



'IT'S JUST TO FIGHT AN UNJUST STATE', GRAFFITI ROSTOCK '92



RIOT POLICE, ANTI-FASCIST DEMONSTRATION, AUGUST 29, 1992



VIETNAMESE TRY TO ESCAPE ONTO ROOF, ROSTOCK, AUGUST 29, 1992

London, August 1992: a hot rainy evening. In the darkness of a storm, the red fire of riots in Rostock flashed across our tv screens. The world saw Rostockers as fascists. We knew that the reality was more complex; in 1991, we had found a society at ease with itself. A phone call to Channel 4, and we were on a plane. Once on the scene, it became obvious that the withdrawal of police during the riots had been planned. Police said that there had been a breakdown in the chain of command - a perfect excuse for obscuring responsibility and blame later on. Equally suspect was the fact that top police were replaced with deputies that evening, and politicians tied up with last-minute appointments. All press printed the official version.

We wanted an insiders' perspective on what had happened, and gradually came to work with the people we wanted: those who had been inside the building during the attack. At the same time it turned out to be important for the film that we were outsiders: we could gain access to ministers and police and set up appointments as international press. The interviews themselves were carried out by members of the JAKO co-operative. Despite, or even perhaps because of, their limited experience, pat answers accepted by the mainstream media were now challenged with informed questions.

Crucial amongst the film material was footage of the riots shot by people from inside their homes, anti-fascist and Vietnamese people who, thanks to the independent media centre, had been able to borrow video cameras. This footage constituted the only record of the entire event and became important evidence to expose some of the lies later expressed in the press. There were examples of police seizing footage and holding on to it for up to eight months.

One German television editor refused to screen *The Truth Lies in Rostock* on the grounds that he wouldn't send German journalists to Britain to investigate a similar event. Reread this replacing Britain with, say, Chile, Ireland, China or Iraq, and the absurdity of that argument is clear. Time and time again we have to ask ourselves which community the international press represents. In BBC reports young anti-fascists were described as 'warring thugs'. Footage supplied to the corporation by the German press of police arresting 'rioters' was in fact film of anti-fascists being arrested on their way home from a peaceful demonstration.

We hope that one day the film will be broadcast in Germany. Censorship may be only part of the reason why this hasn't already happened. When the film was screened in Rostock to over 500 people at the local council hall, there was a tense, deafening silence at the end. One reviewer remarked it was the silence of hopelessness and despair.'

Mark Saunders and Siobhan Cleary run a production company in London called *Spectacle*. ■