

RED ACTION

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HOLOCAUST



ON TRIAL



EDITORIAL

Something, somewhere, is very, very, wrong. According to a recent report by the Sir Norman Chester centre for football research at Leicester University, Celtic fans are among the most racist in Britain. Celtic came a close third behind Everton and Rangers "in the league table for making the largest number of racist comments heard" reported *The Guardian* (7.1.00).

Most curious. Particularly as, despite allegedly questioning 33,000 fans, not one team outside of the Premiership even rates a mention. And yet it is in places like Oldham, Scunthorpe and Carlisle where many believe terrace racism proportionally, remains at its most overt. Not only that, but it was Leicester and Coventry that witnessed the only mass examples of outright and unrestrained bigotry in recent years. Leicester are placed eighth in the league table of shame, but on this occasion in question it was the 3,000 away fans who were the source of it. Similarly at Coventry where a spokesman for the guilty party, ruefully admitted that most of the '4000 away crowd seemed to have been involved'. The considerable embarrassment of Kevin Miles was understandable, as his club Newcastle are flagged up as one of the two major state sponsored anti-racist success stories within the game.

The other notable pilot scheme at Leeds, who are allotted an almost relegation and therefore respectable place in 'the league of shame', were the visitors who gave mass vent to their feelings about 'Pakis' in Leicester. Something similar had also happened only a couple of months earlier when Leeds were away to Blackburn. After the Leicester game in January 1999 the 'Leeds Fans Against Racism' website made at least some effort to explain it.

For state sponsored anti-racism to determindly turn a blind eye to the one club in Britain whose supporters are routinely targeted in murderous attacks simply for wearing the club's colours is to say the least unprincipled

But when Leeds fans rampaged in Glasgow during a pre season friendly at the beginning of this season, targeting Irish/republican pubs in particular, an event which drew banner headlines in Scotland, the silence south of the border, and within the anti-racist world generally was deafening. Neither 'Kick it Out!', 'Give Racism the Red Card!', nor *Searchlight*, who regularly eulogise the so called Leeds blue-print had anything to say. Socialist Party inspiration Tommy Sheridan, who had publicly recommended the Newcastle model to Celtic fans (albeit before the Coventry match) was equally and unusually tight-lipped. Coincidentally the only paper which saw fit to investigate the incident at Coventry v Newcastle, was not the liberal *Guardian*, but the *Irish Times*.

Up until the survey it was very much 'the curious case of the dog that did not bark'. But with the arrest of Leeds players Bowyer and Woodgate following a serious attack on an Asian youth in Leeds city centre, the affair is given an added twist. Both Bowyer and Woodgate had, it appears, featured in a 'Kick it Out!' poster campaign.

Unsurprisingly national coordinator Piara Powar concedes that even without a conviction the credibility of his campaign has already been 'damaged'. Yet the self restraint displayed by him and other state linked bodies is again marked. And apparently so confident was Leeds chairman Peter Risdale, of his self-muzzling pet, he confidently declared, in advance of anybody even being charged, that "the suggestion of this being a racially motivated attack is without foundation" (*Sunday Telegraph* 22.1.00). Contradictions and red faces all round when a few days later the South Yorkshire police, who as a rule, state sponsored bodies insist should have 'institutionally racist' enamelled on their helmets, announced a contrary conclusion.

For state sponsored anti-racism to determinedly turn a blind eye to the one club in Britain whose supporters are routinely targeted in murderous attacks simply for wearing the club's colours is to say the least unprincipled. To then allow the same Celtic fans to be labelled racist, again without comment, is little short of contemptible.

Taken as whole, it merely confirms what many anti-fascists have come to suspect. Not only is the race relations industry blinkered, incompetent, wrong headed, increasingly self-fulfilling, self serving, and self-defeating, but in all probability corrupt.

MAKING HISTORY

In 1988 a couple of reporters were commissioned by *BLITZ* magazine to do a feature on Red Action. As part of their research they approached various sections of the Left for comment.

Most, when not openly hostile, simply refused 'for one reason or another' to be quoted. One group ARAFA (Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Action) went a step further, and to the astonishment of the hacks attempted to censor/edit the project themselves! "The outcome of the meeting" was, the stunned reporters recorded, "a statement put together on the spot and endorsed by the group as a whole". It read: "Islington ARAFA disassociates itself from any article primarily focused on Red Action. The focus of any article should be on the positive aspects of the anti-racist, anti-fascist movement with no more than a small mention of Red Action (ie one paragraph)".

The 'ignore them and they will go away' followed by the slightly more progressive 'damned by faint praise' approach is not restricted to Red Action only. 'One paragraph', is precisely what AFA is allowed in *Searchlight's* recent account of anti-fascist resistance in the 1980's (It does not figure at all in the account of the 1990's). As for the SWP, any public acknowledgment of AFA's existence, no matter how grudging would in itself be a bombshell.

Traditionally, outfits who serve their time at the coal-face, such as the paramilitary 43 and 62 Groups are invariably more concerned with making history, than making propaganda. Up until recently this was also true of AFA. Until it realised that if it didn't take responsibility for writing it's own history, others were only too happy to write them out of it. Consequently a new pamphlet on the history of militant anti-fascism between 1985-2000 with anecdotal evidence from the fighters themselves is currently in production. To the chagrin of the 'one paragraph more than enough' revisionists, a new entirely independent publication, irredeemably undermines any future attempt at militant anti-fascist emasculation.

Anti-Fascism in Britain by Nigel Copey (printed by Macmillan) is the first and only academic study of the tactics and strategies of anti-fascism in it's own right. Its overreaching feature, being an examination, from 1923 up to the present day of the "historic divide between radical anti-fascism with it's emphasis on physical confrontation - and legal forms of anti-fascism". Despite the occasional intrusion of the liberal, not to say naive personal politics of the author, it is nonetheless an honest exploration of motivations, strategies and tactics. And because of Copey's blatant objectivity, rather than being cast, if at all, as either peripheral, or mere auxiliaries to liberalism, militant anti-fascism in each generation strides centre stage as of right. Hence the real value of Copey's endeavour is not the level of research, the quality of the writing (though crisp) or the veracity of conclusion, instead the quiet satisfaction in the AFA camp, despite the staggering £49 price tag, is the actual existence of the book itself.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

LENINISM & LIFESTYLISM

FLICKING THROUGH the pages of the *London Evening Standard* after the 'riots' at Euston station late last year, I noticed the appearance of at least one member of the Revolutionary Communist Group who was familiar to me from early work around the launch of the IWCA, (but more about that later). The Met Police remember had 'lost control' during this pre-planned event, when a few hundred 'anarchists' had 'gone on the rampage' setting a police vehicle alight.

Speaking as someone who has been a member of some formidable AFA stewards groups who have been barely able to step outside their own front doors, before being placed in sealed trains and transported across the breadth of London, filmed, summarily arrested and detained for hours on end, without being provided with so much as an explanation, let alone charge; this becomes somewhat perplexing (Fascists have also been similarly dealt with. In just twenty minutes 400 of them were scooped and placed on police coaches while on the Edgware Road in 1993).

