. "It was an idea with a powerful anger behind it" Davies records. In particular "a disgust at the old two-tiered system in which children were segregated at 11: those most in need of education tipped into second-class schools with sparse resources and no sixth forms, while those who were most able were given more resources, and their own A-level classes. The second tier schools - the secondary moderns were stigmatised as were their pupils". In the old two-tier system, as was intended, the middle classes tended to prosper while the working classes, as was expected, failed. However when middle class children too began to find themselves 'stigmatised' in secondary moderns, the comprehensives were immediately created for them instead. (Incidentally the all time champion of comprehensives was not in fact Shirley Williams as is commonly thought, but Margaret Thatcher, who when education secretary, created more of them than anyone else).

When in the 1980's the middle classes began to whine that now the comprehensives were failing them, (or more accurately their kids were failing in them) Kenneth Baker hurriedly gave them private schools or 'parental choice' (which ended up much the same thing) as an alternative. (Politics apart, nothing could be more subversive after all; nothing more demoralising to the established order, than as a consequence of a level playing field, (even one levelled down) the middle classes were to do as badly as the offspring of the poor. Should such a catastrophe occur, all sort of questions would begin to be asked of the contradictory structure of the society they were being groomed to enter). A genuine meritocracy could, when all's said and done, prove a rather dangerous thing.

Yet according to Blair this is precisely what is happening: "the old establishment is being replaced by a new larger and more meritocratic middle class" he chirps. Philip Gould, author of the *Unfinished Revolution*, and an important figure behind the 1997 Labour victory not only agrees, but goes as far as to suggest that the classless society has already arrived. For him "anachronistic classification... a relic of our class system" is now all that divides us. As he explains, in the "US this problem does not exist because both groups are described



Thatcher created more comprehensives than anyone else when they were thought to work for the middle classes. Later, her Education Minister Kenneth Baker gave middle class parents 'choice' when their children began to fail in them.

by the same middle-class designation, which is what I think should happen here." (*Guardian* 24.9.98)

Without a doubt the middle class does appear to have increased. More visible certainly. Generally less apologetic. Louder. But where, if Gould is to be believed, have they all come from? John Goldthorpe, whose life's study has been a study of class mobility, provides the stunningly emphatic answer. Studying two cohorts of children, one born in 1958 and the other in 1970, he found, against the odds, that the later group had slightly less class mobility than the earlier. The more people that get education, the lesser part education paradoxically plays in social mobility he found. Increasingly in Blair's Britain people are employed and promoted on qualities 'other than brain or qualifications'. Thus social mobility has been stalled partly because middle class children are no longer in risk of sliding down the social scale. Due to this buttressing first by Thatcherism, and now Blairism, one consequence *Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee observes, is that these days the middle classes are better "equipped to cling on more successfully to what they've got. It is the less bright middle-class children who disproportionately consume the new university places: they have to be exceptionally stupid now to fall off the social ladder." (25.1.99) So even with a university education "No one really thinks that the dustman's daughter has the same chance in life as the doctor's son" according to Toynbee.

An opinion supported by a recent revelation in the *Independent* which claims that "drop out rates at universities are an astounding 40%... almost half of the students at a small number of universities are falling by the wayside after the first year... and the universities with the worst records are those with the highest proportion of students from deprived backgrounds". (27.11.99)

"Statistics are often misleading but it's nevertheless true that a middle class child leaving school with minimal exam results is three times more likely to find a white collar job than a working class child with the same qualifications" according to another report in the *Observer* (13.12.98). So far from more

people climbing in to the middle class as Blair claims, in reality the profile of the middle class has bloated because so few are being thrown out. The exact opposite in other words to a meritocracy. Indeed so long as it's not 'pointless' there appears to be room for social engineering in Blair's Britain after all.

Which all helps explain why even while there still is vertical mobility there isn't much of it, and what little there was is fast diminishing. In their book, *A Class Act*, Andrew Adonis and Stephen Pollard quote Chris Woodhead, the chief inspector of schools: "...the failure of white working class boys is one of the most disturbing problems we face within the whole education system. Research shows that white working class boys are the least likely to participate in full-time education after the age of 16, and that white boys are the most likely to be completely unqualified on leaving compulsory education."

