WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO BEAT THE FASCISTS?

THE WORKING CLASS, ANTI-FASCISM AND THE SWP, BY RED ACTION.

Recent articles in the SOMET/SET CLARION have focussed upon the nature of the fight against fascism and in particular, the role of such organisations as the AEF, and the other. With new anti-fascist organisations springing up like mushrooms in recent months, the debate concerning their role has been more acute than before.

After years of denying that the fascists were a significant threat, the SWP has suddenly come out, especially its own members, by re-publishing the ANL SWP paper, which has been circulating for some months. The point about the fascists' leadership within the SWP could hardly be more graphically illustrated. Only a few months ago, the SWP paper was circulating, attacking the fascists as a "sectarian pastime" - the line which Eddie Provenst was still defending in December. The ANL talk to the fascists as to be seen as a significant threat in all - as Red Action has long insisted.

Red Action (with Workers Power, the DAS and others) has for a number of years supported the programme of Anti-Fascist Action - of ideological and physical confrontation. The two principal components that distinguish APA's strategy against the fascists from that of other left groups.

The first is the putting into practice of the slogan "No platform for fascists!". The second is the necessity that fascists present a qualitatively different threat compared to the bourgeois parties and their state apparatus. Not all forms of capitalist reaction are identical in the danger they represent to the working class. One consistent thread uniting the theories of the principal players on the left is their claim that socialists should concentrate their energies on fighting the fascist "syndicate" and its Tory representatives. As Eddie Provenst claims: "What (Red Action) fails to comprehend is that the existence of fascists is endemic to the capitalist system itself."

Andrew Brookes comments: "In Britain today, the main source of racism is the government and police, not fascism!" This analysis calls the Stalinist position of the Thirties according to which fascists and bourgeois democracy are "twins" and consequential should be equally treated like other "left" political positions. It appears to represent the pitch of revolutionary commitment and analysis.

In practice it is a co-opt. As Trotsky said, "It is a policy invented to paralyse the working class in practice."

"This means we have to recognise the whole struggle, for all contemporary evils are 'products of the capitalist system'. The answer is, 'The answer is to overthrow the whole system. The fascists alone mean in effect, 'leave the fascists alone' (and hope they leave you alone?)"

Even worse than this, in the end means relying on the state to contain the fascists as if reformist in both Italy and Germany during the Fascist and the Nazis, respectively. What it appears to protect you from fascist thugs when you chant, "police protect the fascists" it means calling the police to remove fascists when they disrupt your paper sale."

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But fascist is not identical with bourgeois democracy. Nor is it just a case of "fascism". It is already happened in France and is now happening here, that fascism provides the defunct and pretext to drive the bourgeois state to increasingly reactionary postures. It is primarily, as Trotsky put it, a "rational agency of the class enemy", and fascist, when democracy falls in times of crisis.

Trotsky explains: "The fascist organization will destroy its organizations, and atile political ideologies when the capitalist find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery."

The beginning of this process is precisely what we are witnessing in Britain today, and it is already happening in Europe. In Italy, for instance, all those who oppose the physical struggle against fascists, as Trotsky rightly says, are "the unconscious helpers", either directly or immediately.

"Posing increases the insolence of the fascists so much as flashy by leading a ridiculous to the parts of the workers' organisations."

So what, according to Trotsky, writing as he was during the rise of fascist terror in the Thirties, is the correct response of the working class to the emergence of the fascist threat? His argument is not that of the SWP or Willett, but of Red Action. In the Thirties, Trotsky had many occasions to polemicize against the Stalinists who were then proposing a "mass defence" argument that Red Action encountered from the conservative left today.

He doesn't say that you must march against the racism of the bourgeois establishment. He doesn't say that you must lobby Trade Unions, enlist 'key people' in the Trades Unions, or even organise in the colleges. He says:

"The fascist combat detachments must exist and be educated, trained, and armed."

"Disarming the fascists with 'newspaper' articles alone is impossible.!

"A strike is inconceivable without propaganda and without agitation. It is not sufficient to make up a picture of the fascist threat, but when onslaught use force. The strike is the most elementary form of the class struggle which always combines, in varying proportions, ideological methods with physical methods. He who thinks of renouncing physical struggle must renounce all struggle."

The fascists and the left claim that "mass self defence" is the answer - the "key" to any future of fascists or "specialised cadres". In Eddie Provenst's words: "The only power that can remove the fascists and their cadres is the fascists, in the power of the working class. The SWP in no illusions that we have the ability to rid the world of such thugs."

This assertion of the SWP line that the fascists are "economically isolated" and that they provide no "mass" defence against fascism is ironic. Trotsky points out that, "He that thinks the fascists are a much greater threat than what we do it is only the difference that adds, the difference that adds is how it is that if you can't organise even a numerically weak movement, you can ever expect to arrive at a strong one."

But would such an organisation mean "provocation" of the fascists? As Trotsky says, this is an "absolutely reactionary argument". "Liberalism has always said to the workers that by their class struggle they 'provokes' the reaction. It is the philosophy, he points out, by Trotsky and Gandhi but never of Marx and Lenin.

Why does this argument based on provocation, as if the fascists were so many wasp's nests sleeping peacefully until some idiot provokes them with a stick, find so much favour with 'revolutionary' organisations? Trotsky points directly to the real motivation: "It is nonsense to say that in setting the organisation of the milicuta leads to adventures, provokes the enemy, replaces the political struggle by physical struggle etc. In all these phrases there is nothing but political cowardice."

How also should the working class to define itself? Ideologically? Sadly this actually means, as Trotsky himself puts it: "In other words, they cannot hide themselves."

He adds, and all the evidence backs him up to the hilt, where a policy of physical confrontation is systematically elaborated, "the recruitment of the fascists is done by the fascists."

"The problem of 'mass defence' against the incursions of the fascists, to maintain that physical response by what Trotsky terms "combat detachments" - tend that the SWP terms "equilibrium" because it divides the detachments from the masses. He answers:

"But why then are there independent armed detachments among the fascists that do not cut off the or even poor organisation of fascist detachments, but the fascists are too strong to be stopped, which in turn becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. For if they are not too strong now, while they are still at a relatively undeveloped stage, they will be far too strong later.

"Isolated and concerted action from the left can avert the danger of a mass base for fascist politics. They must be met with direct and coherent action now. The central argument is really very simple; so simple, Trotsky put it in the form of a simple slogan, "antiswarm in clear thinking of the enemy by our horses."

"A cattle dealer once drove some bulls to the slaughterhouse. A butcher agreed, with his sharp knife and on Thursday asked the butcher with our horses" suggested one of the bulls.

"In what way is the butcher any worse than the dealer who drove us here?" replied the bulls (who had been feeding Socialist Worker). "But we will not be able to attend to the dealer afterwards."

"Nothing doing" replied the bull's firm in their principles. "You are trying, aren't the left, to shield our enemies - you are a social butcher yourself."

And they refused to close ranks."

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EDITORS' NOTE

The anti-fascist article by Eddie Provenst, an SWP member, in the last Clarion has sparked a lively reaction. In Britain now there exists a tragi-comic situation of three separate anti-fascist organisations, where there should be only one, and that based firmly on an alliance between the organised working class and the Black Communities. This article, defending workers' self-defence squads, was received late, but has gone in an outstanding socialist polemic. We apologise for the necessity for the very small expletive.

Dave Channell