That is of course, unless the timing of this 'outrage', so readily condemned by all the usual sources, just so happened to coincide with the new anti-terrorist legislation being passed through the House of Commons at the time. The new legislation, marketed by Millbank as being necessary to deal with dangerous animal rights and Islamic groups, is draconian enough, Human Rights campaigners acknowledge, to have led to the jailing of anti-Apartheid supporters based in London during the ANC's armed struggle.

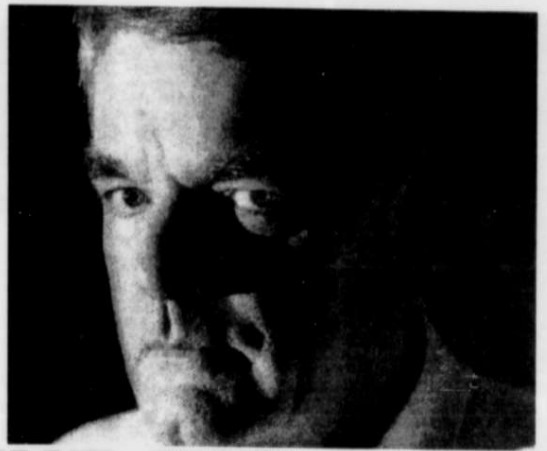
This is not to say that I, let alone Red Action, condemn the actions of people that might or consider them to be consciously operating to any kind of 'state agenda'; I'm all for people letting off a bit of steam at the expense of Plod now and then. But equally this does not mean that the state is not able at times to deliberately manipulate the situation.

Red Action was, to our knowledge, the only publication which pointed out the 'strange' fact that as the 1990 Poll Tax Riot in Trafalgar Square was reaching its climax and the police appeared to be 'losing control', hundreds of their colleagues sat calmly sipping coffee in Whitehall, literally yards away. While the event supplied a number of RA members with a fresh collection of entertaining anecdotes and *Class War* its backlog of photos for the next decade; the Anti-Poll Tax Movement was effectively criminalised in the subsequent hoo-haa, leading to vastly depleted numbers on later demonstrations as the participants were reduced down to the 'politicos'.

Which brings me back to the aforementioned 'former comrade'. The spectacle of "Marxist-Leninists" who deserted a fledgling IWCA for the ranks of the 'tree people', tailing the Anarcho-Green movement, probably says far more about the RCG and the present state of revolutionary struggle in this country, than it does about their new-found, fatigue-clad friends. The December/January edition of the RCG's *Fight Racism Fight Imperialism!* reassures us that this adventurism will continue, they'll be "out there on the streets" involved in "mass direct action", presumably swapping their Leninism for Lifestylism!

The excitement in Seattle will only encourage them further. It appears that this coalition of the middle class left, students, Greens, 'eco-warriors' and pacifists, is now being touted around as the 'great white hope' for the world's 'oppressed'. And the working class? No mention of them I'm afraid, but plenty of exotic types telling any reporter who would listen that "this is just like '68 all over again". Exactly. Mmm. Sobers you up a bit doesn't it. Later suckers...

Steve Potts



THE BIG ISSUE

"Holocaust goes on trial" was the *Daily Telegraph* headline which announced the beginning of libel proceedings being brought by historian David Irving against fellow author Prof Deborah Lipsdadt, following her accusation that Irving was the most prominent, and thus most dangerous "Holocaust denier" in the world.

At issue is not whether Nazi concentration camps existed, but whether the inmates, and Jews in particular, were systematically and deliberately exterminated therein. Irving, who graciously accepts that between "one and four million Jews" died during the conflict, insists it was not as result of having been gassed, but more probably due to "overwork, starvation and typhus". He also claims that the "Americans built the gas chambers at Auschwitz", while the Poles, he insists, "admitted in 1995" to being responsible for a similar post war construction in Dachau. In the past he has referred to Auschwitz as a "tourist attraction" and has called the Holocaust a "blood lie" against the German people.

For his detractors, he is "a liar driven by his extremist views". As Prof Lipsdadt's lawyer put it: "By exposing that dangerous fraud in this court the defendants may be properly applauded for having performed a significant public service". Accepting that few people in Britain up to now have ever heard of Irving, much less the notion of the Holocaust as fiction, what 'service' and to 'whose public' is a moot point? With January 27 in future to be known as Holocaust Memorial Day, and plans afoot to make any questioning of the Holocaust a criminal offense in Britain as in Germany, the fall out from the planned twelve week trial, seems likely to carry national and international repercussions.

That Irving is politically partisan in his motivation, is beyond question. Fellow historian Andrew Roberts who visited his flat in Mayfair described it thus: "On one wall were framed copies of the then Nazi newspaper *Vokischer Beobachter* dating from the thirties. On the desk was a framed autograph in a familiar, spiky hand, which on closer examination read 'Adolf Hitler'. At his parties - to which I was not invited - the cocktail swizzle sticks featured small glass swastikas. Here, the place proclaimed, lives a True Believer." (*Sunday Telegraph* 16.1.00). A little more than a day into the trial he was castigated by the judge for blatant bias. An SS telegram, which according to Irving disproved the notion of 'a final solution', which had demanded that 'the execution of Jews in Riga be stopped' had had the rest of the sentence which continued '...and must be done more discretely' - deleted. Similarly, during the *Hitlers Diaries* debacle he suddenly declared the forgery genuine, only days after pronouncing them false. When asked why he simply explained: "That's show business".

Now, if it were merely a question of Irving's integrity these anecdotes alone, would in a normal libel trial, prove damning. However it is not, it must be remembered, Irving who is on trial. And for those who want, as one Jewish critic put it, to make "the Holocaust central to civilisation" it may yet not prove to be all plain sailing. Put bluntly, Irving it appears, is not the only one with the capacity for invention. For example, since the de-Communistation of Poland it has been conceded that the figure of many millions put to death in Auschwitz alone, is an exaggeration. For the moment no figure can be agreed. Moreover, the Yad Vasheem

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NOT WAVING...

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

'REPUBLICANISM: IS THIS THE END?' was

the title of a public meeting organised by Socialist Outlook in Birmingham recently. 'Trotskyism: is this the end?' Birmingham Red Action mischievously countered in our own leaflet. Padraic Finn, of Socialist Democracy opened proceedings by dismissing the peace process as "the British dispensing temporary solutions to supplicate the nationalist movement". He poured scorn on the simultaneous surge of support for Sinn Fein north and south "as nothing but community politics" adding, "republicanism had no perspective beyond that". Furthermore by aligning themselves with 'the forces of capitalism', they had caused 'the cutting off of working class nationalists in the north from those in the south - and in Britain'. "Helping Blair" he concluded "only makes problems for socialists in Ireland and here much worse". As was so ably demonstrated, left to their own devices 'socialists' are perfectly capable of making plenty of problems for themselves without any outside interference thank you very much.