However it is not the principle underlying comprehensives; 'the principle of the level playing field' which has been disproved as the Right would claim, rather that the comprehensives were never that comprehensive, and the level playing field more often than not resembled the north face of the Eiger.

"The comprehensive revolution" as the books' authors conclude "has not removed the link between education and class - but strengthened it."

So far from more people climbing in to the middle class as Blair claims, in reality the profile of the middle class has bloated because so few are being thrown out

Community Resistance

N. LONDON Islington by-election contested

CLERKENWELL, has now become synonymous with New Labour's trendy Islington and rebranded as the new cultural sector of 'Cityside', with Exmouth Market at its hub where most of the traditional market stalls and shops are being forced out to make way for the cafe/bar cappuccino and trendy trainer brigade.

Living side by side to this Clerkenwell is another Clerkenwell; where sprawling estates are home to some of the most impoverished people in Britain. This has created what the local branch of the Independent Working Class Association has described as a state of "social apartheid".

This area suddenly became the focus of attention recently when the high-profile Liberal Democrat Councillor, Baroness Sarah Ludford, resigned her seat, in order to join the gravy train in Brussels as a newly elected MEP, prompting a snap by-election for 28 October.

After discussions with local activists, Helen Cagnoni, a well respected and veteran campaigner for the rights of local working class tenants and residents, declared her intention to stand as an 'Independent Tenant-Resident' candidate.

The announcement of the election date coincided with the distribution of 6,000 copies

of a four-page issue of the IWCA's *Islington Independent* newsletter, especially produced for Clerkenwell and neighbouring Finsbury. The newsletter dealt with a whole range of issues, from Labour and the Lib-Dems, from council house privatisation to local democracy, from youth facilities to an in-depth article on the Finsbury Estate. Local activists reported the newsletter creating a "buzz" on the ground in the area and immediately prompted a number of calls to the IWCA phone line. As the electioneering began in earnest, the newsletter also brought a heated phone call from a Labour Party official incensed by the branding of their candidate, Tim Clarke, as "Tim - Nice but Dim!" and demanding a response within 24 hours or else he "would be contacting HQ".

In a desperate attempt to make up ground, the Labour Party began issuing a blizzard of leaflets making wilder and wilder promises, with thousands and thousands of pounds being promised to provide repairs, a concierge, security, a youth club and worker on the rundown Finsbury Estate. Afterwards, tenants joked that had the election campaign lasted another week, they would have each been promised jacuzzis with gold taps! Of course the tenants weren't fooled and the news, that accompanied a feverish spate of cleaning by council workers, that Government Minister Glenda Jackson would be arriving on the Estate with the Labour team was to prove a provocation too far. The following morning, the reception that Labour Party officials received was so hostile, they had to leave the Estate and cancel their PR stunt.

Meanwhile, it was suggested that early canvassing returns in what was a safe seat for the Lib-Dems had forced them into fevered door-knocking and a flurry of leaflets as they sought to distance themselves from many of the Labour Party policies they had supported. The party leader was seen canvassing tower blocks, on his own, late into the night.

Of the other candidates, the Tories could only

mount a token challenge while the Greens occupied the ground normally reserved for the fringe Left, with their candidate proclaiming that "I will support victims of abuse, exploitation, violence (including the long-oppressed people of Vietnam) and hate crimes".

The Independent candidate and her supporters clearly set the agenda, wiping the floor with the other candidates at a hustings meeting as well as distributing two leaflets to all homes in the ward and canvassing all the estates at least once.