Workers Power demanded the IRA live up to its "military duty" to defend Catholics from attack. A member of Troops Out coolly suggested, that if they were so keen to defend 'catholics' perhaps they could take themselves off to Ireland and "arm themselves, possibly courtesy of the IRA"! Sadly WP couldn't find it among themselves to offer even a half decent retort, and manfully swallowed the taunt with a gulp. A small incident, but which for some, epitomises the 'voyeurism' of Trotskyism. "They like to look but not touch" was how the *Tiochfaidh Ar La* editor put it recently.

A life long member of the pro-imperialist British Labour Party declared that Sinn Fein's participation in the Executive was evidence of their eagerness to shore up the "status quo". Someone who I presume can at least claim to speak on the issue of the 'status quo' with some authority. The solitary Workers Action member, (not only in the meeting, but I suspect in the country) threatened at one stage "to expose what is going on". So intricate was the conspiracy, he declined to expand further. Overall the republican strategy boiled down to nothing more than an attempt to "democratise the Orange State" another whined.

But if indeed the six county statelet was democratised, then it could no longer be credibly defined as Orange surely? Even when allowed the fullest democracy themselves, Trotsky's finest couldn't decide when precisely the republican parrot had ceased to exist. The "collapse of the Soviet Union" was one offering. "Demobilising the solidarity forces with the Birmingham pub bombings" was another (perhaps this was the deliberate conspiracy our lonely friend was referring to?)

Generally the 30 year struggle had ended in "a historic defeat for the Irish working class... as well as for the British working class" was Workers Powers' conclusion. Only Socialist Democracy was willing to "oppose the combination of bankrupt military strategy" and the oft mentioned "compromises with imperialism". That the "bankrupt military strategy" they had routinely denounced, (at least as far back as the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974), was now coupled in the same sentence, with an equally withering condemnation of the IRA "for compromising with imperialism" - that is to say for finally following their advice - was breathtaking.

Yet for those few who, like them, "wanted to move forward" it would not be easy. No. They would 'have to go further' they warned. This was their enigmatic Plan B. After 50 years of going nowhere, with nothing but their dogma for comfort, "going further" was politically very scary stuff indeed. But is it the end? Maybe not, but please God we are surely on the last chapter of a very thin book.

Bob Martin



THE BIG ISSUE - contd

museum in Jerusalem which has a deserved reputation for being scrupulous, admits that even the wider figure of the 'six million' is itself an arbitrary one. Intriguingly, Professor Lipshadt herself concedes that "the notorious tale of the Nazis making soap out of the bodies of dead Jews is a myth probably fabricated by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of the former Soviet Union" (Christopher Hitchens, *London Evening Standard*, 12.1.00).

When you consider one of the reasons the recent Brad Pitt film, *Fight Club*, was widely condemned as 'Nazi and fascist' was for a 'shameful parody' of something which Prof Lipshadt now acknowledges is a metaphor; it serves only to highlight the reverence attached to the approved reading of history, and the implications of it unravelling.

Back in 1987 when identical accusations of being 'fascist and Nazi', were laid by amongst others the Union of Jewish Students, it caused the dramatic cancellation of the Jim Allen play *Perdition*. In this drama, based co-incidentally on a libel trial, the defence counsel argues that "Israel is a paid watchdog: a nation built on the pillar of Western guilt and subsidised by American dollars". Similar reasoning is of course to be found on the far-right. Nonetheless such a rationale cannot be deemed fascist merely out of coincidence; more particularly if objective fact.

Norman Finkelstien for one, a left-wing and political scientist argues that the 'Holocaust industry' was created by the pro-Israel lobby in 1967 to "justify aid for Israel". In effect "the Holocaust is the Zionist account" of history. "It was" he claims "seized upon and methodically marketed" because it was politically expedient" (*The Guardian*, 18.1.00). One notable consequence of this relentless marketing, is that the notion of anti-fascism and anti-Semitism, has become so interlaced, it has fused in the public mind, to the extent, that everything and everybody else is squeezed out. In his *Schindler's List* Oscar acceptance speech for instance, Steven Spielberg dedicated it to the "6 million who can't be here" as if Jewish persecution was the be all and end all of Nazi philosophy, and therefore, everything, and everyone else caught up in it, 'a mere detail of history'.

In the similar way, anybody or thing, deemed in some way 'anti-Israeli' is automatically turned up side down in the quest for some pro-Nazi baggage, while anti-fascism is itself widely assumed to be motivated by, and the perogative of, essentially ethnic considerations. In the late 80's, an AFA representative negotiating with Hackney Council for some funding for the AFA 'Unity Carnival', was challenged by the Sierra Leone head of the race equality department, who assumed it was an event exclusively "for the Jewish community". Around the same time and just as bizarrely, an asian activist was physically ejected from an anti-racist meeting in the East End, on *Searchlight's* instruction, simply for being in possession of a PLO scarf.

Behind the scenes, while "Never Again!" iconography remains the jewel in the crown of ANL propaganda, the militant anti-fascist pedigree is under constant attack due to its un-apologetic working class orientation. Considering that the primary ideological basis of fascism is the pursuit of antagonism WITHIN rather than between races, such thinking, betrays analytical untidiness at best.

In recognition that for the best part of half a century the far-right have sought to put the 'Holocaust on trial', make it an item of controversy, a defensive reflex under the circumstances is to be expected. But now with the archives being opened in the former killing fields of the Eastern front if, as seems likely, the lid is to come off, better in the long run, 'our side' is seen to do the lifting. 'Political expediency', if not clarity and candour would appear to demand it.

BIG ISSUE PREDICTION: 'Holocaust on Trial' regardless of outcome.

OUTLAWS & RENEGADES

At issue is not whether drugs are good or bad, suggests Joe Reilly, but how the subsequent anti-social problems should be managed. Key to this is deciding from a Marxist perspective, whether 'junkies' are part of the working class or a key component of the most dangerous of classes opposed to it.

"Degenerate youth! Guttersnipes! Pimps! Bums! Thieves! Plunderers!" was the headline appeal of a Communist Youth newspaper in Germany in 1923. Had it been produced 50 years earlier in Marx's day, it might have read: **"Street Gamins! Riff-raff! Vagabonds! Beggars! Spivs!"** Today: **"Joyriders! Ramraiders! Pushers! Junkies!"** would undoubtedly figure prominently.

In pitching their invitation, the Communist Youth authors did not attempt to offer any judgement on the accuracy of the epithets, beyond expressing their contempt for the bourgeois press that applied them to street gangs known as 'cliques' and it's 'gibbering' about the "moral degeneration" of youth'.

This appeal represented the beginning of a campaign by the German Communist Party (KPD) to try and organise and politicise the sections of society previously referred to by marxists as the 'lumpen proletariat'. Their reasons for so doing were many. In the first place, the KPD claimed as its strongholds the very neighbourhoods in which the cliques were at home, and the milieu of the cliques was reflected in its own composition. Secondly, while the KPD had a disproportionate number of manual and unemployed workers in it's ranks, the main Social Democratic Party (SPD) retained the allegiance of the great majority of organised workers; which forced the KPD to seek recruits outside the ranks of the organised and employed working class. Thirdly, the KPD then was an avowedly insurrectionary party, which adopted and even welcomed the role ascribed to it by its opponents and rivals as a 'party of outlaws'. The SPD regularly accused the Communists of having brought an unheard of coarseness and brutality into political life on the streets and in parliament, while for it's part the Communists were known to be relatively tolerant of ex-convicts in its own ranks and whose chief political newspaper named spies and traitors to the movement and urged readers 'to teach them a lesson'. Last but not least in the battle for the streets, as a result of the Brownshirts attempting to establish itself in strongholds of the Communists, knives and guns were being brought into the conflict as well as fists. Given that the credibility of the combatants depended on their displaying an active and effective response to the physical and political threat posed, the advantages of mobilising the energies and abilities of the cliques 'in their own cause' was fully apparent.

However to pretend that the strategy of orientating, organising and recruiting outside of the realm of the 'idealised worker' outside of its 'proper'



A gang of self-confessed 'joyriders' s on the West View estate in Hartlepool, Cleveland. Part of our constituency or just lumpen scum?

constituency went smoothly, without controversy or contradiction, would be wrong. In fact the KPD never fully reconciled this departure from the orientation to the 'point of production'. Indeed when the communist movement approached the worker outside the workplace, or the working class child who had never known work, it always did so with suspicion.

Tellingly, when the party leadership thought of the gangs it saw them as possible allies rather than as bone fide members of its own constituency. A party less constricted in it's vision of class and of politics, might have been expected, indeed may have felt obliged to develop an analysis of the street gangs and their role within a progressive movement. It was never attempted. Logically there were only two lines of argument open to the Communists: on the one hand, they could acknowledge that the cliques and all they represented, were marginal to the working class, or even that they were a symptom of the actual 'pathology of the proletariat under capitalism', but that the party while recognising them as degenerate nonetheless regarded them charitably.

On the other hand they could have concluded that the fact that individuals or groups were categorised as criminal, was the result not of intrinsic qualities that disqualified them from participation in the revolutionary movement, but of belonging to a single and universally (if not uniformly) oppressed working class, all of whose members were subject to the same pressures, processes and categorisation. In terms of the cliques this would have meant the KPD accepting they were no less representative of the working class for not being in work. In fact the KPD attitude on such related questions as anti-social crime, youth and so on, forever hovered between these two approaches. This ambivalence was particularly vivid when young Communists behaved like clique members. For instance the active and fighting formations of the Communist youth (with an emphasis "on ace lads only") were often characterised by a style and mentality strikingly similar to those of the cliques. Inevitably this led not only to renewed concerns about the dangers and values of the latter, but interestingly, also became a source of conflict between the leadership and the

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For *Guardian* reporter Nick Davies, the comprehensive system is a...

A CURIOUSLY ENGLISH STORY..

featuring a little snobbery, a dash of racism and a great deal of class politics. However, as A. Shaw explains, precisely the same ingredients are implicit in his own remedy

“It is perfectly understandable that parents should move heaven and earth to get their children into the best possible schools, whether it means moving house, applying to different boroughs, paying for their children to take entrance exams, appealing to independent adjudicators, taking holy communion before applying to Church schools, even giving false addresses” a *London Evening Standard* editorial explained recently (29.11.99).

'Best schools' are for the *Evening Standard* defined as those who 'attract the good teachers'. The 'good teachers' in turn are attracted by the schools with the best 'facilities'. That 'good facilities' plus the 'good teachers' in turn attract the 'bright pupils' is a simple case of cause and effect. Or so we are led to believe. But what isn't explained is how the good school acquires the best facilities to begin with? And if the comprehensive system has 'not removed the link between education and class' but strengthened it - where in the cycle exactly does the systemic discrimination first kick in?

In a recent report, Nick Davies, *Guardian* Reporter of the Year, shows precisely how the class discrimination accelerates once the required social segregation is achieved. He takes two schools in Sheffield, both of which became comprehensive in the early 1960's. He describes it as a "curiously English story... it features a little snobbery a dash of racism and a great deal of class politics". It begins with the two schools Silverdale and Abbeydale setting out on the road to equality. In the dawn of the comprehensives Abbeydale was 'the posh school'. But Abbeydale's new comprehensive catchment area, now took in a slice of a deprived working class neighbourhood.

No longer protected by the 'high fence of the 11 plus' local kids began to turn up in the play ground. Some were black. Instantly, some of the middle classes began to withdraw. By the late 1980's with the gates thrown open by "parental choice" Abbeydale Grange "suddenly found itself the scene of full blooded white flight". Middle class parents bought their way into Silverdales catchment area instead. The key to understanding the economic implications is straightforward. Essentially when the children move, they take the money, £2000 a head (government subsidy), for every new pupil - with them. Happily for them, the way the system is structured the high intake always leaves the 'best school' a considerable surplus each year which it can invest in improving 'facilities'. So naturally with the new intake, Silverdale is booming. For the 'failing school' the system works exactly in reverse. Within them remaining pupils are doubly punished, few facilities - few staff. Back at

Abbeydale as Davies reports "the roof leaks, the drama department has no lights, the cricket team has no pitch, ancient fire damage still scars the walls of the science room, last terms trip to Alton Towers was cancelled because there were no staff to take it, the boiler is broken, the driveway is crumbling and most important, there is a constant nagging shortage of cash for staff". Nor is it standing still. It is instead, under New Labour according to head Jan Woodhead "becoming worse and worse. More and more polarised. There is a horrendous backlash going to happen and there is a wilful blindness to it".

Predictably Abbeydale is held up as clear evidence of the failure of the 'comprehensive ideal', while Silverdale is used as a stick to beat those who lag behind in league tables. But one way or the other 'blindness', wilful or otherwise, doesn't come into it. Socialism for the wealthy, market forces for the poor is, after all the New Labour philosophy. It is, as the Americans would say, a 'rigged game'. Moreover, if as Philip Gould insists 'we are all middle class now, if we all have shared interests and concerns; if there is a level playing field' what then of the ones that fail? If his and Blairs portrait of Britain is as a meritocracy, then as Polly Toynbee points out "our children must owe their success to their genes, brains and efforts. By implication the poor must lack these attributes" (*Guardian* 24.9.98)???

The 'poor genetically lacking certain attributes' has grave social and political implications. In the immediate term it provides the school system with a green light not only to compound the endemic discrimination within society at large but - in fundamental ways to justify it. In still broader terms, it is to 'wilfully' or otherwise embrace the murky world of race and eugenics. And if the 'poor' are genetically predisposed to failure what future the welfare state, social housing or localised democracy? All, purely by coincidence at this very moment, being weighed and measured by the New Labour executioner.

Given the amount of evidence it is hugely ironic, (but also not untypical) that it is Davies, the impassioned liberal, who writes so movingly of the plight of the dispossessed who finally closes the circle on them. Davies' argument constantly stressed, rests on the singular notion of "using the bright middle class children as an asset to be distributed like fertiliser to help the poorer children grow... bright children succeed and, if there are enough of them they spread success to the poorer children... if the bright middle class children are siphoned off into private schools and a

minority of state schools like Silverdale the children in the rest of the system will fail" etc. He quotes approvingly a school head who recalls the [feckless - drunken - criminal?] parents of the children who failed to turn up for school during England's first match in the World Cup last year. "They thought football was more important than school. The trouble is that education is a middle class value which we are trying to operate in a working class culture". Even poor old Abbeydale is "lucky" according to the head simply because "we still have the support of a few middle class families".