However, when the result of the election was announced, the biggest story was one of apathy, with less than one in four turning out to vote. While there was obviously widespread disillusionment with the establishment parties, the vast majority of the working class residents had not been convinced to actually come out and vote for 'their' candidate. Still, while campaigners were disappointed with their tally, from an objective view, 12.5% must be seen as a very credible effort, with their candidate taking 1 in 4 of the working class vote in what was a 'mixed' ward. Especially when on the same day a Socialist Labour Party candidate in the London borough of Kingston-Upon-Thames, while on admittedly less fertile terrain, polled 16 votes (0.7%) on a higher turnout of 40%. The final Clerkenwell result was:

Lib-Dem: 1127 (55.4%; -4.7%), Labour: 536 (26.4%; +0.7%), **Independent Ten/Res: 255 (12.5%)**, Conservative: 82 (4.0%; -1.5%), Green: 33 (1.6%; -7.1), Turnout: 23.7%

The percentage of the Labour vote held up due to the support of the middle classes, campaigners commented that the bigger the house, the bigger the Labour poster. And while the Lib-Dems lost ground, they still succeeded in trading off the line that not having held power, they should be given a chance.

IWCA activists consider the campaign to be a small but important step to rebuilding working class politics in the area.

Now & Then

Hutchinson gave a pretty hardline display of Loyalism. He stressed his British identity and quoted the slogan, "ready for peace ready for war", which is apparently the kind of thing the Ulster Volunteer Force paints on gable-end walls in the North. He said he was a "socialist", though he did not claim the same for the PUP. He was a good speaker and I fear he went down well with much of the audience. John McNulty made some valid points in the workshop afterwards. He said that if it became normal for the Scottish Socialist Party (formerly Scottish Militant) to invite people like him [Hutchinson] onto its platforms, there was a danger of the SSP going over to reaction.

Amongst grassroots SSP members I detected little sense of disapproval for the fact Hutchinson had been allowed to speak, though a couple of visitors from the French section of the Committee for a Workers International had misgivings about it, which I found to be a healthy response. It is up to the left in the SSP to organise better and counteract the influence of the right, or Hutchinson's variety of 'socialism' will come to be seen as normal - and perhaps on more than the Irish question.

James Robertson, on *Socialism 2000*, *Weekly Worker*, 11.11.99

Rather than draw the obvious conclusion from the fact that RAFA has attracted the political support of some republicans in response to the fascist/Loyalist axis, but have failed to attract support from the Loyalist camp, the Militant conclude it must be because AFA is "sectarian".

In rejecting the possibility of an anti-fascist/republican axis as unethical, it counters the reality of the BNP/Loyalist axis by attempting to establish a Militant/Loyalist one! During the general election the policy was taken to it's logical conclusion. Militant refused point blank to share a platform with AFA.

Militant's official policy is that fascism is BAD but loyalism is OK, in the hope that Loyalists in turn will conclude that the BNP is BAD and Militant is GOOD! The moral of the story is this: any group that out of opportunism panders to reaction, who bends the knee to Loyalism should never be trusted, for such duplicity is both inherent and progressive, and given the right set of circumstances it is not completely outrageous to suggest it might (on a live and let live ticket) also doff it's cap to fascism.

Red Action, issue 62, July/Aug 1992

The political pattern evident in the rise of the far Right across Europe is also apparent in Britain. Another reason G. O'Halloran argues that with no proven antidote the liberal Left feels obliged to approach the issue with...

EYES WIDE SHUT

"The Far Right is on the march again in Europe" declared the *Independent* following the victory of the right wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) in the recent general election on October 24. Swiss voters have swarmed in alarming numbers behind the banners of extreme anti-immigration and fierce xenophobia."

The *Independent* argued that both the success of millionaire industrialist Christoph Blocher coupled to the recent victory of Jorg Haider in Austria "cannot be dismissed as a flash in the pan protest. Nor can it be explained as a cry from the unemployed and the dispossessed - as it has been in France and Italy".

True. Yet explained away, is precisely what is happening. Where the situation in countries like Germany and France was laid at the door of exactly the type of social circumstances outlined, recent developments ought not to be taken 'too seriously', we are told for just the opposite reasons.

For *Independent* columnist David Arranovitch, Jorg Haider is "wrongly described as a neo-fascist" specifically because "his success was not founded on economic crises, mass unemployment or rampant inflation". "Austria," he adds for

Up until 1997 the UKIP had a clause stressing that racists were not allowed to join. No longer. Probably not appropriate when it's new leader commodity broker Nigel Farage, is prone to routinely employ descriptive terms "such as nigger or nig-nog in the pub after meetings".

Blocher the orator, tick; appeals to fears of the people, tick; seems to be anti-Jewish, tick". When the 'template' method: mass unemployment, nope; rampant inflation, nope; vast rallies, nope; private armies, nope; comes up with conclusions

good measure "has very few workless citizens". Jonathan Steele writing in the *Guardian* agrees: "there is no clear connection between Far-Right voting and unemployment. Austria, Norway, and Switzerland have lower rates of unemployment than their neighbours. It is more a protest against the undermining of traditional patterns of rural life" (!). And in his opinion, therefore "respectable".

"You have to be careful" warns Linda Grant "not to place the template of Germany in the 1930's on to the present, and finding places where there is an overlap, proclaim the return of the Third Reich:

she personally finds comforting there is no objection.

For as she sees it the "Right in Switzerland has grown out of a peculiarly Swiss sensibility which is unlike any other in Europe." (A sensibility which is deemed 'unlike any other in Europe' would seem to be the ideal basis for extreme nationalism you would have thought, but no.)

'Don't panic' is the collective exhortation from the liberal press. Everything including Far Right parties in regional and now national governments can all be explained - if we just stay

calm. Blocher is, in any case, according to a journalist on the Swiss left-wing magazine *Schatthausen*, 'no fascist'; 'he's not...' wait for it "...Jorg Haider". Exactly what the Left in Austria say of Haider. A 'former' fascist is how Fini is described in Italy. And when the Republican Party made a breakthrough in Germany, liberal commentators were quick to stress that it's leader, former SS officer Franz Schoebeaur was "certainly no Le Pen". Throughout the 1990's in every country where a Far Right figurehead has emerged, the media, usually those considered best placed, on the left of centre, sanctified them as 'distasteful, but harmless democrats' with indecent haste. To say otherwise could on the one hand prompt a collapse in morale, and on the other the need to do something about it. So 'fascists?' 'I see no fascists!' is a most popular refrain these days. Recognising each other is no problem for those on the Far Right of course. Haider for one, is reported as greeting the news from his 'Alpine neighbour' enthusiastically. Conversely, Jonathan Steele is at pains to emphasise that "every country is specific" and crucially: "what has been happening...presents no pattern".

A coincidence then, the radical protest vote, in every major country in Europe being soaked up by the Far Right: Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Austria, Switzerland ...are, we are told, conditioned by a sensibility and a set of circumstances peculiar to themselves. "Amazing" as Gary Younge commented "what we can get used to".

As an 'island race', Britain too prides itself on its uniqueness. One of the reasons to protect it. One of the main reasons to stay out of the EU for instance. A rationale for the need to curb immigration of naturally...Hold on!... It couldn't happen here, could it? Certainly not. Hardly a fascist in sight. (Not unlike the rest of Europe in the eyes of the liberal media in that respect of course.) No cause for alarm, but there is just the faintest similarity, just the faintest hint of, dare I say it, a 'pattern' emerging. Indeed many of the required ingredients are in place already.

A conservative party being wrenched steadily to the right. But not yet right enough. A fact proved by the ability of the tiny United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) to capture three seats



The Countryside Alliance: looking for allies and little to do with foxes.

**continued
page 10**

EYES WIDE SHUT

continued from page 9

and almost 7% of the vote in the Euro election. An angry right-wing protest movement, the Countryside Alliance (very few believe it is entirely about foxes), taking to the streets in impressive numbers and 'looking for allies'. Finally a BNP freshly 'de-Mosleyised' talking of the need for a 'realignment on the Right'. While not interrelating for the moment the component parts are certainly not total strangers either. More than a few of the activists now highly influential in the Tories cut their teeth in the Federation of Conservative Students, a body which proved too right-wing even for the likes of Norman Tebbit who closed it down. Thereafter fraternisation with the BNP, though not consummated, was considered. That old restlessness has not abated. Aware that the average age of the party is 67, today's conservative youth are desperately keen on a radical public makeover. Attempts to re-brand themselves CFUK: Conservative Future: United Kingdom is a symptom of a recklessness evident in the mainstream party as well. Not only do the young Tories not have a problem with sharing platforms with the Italian fascists of the Alleanza Nazionale as members of the European Young Conservatives, but when the shadow international development officer Gary Streeter was asked if we welcomed the success of Haider's Freedom party, "That's a matter for the Austrian people" came the terse reply. Meanwhile BNP involvement with, and support for, the Countryside Alliance is hardly a secret.