As Davies acknowledges this study on the "compositional effect" is for the middle class parent "both the thrill and threat of the comprehensive schools, the prospect of their bright child either soaring and taking others with it or sinking beneath the weight of other children's disadvantage" (or put another way the thrill of 'nice but dim' - with appropriate tutoring - for once being the 'bright fish' in the dull working class pool, set against the threat of being exposed, even with the 'natural' advantages of 'genes, brains, and efforts' as being as dull as dishwater himself).

All in all a mindset not a millions miles from the experiment 'of leavening out the colour' in Australia in the 1950's. The idea was that if enough Aboriginal children were fostered with lighter skinned immigrants everyone would in time end up white. This was regarded as the ideal solution to the 'Aboriginal problem'. 'Light and bright' being synonymous, the 'liberal' assumption then.

So with Davies, who consistently and inaccurately draws the contrast between 'bright' (as if the inherent privilege was a mere by-product) and 'poor', naturally sees nothing wrong and quite evidently regards it both as valid and personally rewarding, to attempt to after a similar fashion 'impregnate the working class with middle class values.'

Unfortunately for him, the weight of his own evidence exposes it as a forlorn attempt. To refer to the absence of 'a level playing field' while studiously ignoring the class system it reflects, is analogous to addressing the issue of race discrimination in South Africa schools while studiously ignoring the system of apartheid itself. But then 'the working class only exist' for Davies 'as the most suffering class' and like any good liberal he merely wants, to quote Marx, "to deal with the abuses of society on the same basis that give rise to those abuses".

All of which helps explain why today, like the matter of race for previous generations, the description 'working class' is seen as a term of abuse, not to be mentioned in polite society for fear of causing unnecessary offense. Hypocrite, Davies maybe, but unlike New Labour, cynic he certainly is not. Having himself analysed cause and effect in regard to the bigger picture, he then, with the appropriate hand wringing asks, whether in fact the 'blighted lives' might possibly have come about through something other than design? "The comprehensive were attacked at birth by the



If in New Labour's meritocracy middle class children owe their success to their genes, brains and efforts, by implication working class kids must lack these attributes.

subtle power of British class and then quietly smothered by the education reforms of the 1980's" he acknowledges but "did the Tories" he wonders "set out to kill the comprehensives without admitting what they were doing?"

To refer to the absence of 'a level playing field' while studiously ignoring the class system it reflects, is analogous to addressing the issue of race discrimination in South Africa schools while studiously ignoring the system of apartheid

'Not knowing what they were doing' could never be entered as a plea of mitigation for New Labour. Thatcher once famously remarked that there was "no such thing as society". She also said "the more you talk about class - or even classlessness - the more you fix it in people's mind" was a less heralded but no less accurate guide to her personal philosophy. Blair, an admitted admirer, has absorbed the lesson well. And so where Thatcher attacked the working class through the anti-union legislation and forced unemployment, Blair clearly intends to go a step further, and finish the job.

By adopting the Thatcher dictum and making it government policy he confidently expects to exterminate the entire working class politically. But for that to be accomplished the 'problem' of the working class must first be made to seem "small and soluble". Hence the National Statistics Office's new eight tier social classifications unveiled last year which saw 80% of occupations presented as middle class: That 'everyone in the future be designated middle class' - or failing that - 'untermenschen' is the government objective. Any talk of specifically addressing, or as New Labour would see it pandering to the sectional interests (welfare, housing, education) of a class no longer officially recognised, is self-evidently absurd.

An analysis providing in the short term, an instant dividend by making it possible for a dictatorship of the centre to politically ignore the wishes, of (by any criteria) more than one in two of the population. Further proof, if such were needed, of Labour's general perfidy comes with the reform of the House of Lords. In this instance the hereditary principle 'nature', is to loud applause, rejected as undemocratic. The reformed second chamber we are then informed may actually be appointed instead. Thus in one arena 'natural selection' is sacrificed, order to allow it to be championed as 'meritocratic' in more important areas such as education. Hypocrisy runs deep in all middle class institutions. In New Labour, it practically gallops.

Community Resistance

E. LONDON Hackney

feeling the pressure

ONE WAY of measuring your success in community politics is to look at the effect you are having on your opposition. Those charged with gentrifying Shoreditch, until now given a free hand by all four political parties represented on Hackney Council, have clearly begun to feel the pressure.

The New Deal publishes a bi-monthly glossy magazine, paid for out of the money that could go on improving Shoreditch estates. They have twice devoted an entire page to attacking the IWCA - in the August and November editions. The August article was in response to the first IWCA newsletter, 10,000 of which were distributed across Shoreditch with the headline of "New Deal" crossed out and replaced with "Raw Deal."

Instead of replying themselves, they conducted an interview with well-known tenant leader, Marie McCourt, under the headline "Raw Deal - what raw deal?" Because of the pressure they were facing, following our newsletter, Marie was allowed to make points not usually seen in their New Deal magazine, and ones we would

be happy to support. These included "the vast majority of us are against stock transfers and wish to remain Council Tenants to protect our tenures" and "I urge you to support your various TA's, Area Forums and also those who work tirelessly to prevent the area being overrun by bars, restaurants and clubs."

In October we went door-to-door in a council block that the New Deal had earmarked for handing over for private renting. The Chair of the Tenants Association was at the meeting which voted for it, and had not opposed the proposal, or even let any of the tenants know. We got a good response to a petition in the block, and followed that up with a leaflet, which stated "You may ask why the IWCA is doing this. The answer is that our aim is to involve and represent the interests of Shoreditch's working class majority. A better question is why didn't Hackney Council, Pinnacle and the New Deal tell you that that they were making plans to move you out of Charles Gardner Court."

Instead of admitting that they had made this decision behind closed doors, and should have told the tenants, the November edition of the New Deal responded with a full-page article. They admitted that they had "made some suggestions to the Government for the future of certain estates in the area, including Charles Gardner Court." They proposed "Market renting of Charles Gardner Court with 10% at 'stepping stone' rents for locals subject to completion of tenant consultation."

Another New Deal article celebrated the visit of Government Minister, Nick Raynsford, who came to Shoreditch to open a new housing development. IWCA members along with other local residents have highlighted this particular development as being a sign of things

to come. It is built on Wenlock Barn, the biggest estate in Shoreditch, but rents start at £146 a week, and it is also designed to look different from the estate - to show that it is not for local people. The New Deal was forced to admit that "the new Murray Grove development aimed at young people has brought mixed reactions from locals. Whilst many agree the new Peabody Trust apartments are uniquely built with their bolt together construction, it is the price that has locals miffed." They claim it has brought a mixed reaction - we haven't found anyone who has a good word to say about it. The local paper, the Hackney Gazette, ended their coverage of the same story by saying the block "had been slammed by nearby residents for being a 'yuppie' building."