However developments within the UKIP are far more fruity. Up until 1997 the UKIP had a clause stressing that racists were not allowed to join. No longer. Probably not appropriate when it's new leader, commodity broker Nigel Farage, is prone, according to Francis Wheen, to routinely employ descriptive terms "such as nigger or nig-nog in the pub after meetings" (*Guardian* 13.10.1999). Wheen also reports that accomplice and fellow MEP Michael Holmes in his Euro election leaflet this year paid tribute to "citizens' patriotic protest groups" such as Save Our Sterling - which is run by the BNP. Nor does Farage deny direct talks have taken place between himself and Mark Deavin, a close friend of new BNP leader Nick Griffin. So there are a number of possible scenarios. One was outlined by Deavin in 1997. With Blair elected Deavin predicted: "the BNP will become the official opposition in the inner cities. The UKIP will be the opposition in the shires, the middle class opposition". That is scenario one. On the other hand "That party is a serious opposition to us in middle England", he went on to acknowledge "but, if we had the resources we could tear it to pieces". Might be no need, as the UKIP since it's triumph, has been busy tearing itself to pieces. Scenario two, sees the UKIP collapse and the BNP mop up, not simply some useful recruits, but more importantly the voter base thus abandoned. Fanciful? Only if you believe in 'the peculiarly British sensibility unlike any other in Europe'. Otherwise the scene is being set for a comprehensive drive to push the political centre even further to the Right.

One who fervently believes in both Britain's uniqueness and the opportunity unfolding, and who has been central to its design is former street operative Tony Lecomber. A veteran of over twenty years, he knows that the Far Right have never had a better opportunity to become a serious player in the political mainstream. However there is a nagging doubt that despite all the BNP's twists and manoeuvres 'they', haven't gone away you know. What if for all his efforts, if "our opponents - particularly the more violent kind" have not after all, despite his own genuinely held expectation and repeated promises "been left behind with nothing to do". Rather than enjoy, like the Far Right in Europe, a "free run", what if the only people tracking his party are precisely the ones who forced a change of course previously? What if the militants rather than being permanently outflanked are just as eagerly looking forward to what they consider merely to be a new phase of the struggle? What of BNP plans for the inner cities if the ground is actually contested? What if having out-violenced the BNP the same people now expect to out-radicalise them? Suppose in this process of re-inventing themselves, instead "of a full blown split" they eventually, through having found a 'better way', trigger a renaissance across the Left as a whole? For Lecomber, understandably the stuff of nightmares, particularly as the Euro nationalist strategy is after all Plan B!

Significantly rather than attempt to analyse the situation objectively, he instead seeks comfort in drawing attention to obstacles already surmounted. Moreover the propaganda nature of the delivery suggests Lecomber is all too aware he is not be the only one losing sleep over it. Much of the article sub-titled 'Red Distress' locks on to the possibility of a most "welcome" and "fully-blown split" in the militant camp. A distinct likelihood he suggests due to the "dilemma" between those "who

cfuk

Conservative Future : United Kingdom

In a bid to appear updated with a new dot.com image, the Tories reveal a growing impatience within the ranks