Another sign of the pressure that those in charge of regeneration are facing came in the Gazette article celebrating the award of £30 million for the New Deal. Kevin Sugrue, head of the Council's regeneration agency, Renaisi, used language never heard from the Council's PR people before, calling for "affordable homes to stop young, working class people born in the area from moving out." An IWCA activist picked this up in the following week's paper. Dubbing Renaisi a "gentrification agency" he remarked on his surprise "especially since his New Labour bosses have stated that we are all middle class now."

This is the pressure that has been built up after just six months' work. The gentrifiers are not used to being challenged, and we have shown that it is possible to do this effectively. This has further encouraged some of the better local tenant leaders, who until now thought that there was no way of opposing the gentrification of Shoreditch to pick up the cudgels.

OXFORD Blackbird Leys campaign baring fruit

IN OXFORD, Blackbird Leys Independent Working Class Association has seen its support increase on the estate as its campaign against anti-social elements begins to bare fruit. One family who have plagued fellow residents with abusive behaviour for the past two years, were recently forced to go to the local press to plead that the IWCA call off its offensive. A double page spread in the Oxford Mail November 27th headed "We've been branded the neighbours from hell but we promise to mend our ways", carried an interview with the family in which they held their hands up to all the charges levelled against them in the IWCA newsletter Leys Independent. They also claimed to have seen the error of their ways. Since the article appeared the family has in fact kept their promise, improving the quality of life for their neighbours considerably.

The housing associations on Blackbird Leys/Greater Leys and their bedfellows the New Labour City Council who have made empty promises to have 'the problem in hand' over the last couple of years, are obviously none too pleased with the success of this

relatively short campaign and the support it has attracted from their tenants. Housing association executives and local councillors originally tried to extinguish the infant IWCA through a series of meetings/phone calls, where attempts were made to persuade IWCA activists that they would better achieve their aims by abandoning the IWCA and jumping on board housing association/council sponsored (i.e. non-political) projects. This would have obviously ensured that these activists would not be in a position to criticise housing association/council policy, for fear of losing funding or being shut down etc. Now that the penny has dropped and it is understood that the IWCA, is not prepared to play ball, the authorities have changed tack completely.

Two months prior to the estate's Christmas party, the Farmstead Management Group, asked IWCA members if they would supply their children's cinema for the event. This was agreed to. Between this agreement and the Christmas Party, the Blackbird Leys IWCA produced its second newsletter, in which further criticisms of housing association policy were made. It was now made clear that the IWCA was not for sale. Farmstead Management immediately retaliated, distributing its own material which included claims that the IWCA was 'stereotyping the area and threatened the good work of other, (pet), residents associations'. In

addition to a series of abusive phonecalls they even tried to pull the plug on the children's cinema! Legal action was even threatened over a minor technical detail. The show went ahead, much to the delight of the packed house of local children, and visible chagrin of Farmstead Management.

The dwindling Labour party faithful have also been forced to get off their fat arses and trawl the streets of Blackbird Leys for the first time in years. As well as hinting the IWCA 'might even be NF', New Labour have further insulted the intelligence of locals with their own Blackbird Leys newsletter, which surprise, surprise claims that the party is dealing with all the issues that have been raised by the IWCA, top of the list - anti-social neighbours. As an IWCA activist recently pointed out in the Oxford Mail letters page, "If Oxford City's (New Labour) Council genuinely wanted to rid this area of anti-social elements it would not be carrying out a policy of dumping them here in the first place".



Labour Cllr Tony Stockford: has suggested the IWCA 'could possibly be the National Front'.

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rank and file. In 1931 this led to one of the most explosive moments of the conflict within the party as a whole. In an attempt to hold on to its tenuous legality, the definitive statement issued by the leadership in November 1931 of its rejection of 'individual terror' and 'adventurist tendencies' within the movement ended its insurrectionary phase. Which in turn led to open accusations from activists of the leadership having abandoned their revolutionary ideals, as well as betraying any effective defence against Nazi incursions into 'Red' neighbourhoods.

The leadership countered, that tendencies to 'individual terror' reflected a mood of 'desperation' and 'revenge', motives that characterised 'the uprooted, insecure, petty bourgeoisie gone mad... alien to the socialist working class'. This depiction of the street fighters as 'petit -bourgeois' only exposed the inability of the party to describe, or accurately put into words activists who were in its view, neither perfectly disciplined Communists nor members of an alien class.

The KPD had no way to acknowledge that one might be working class, and yet behave in ways considered undesirable. This was a genuine confusion that arose within the Communist movement whenever a distinction had to be drawn between what was proletarian and what the emancipated proletarian ought to be, what the party had to deal with in terms of actual working class culture and what it was meant to make of it: and this confusion was not irrelevant to

when the real working class counterpoise their interests to those who are feeding on their children, the state rushes quite brazenly in on the side of THEIR allies. To confront or even execute dealers as the IRA have done on occasion is 'not out of reverence for the law' but the opposite

followers, the party had first to understand the reality it was aiming to change, and to confront the nature of its own constituency in its totality. And this it could not do with any consistency.

The party's self image continued to be dominated by a view of class struggle that implied it should not be and need not be, dealing with the cliques in the first place. This view had no place in it for the analysis of working class culture as it reflected the construction of collective interest outside of

the party's own capacity to carry out the political tasks it had set itself. Chief among them being social revolution which was its *raison d'être*. Instead of a social revolution what it actually got was a political counter-revolution and fascist dictatorship.

Considering the many other obstacles the KPD faced (not least Stalin's own fears of the impact on Russia of a successful German revolution) it would be a mistake to imagine that a coherent class analysis alone would have made triumph possible.

Nonetheless if it was even to assess the prospects of change accurately and present them convincingly to actual and potential

the work place. There is no question that the elements of a new and inventive approach to the politics of every day life were present in the theoretical utterances of some spokesmen for the movement, and even more obvious in the actual practices of the KPD.

But as long as the party's leaders continued to argue as though the progressive politicised culture it expected its members more or less spontaneously to represent, was the only real culture of the working class, they ran the risk both of blinding themselves to the points of vulnerability in class and movement alike, and of alienating their own followers who knew better.

Though we are self evidently addressing an entirely different situation in a different country, in a now different century, the lessons to be learned remain critical. All importantly, the main point of conflicts within the KPD, have, due to time been resolved.

One, social democrats anywhere, pronouncedly in the case of New Labour, can no longer count with any confidence on the allegiance of 'organised workers'. Two, the sections of the class most in need of organising are for the most part no longer unionised.

Consequently 'the point of production' as the best or indeed only basis from which to organise the working class in pursuit of its 'immediate interests', is in a complete break with a century of socialist custom and practice, *passé*, in Britain at least. It was on this premise, that the Independent Working Class Association came about.

Three, there is of course Red Action itself. Here is an overtly political organisation formed by precisely the same social elements, who as a result of a confrontation between leadership and rank and file fighters, were accused of a propensity for 'individual terror' and expelled from a party riddled with markedly similar contradictions to the KPD.

But unlike their predecessors, rather than drift out of political life, they, rather impertinently, set themselves up in political opposition. Tellingly, of RA's initial modest objectives, 'to accommodate ordinary working class recruits within the then wider socialist family', was one. To 'celebrate working class culture' another. Because many of the founding members, who if not exactly 'convicts', were not entirely unfamiliar with a prison cell either, there was never a danger of a conflict between the political rhetoric of the group and the reality of working class culture coming into conflict - and Red Action surviving.

Of course whether Red Action has marked an evolution or regression is dependant on your opinion on the proper boundaries of both proletarian behaviour and class. Suffice to say, that up to the present, in line with tradition, the consensus amongst the mainstream Left is that Red Action is not merely a 'party of outlaws' but has, and continues to be for a wide variety of reasons, a menacing 'party of renegades'.

Interestingly despite said developments, the potential for conflict either within Red Action, or between sections of the class on the question of class demarcation has not altogether abated. For instance, by some distance, the most heated debate at the RA Annual Conference in 1999, and the one which drew the greatest number of contributions (24 in total) was in relation to some proposals on the drugs issue. Since then, the debate has continued within the pages of our publications. Off the record the respective positions have been referred to (probably unsatisfactorily) as either 'liberal' or 'reactionary'.

Quite properly all involved recognise that a) politicising



Though forced to recruit outside of the ranks of the organised and employed working class, the party self-image continued to be dominated by a view of class struggle that implied it should not be dealing with street gangs in the first place. (above: A KPD stronghold in a working class district of Hamburg, election day 1931)

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working class neighbourhoods and avoiding the issue of drugs and related issues cannot be put off indefinitely and b) helping the IWCA define an appropriate strategy is not only crucial in itself, but could in conquering what is considered an insoluble problem, prove the lynchpin in progressive working class thinking on related issues.

At issue is not whether drugs are a good or bad thing, but how the subsequent problems should be managed. Personal behaviour, approval or disapproval, is neither here nor there. The key is devising a strategy that works. And works moreover in the interests of the real working class, politically and socially. And here we get to the root of the matter. Are 'junkies' and indeed 'dealers' to be considered part of a working class constituency, or are they a key component of what the 1848 *Communist Manifesto* referred to as the 'most dangerous of classes' opposed to it. How this question is resolved will be key in addressing the problem on the ground.

Marx to whom the phrase 'lumpenproletariat' is attributed was totally unambiguous in regard to the threat 'the scum' posed, in particular to revolutionaries. Time and time again he went in to bat on the subject. 'Marginal, itinerant, obsolete, downtrodden, dregs' were just some of the metaphors attributed to trades and livelihoods such as "beggars, vagabonds, rogue's, police spies, spivs, street gamins, petty thieves, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, pimps, brothel keepers organ grinders, rag-pickers, brothel keepers": those who could not and were for the most part, unorganised, who contributed nothing productive and so lived as a parasite on society. (Importantly, this view does not extend to the 'reserve army of labour' the unemployed; who are 'a consequence' but also all importantly a 'condition' of capitalist production.)

Significantly as a result of their intimate studies of revolutionary endeavours across Europe over three decades their initial hardline view, only hardened as time went



Experience demonstrated to Marx and Engels that on the whole, whether 'honest or dishonest discards or self-discards' the 'lumpen' tended to be inhospitable to social ideals and are typically moved by cynical self interest on the most vulgar level

on. In 1870 Engels evaluated them thus: "The lumpen proletariat, this scum of all classes... is absolutely venal and absolutely brazen. If the French workers in every revolution inscribed on the houses: Mort aux Ouvres! Death to Thieves! and even shot some, they did it not out of reverence for property, but because they rightly considered it necessary above all to get rid of that gang". And again: "What all these elements, honest or dishonest, have in common is that they are functionless outsiders, discards of the system, or self discards". Experience demonstrated to Marx and Engels that on the whole, whether 'honest or dishonest discards or self-discards' the 'lumpen' tended to be inhospitable to social ideals and are typically moved by cynical self interest on the most vulgar level, available to the highest bidder, untrustworthy even when bought up, and dangerous not only as accomplices but even as tools: "the worst of all possible allies", as Engels commented. Consequently anyone who "relies on them for support proves himself by this action alone a traitor to the movement".

In contemporary terms the casual drug user (either hard or soft) is not automatically fitted into such a catchment. It is not a question of personal morality. For our purposes, it is entirely dependent on how it relates to wider society generally, and working class communities specifically. Nonetheless it is evident that the historic character profile of the 'discards and self-discards' is an all too familiar one. Nor does it need a revolutionary conflict for their malign presence to be felt. Their corrosive effect on the self esteem, morale and material well being, once they have come to the fore within working class communities is well documented. That their

defining character is a decidedly parasitic one is beyond question. Equally any progressive movement that had serious ambitions would face a confrontation with them sooner or later: that they are the enemy within is without doubt.

Clearly for 'working class rule in working class areas' to be made operable the real working class would have to be master.

Thus the revolutionary responsibility is three fold. Social democracy has ditched the working class, respectable and otherwise entirely, so all are now subject to the same bourgeois 'underclass' categorisation. The upshot being that the IWCA has the opportunity, and moreover is obliged, to operate under the principle of the "big tent"; in the sense of accommodating and organising from the broadest class basis permissible (as against the position of the Communists who had no choice but to concentrate exclusively on those sections of the class rejected by social democracy).

Secondly, much like their employers, the police role in working class communities such as it is, has been re-defined as one of de facto containment. Finally, when the real working class counterpoise their interests in an organised fashion (most visibly in Dublin) to those who are feeding on their children, the state rushes quite brazenly in on the side of THEIR allies. In such circumstances to confront or even execute dealers as the IRA have done on occasion is 'not out of reverence for the law' but the opposite. Above all, for any progressive movement to continue its advance within a working class neighbourhood it will prove necessary 'to get rid of that gang'. Get rid not merely as a by product, but as an end in itself. Given the stakes, not taking sides is not an option.

In practical terms this means, as the IWCA have done on Blackbird Leys 'dealing with them' at an early stage by organising the real working class against them. This is not in itself a political solution but it is the foundation for one. For on the matter of class demarcation there can be no room, not least within Red Action, for any 'ambivalence'.

Furthermore only when it is fully understood and accepted they are a natural adversary can it be worked

out how their influence is ameliorated and undermined. But only when we ourselves are absolutely sure where we stand politically; are crystal clear on where the demarcation line is drawn, then and only then, can we allow any solution the luxury of the necessary liberal and charitable ingredients; 'the carrot' undeniably required to make it effective.

In the meantime the existence of the contemporary 'lumpen' is a glaring 'point of vulnerability in class' and potential movement alike and we who are best placed, the ones who 'know better', must not blind ourselves to this reality, or indeed, in particular, to the implications of the current balance of forces on the ground. For as the writer D.H. Lawrence put it: "No absolute is going to make the lion lie down with the lamb - unless the lamb is inside".