want to continue to try and turn up at public, nationalist [exclusively NF] activities to attack them, and those who wish to follow the BNP into the mainstream". He quotes a RA editorial from twelve months ago as proof of tension. With obviously mixed emotions he then admits that rather than the NF activities splitting AFA, the AFA reputation alone has irrevocably "split" the NF! Sinister elements from North London AFA had increasingly been seen in the vicinity of NF activities; on the look out for an "easy target" which led an increasingly jittery NF leader to conclude it was "only a matter of time before the diminutive Front came badly unstuck" ('A week', as they say...) With the central plank removed, supporting arguments to demonstrate "the reds pulling in two directions" appear even more implausible and disingenuous. In drawing attention to the admittedly unprecedented reproduction of an article by himself in its "entirety" in RA last year, which would have had, he concludes, the effect of "opening their own members eyes to their own futility, and will have sapped their morale and sense of purpose" he merely reveals his own concern. It was successfully employed to the opposite effect. Given the article in question addressed the prospects of the IWCA entering the political mainstream questioning the 'realism' of Red Action itself doing the same only two years on (as an alternative presumably) is plain silly. Similarly asking "what would they [RA] offer if they did turn their hands to politics? That it's wonderful to be ethnically cleansed? That it's progressive to make women wear veils?" smacks of (and I don't want to overplay my own hand here) of a certain foreboding. A sense of someone, who precisely because he can identify the political Shangrilla almost within his grasp is constantly looking over his shoulder. For Francis Wheen on the other hand it is the promised realignment of the Right "that certainly needs watching". In welcome contrast to his fellow liberals he believes it to be "dangerously complacent to ignore our home grown fascists... for while Griffin might not have the popular appeal of Jorg Haider, after years of hibernation something is stirring in their malodorous lair". No doubt in 1986 somebody equally well meaning suggested 'keeping an eye on young Haider'. Not that it did any good. Nor with the millions swarming behind the banners of the Far Right across Europe is 'watch and pray' any substitute for a strategy. Divine intervention is all very well, but if he is on our side, he has, remember, let us down rather badly, once already this century.

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A Word In Your Ear...



FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE COMMUNISTS...

"Lenin left us a great legacy and we, his heirs, have fucked up it up!" was Stalin's comment in 1941 on being told of Hitler's invasion of Russia. In a review of a new book, *The Road to Terror - Stalin and the self destruction of the Bolsheviks*, it is remarked in passing, that in contrast to the Nazis "the terror campaign [in Russia] was not very orderly. In Germany the victims were announced in advance: Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, Socialists and the mentally ill." (*London Evening Standard* 8.11.99) Now, unless they are listed under "mentally ill" Communists, you notice, don't get a mention. The latest air-brushing follows swiftly on the heels of another new book, *Fascism: Theory and Practice* by SWP theoretician Dave Renton, who was taken to task in the pages of *Red Action* for a similar economy. Renton, had deliberately listed "liberals and feminists" first and second

in order of merit in the 'hierarchy of the oppressed' in order, it was alleged, to falsely convey the impression that a) these groups were first to be targeted and b) were singled out precisely because they were front line anti-fascist fighters... Communists were, needless to say, not even placed. A common enough assumption perhaps, but the disquieting thing is the people, writing and reviewing, **know different**.

When you consider that in the German Weimar Republic, Communist was synonymous with manual working class and we, their heirs, are being similarly 'fucked up', (See editorial on *Searchlight*) is it any wonder we're a bit 'chippy'!

Adolf: he came for the communists first... Various descriptions as "essential reading"; "the highest rank of scholarship"; "the standard work superseding all others" and most tellingly for our purposes, acclaimed principally for its "intellectual honesty", *Hitler*, by renowned historian Ian Kershaw, a scrupulously detailed 880 pages, came out only last year.

In it Kershaw explains that while for the Nazis the Jews were the 'racial enemy', it was the Communists, the 'chief object of hostility', who provided both the physical and ideological opposition. And there was plenty of it. During July 1932 alone, 86 mainly Communists and Nazis died in politically motivated street-fighting. Hundreds were seriously injured. On one Sunday afternoon, seventeen Nazis were killed and sixty four (mostly Nazi) were seriously injured, when the 'Brownshirts' tried to march through the tough dock area of Hamburg Altona. Consequently when Hitler came to power it was as Kershaw emphasises, "Communists" not Jews "who were the main targets". It was the Communists, not liberals, who "were particularly savagely repressed. Individuals were brutally beaten, tortured, seriously wounded or killed with total impunity".