(Research on KPD from an essay: *Organising the Lumpen Proletariat: Cliques and Communists in Berlin during the Weimar Republic* by Eve Rosenhaft, acclaimed author of *Beating the Fascists*. Material courtesy of C. Price, Baltimore.)

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A Word In Your Ear...



WHAT GOES AROUND...

"SINN FEIN will be happy to administer British rule in Ireland for the foreseeable future". It was this quote, SF Ard Comhairle member Francie Molloy was confronted with at a Troops Out rally in Birmingham toward the end of last year. Being an informal column, his accuser who we will refer to by his Christian name, Rory (his real name), often sports both an Arran jumper and a PLO type scarf, (you know the type) is a 'dissident' convert. And so wise to counter-revolutionary wiles, and in anticipation of some blustery denial, he took care to name the paper concerned. As luck would have it, it was in fact Molloy himself who had been so quoted. He admitted the quote was entirely accurate, except that is for the small omission of the word "not". *The Sunday Times* is an arch opponent of the peace process, while Liam Clarke, is, 'as all

republicans know' an 'MI5 operative' he offered in explanation.

On 9 January, from the same political stable "IRA to begin disarmament 'within weeks'" was a *Sunday Telegraph* headline. IRA weapons were to be put "out of use" it proclaimed. "Put beyond use" is how Suzanne Breen in her column in *Fortnight* magazine put it. In a "secret deal" she announces weapons will simply be "put beyond use", and as a result, "grassroots Provos will" she promises "defect over decommissioning". On every front the 'Provos' were in deep doodo: disaster generally 'for the fastest growing party in Ireland' beckons, she reckons.

Though Sinn Fein, favourites to take over from the SDLP as the largest nationalist party, "can secure the votes of those previously turned off by the armed campaign it will" she prophesies, "eventually struggle to retain militant working class and rural republican support". Even worse "the dissidents although still smaller than the Provos are expanding". As proof she cites "political meetings" which "are now attended by representatives from Irish groups in the USA and" - and of course - "Britain". With the support of woolly jumpers everywhere that dissidents guns remained silent was she concedes something of "a surprise". Probably just "waiting until it is capable of launching a sustained campaign" Suzanne reassures. And despite its continuing "verbal commitment, Sinn Fein has - like Fianna Fail in the 1930's - effectively abandoned traditional republicanism". Therefore she opinions airily "it's only a matter of time before it drops abstentionism from Westminster".

And just as *Fortnight* the 'mouthpiece of BT9', struggles to hold on to the centre, Republican Sinn Fein are just as ardently fighting to hold on to the past. Hence their insistence that Adams and McGuinness, who are 'already halfway towards accepting seats in the British Parliament should forthwith cease using the name Sinn Fein'. Generally all concerned would prefer 'real republicanism' to be served by someone other than 'the fastest growing party in Ireland'. RSF, who calculate their membership in dozens would be ideal. Rory for one, for whom a round dozen would normally imply a tripling in membership, would be immediately reassured. For in his eyes absolute failure, is the only authentic hallmark of absolute integrity.

When, within a couple of months of its launch in April 1995, the London branch of the Irish political prisoners organisation, Saoirse, had in support and propaganda terms effortlessly outstripped, not to say seriously embarrassed senior support groups of over twenty years standing, his suspicions based on that criteria were ripe for arousal. And once the whispering, that Saoirse had been 'infiltrated' with the express intention 'to place the prisoners issue at the very top of the peace process agenda, the better to embarrass the leadership when the Brits failed to deliver' began, it found welcoming ears. The necessary overnight transformation of the 'infiltrators' from 'pro-IRA and pro-peace', to 'pro-IRA but anti-peace', to anti-peace and pro-MI5' was equally compelling. To bring things to a head it merely required a fellow 'woolly jumper' Rod, (again his real name) to give substance to the baloney by airing the smear publicly. Were certain factions inadvertently or otherwise, "working to an MI5 agenda" he dutifully inquired?

Within a matter of days, *The Irish World* quoted a source (unnamed) who confirmed 'IRA concern' with being publicly associated with any group that was "open to [MI5] infiltration". By the weekend the hounds had the scent, when an article in *The Sunday Times* (no, not Liam in case you are wondering) thought it 'entirely reasonable' for SF to re-establish a clear line of command "unimpeded by outside groupings". This was swiftly followed by an article in *The Irish Times* by someone named Suzanne (one and the same), insisting Sinn Fein "had long been unhappy with the group's militant [for 'militant' read 'dissident'] activities". It finally fell to *The Irish Post* to pin the tail on the donkey. As it explained, the London group had "lost direction" after being "infiltrated by extremists such as Red Action that sought to undermine Sinn Fein's peace strategy". Though in no rush to identify the other "extremists", it sounded, on the face of it, you must admit, plausible.

A certain Ard Comhairle member duly 'bought the pup' and the most dynamic 'mainland' campaign (Bishopsgate, etc, apart) for over twenty years was wound up with immediate effect. As tends to be the way of things, the central allegation was needless to say entirely accurate, apart from the omission, of the word "not". But what goes around comes around. No surprise (and with it some unattractive smugness) when the elements privately whispering "MI5" in an Ard Comhairle ear then, are in turn quoting MI5 and publicly bellowing "Sellout!" in it now.



Suzanne Breen

Something We Said?!

I saw it in Oldham, which is now really, really, poor. The white people are 'what they'd call in America "white trash"'. There are lots and lots of young Pakistanis, and most of them are making money, wheeling and dealing, wearing the suits - and the hatred from the whites, the real bitter, twisted hatred... I'd never come across before. It was violent hatred. They wanted the Pakistanis physically eliminated. And I saw it in Dover, where the refugee row was going on. People told me there were Albanians, Kosovars, wandering the streets, smothered in gold, and stocking up at the butchers every day with their tax money. Ha, I could hardly find any. I found three Kosovar kids on a bench. They'd lost their father lost everything, didn't have any hope. And the locals were throwing stones at them. I cried. I thought "This place has the mark of the Beast".

Darcus Howe on the research for his programme 'White Tribe', *Observer*, 9.1.00

It's looking back that I saw what we were doing, the gradual conditioning process of the screws. Prison work? We'll work. What to an outsider might have appeared as capitulation after the Hunger Strike, but which, very slowly, gave us increasing freedom to move about the jail, and created the conditions that made the escape possible. Escape from the most secure prison in Europe. It was a model for the Peace Process. There are many different ways to skin a cat.

IRA POW Gerry Hanratty in interview, *Republican News*, 16.12.99

The IWCA emerged from a campaign to stymie the BNP in local elections on the Isle of Dogs in 1995. Anti-fascists sensed that without a credible alternative the far-right would clean up in the vacuum created by Labour's desertion of the working class.

Ben Skelton, *Red Pepper*, Dec/Jan 2000

Shaun Woodward has left one centrist party, which has remained true to its centrist tradition, for another centrist party, which has moved to the centre and on some issues to the far right, from its previous left-wing tradition... If Labour is now the natural party for Shaun Woodward, how can it still be the party for those who need it most?

William Rees Mogg, *The Times*, 27.12.99