"Around 10,000 Communists and Socialists were arrested in March and April alone. By June, the numbers in protective custody, **most of them workers**, (not many of them feminists presumably) had doubled." (our emphasis).

When "Dachau, the first concentration camp was opened" it was purpose built, Himmler announced at a press conference "to hold" - wait for it - "Communists and if necessary Reichsbanner [SDP paramilitaries] and Social Democratic functionaries". The Socialist SDP only "if necessary" note. Coincidentally, the *Guardian* recently reprinted a report from Dachau concentration camp from January 1, 1934, as part of their *Century* supplements. It makes for interesting reading, "the number of prisoners is 2,200 - 2,400. Of these about fifty are intellectuals, a few are members of the middle class, without any political affiliations, fifty or sixty are Nazis, about sixty are Jews, about five hundred are Socialists, two are army officers, there are several beggars and ordinary criminals, fifteen are non-German subjects and **the remainder are Communists. The overwhelming majority belong to the working class**". (our emphasis)

There's lots more, but you get the picture. Working class communists were not just part of the fight against Adolf. To all intents and purposes **they were** the anti-fascist resistance.

Ah yes, you can here the liberal shriek, that's all very well: "But the communists fought the Nazis with similarly violently methods, toward similar totalitarian ends, which for us disqualifies them as anti-fascists!"

From this logic Hitler can, and should, be morally held to account, for persecuting the innocent only, those who did not get involved, the mentally ill, homosexuals, Gypsies, trade unionists, Jews... not forgetting the feminists and liberals... those not tainted by violence... the ones who stood idly by and did nothing! The revisionists in other words identify **exclusively** with those who did not fight fascism! In Russia in much the same period, priorities are reversed. Unless they are Communists, it is now dissidents, the more militant the better, who are applauded. Imagine any other minority being unlucky enough to find themselves the 'chief object of hostility', for the two bloodiest tyrants (Joe, like Adolph, began his purges within the Communist Party) in this the 20th, and bloodiest century, and this coincidence not rating a mention? A mere oversight or more to do with 'the victors always being the ones who write history'. Instructive to observe, is it not, on what side of the wire, so to speak, liberalism stands? On the basis that those who 'rewrite the past are condemned to repeat it', is to my mind no reason why in the meantime, if the opportunity arises, they still shouldn't get a slap.

Something We Said!?

They felt that talking was not enough and wanted action. This was at the end of 1991-beginning of 1992, a time when the BNP and other extremists were being successfully targeted at public meetings by anti-fascist groups. There were many street confrontations with a group called AFA and its parent organisation Red Action, an extreme left wing group. It was a dangerous time to be on the Right. C18 saw its role as a "stewarding" group to protect these meetings.

A *Hate Watch* interview with journalist Nick Ryan, website: www.hatewatch.org

Will AFA give them [NF] a free run? In the late 1980's and early 1990's the BNP encountered stiff opposition from these reds but was able to carry on because of the determination of BNP adherents, and the numbers that could be mobilised. Today, however aggressive its members, the NF have no such numbers... the Front's tactics for going on the streets has also split it internally with its Chairman realising that it is only a matter of time before the diminutive Front comes badly unstuck.

BNP organiser Tony Lecomber. *Patriot*,

And what would they offer if they [the reds] did turn their hands to politics? That it's wonderful to be ethnically cleansed from your street? That it's progressive to make women wear veils?

Tony Lecomber, same issue of *Patriot*.

A slight smugness is detectable in British reactions to the electoral success of Jorg Haider's Freedom Party in Austria. What can you expect from a country that largely welcomed the Anschluss and chose Kurt Waldheim as its President only a few years ago? Couldn't happen hear could it? Probably not but it would be dangerously complacent to ignore our home grown fascists altogether. After years of hibernation something is stirring in their malodorous lair.

Guardian columnist Francis Wheen, 13.10.99

The SWP is a sect par excellence - it has little or no rationale for its existence apart from its existence. It lives to recruit... the stresses and strains that are beginning to erode 'party' unity have yet to find organised expression amongst the rank and file. It can only be a matter of time.

Mark Fisher, *Weekly Worker*, 21.10.99.