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# THE BRITISH LEFT AND THE IRISH WAR

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- Ten Years of Solidarity Work
- Ireland and the National Question
- Fourth International Theses on Ireland (1944)
- The Irish War: 1968 - 1983

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**WORKERS POWER**

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50p

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# PREFACE

In the wake of the defeat of the 1980/81 hunger strikes in the Six Counties the national struggle in Ireland has , at the time of writing, profoundly ebbed. The IRA/INLA can still strike symbolic targets in Britain (eg. the Household Cavalry) or units can still prove a match for the British troops on the streets of Northern Ireland's cities. Yet, once again, the masses are off the streets.

Two years ago, the Irish hunger strikes had set the North ablaze with mass action- demonstrations, strikes- such as had not been seen for several years. The heroism of the H-Block prisoners' confrontation with the murderous Thatcher Government raised not only the North. In the Twenty-Six Counties popular indignation reached mass proportions again. Even in Britain, deep unease was experienced by the publicists of the official disinformation on Ireland. Within the labour movement a definite questioning of the British role in Northern Ireland began, a role which the Labour Party had colluded with ever since Partition. The subterranean rumblings were even to be heard in the September 1981 Labour Party Conference, at which Ireland was bitterly debated for the first time in years.

The defeat of the hunger strikes and the subsiding of the mass struggles which accompanied them has inevitably affected the solidarity struggle in Britain. The agitation that reached significant proportions around the time of the hunger strikes has faded away. New anti-Nationalist measures , new concessions to the Orange bigots may revive the attention of the labour movement but it is not the duty of revolutionaries to await 'spontaneous' interest but, rather, to prepare for decisive moments by a steady stream of well-explained agitation and propaganda in the trade unions and the Labour Party.

This is our purpose in producing this pamphlet. The material has been assembled with the aim of laying the political basis for solidarity work in Britain. A detailed history of national oppression in Ireland is not our main concern here, but material on this is presented in the first document and in the archive piece from 1944. We assume that most people who read this will accept that national oppression exists. This pamphlet aims to show what conclusions flow, or should flow, from this realisation.

The major piece here, 'Ireland, the National Question and the International Socialists (IS)', was written in the summer of 1974 by the Left Faction of IS. This faction was to gather together the initial cadre that formed Workers Power after the Left Faction's expulsion in 1975. The failure of the centrist left (in particular IS, now the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)) after the Aldershot bombings was the initial inspiration behind the formation of the Left Faction. This factional platform takes the opportunity to state some fundamental truths of Marxism on the National Question, in an attempt to educate the rank and file of IS. They retain their validity today. A foreword has been added to place the document in its context. Footnotes have been added, but otherwise only minor stylistic changes have been made.

'Ten Years of Solidarity Work' surveys the pitfalls of opportunism that have bedevilled Irish solidarity work between 1973 and 1983. The errors of the Left have been due either to 'left' accommodation to the politics of the Troops Out Movement (TOM), or a one-sided reaction to its failures. Few, if any, have drawn correct lessons of this experience. Some, like Geoff Bell, in a recent influential book of Labour Party policy and Ireland, refuse to critically examine the last ten years. He briefly alludes to the failure of solidarity work thus:

"The inability of TOM to build the 'mass campaign' it hoped for was due to the hostile environment it had to work in"  
("Troublesome Business" G. Bell, Pluto 1982)

Building an anti-imperialist solidarity movement, confronting chauvinism in the British working class, will always involve working in a 'hostile environment' if done seriously. This glib appraisal turns the truth on its head. The failures of the last 10 years have been primarily subjective ones; the failure of political leadership to formulate principles, strategy and tactics - 'Ten Years of Solidarity Work' puts the record straight and lays the basis for principled alternatives.

We include the archive piece, not because we agree with everything in it, but because it is not widely available, and has not (to our knowledge) been reprinted. The authorship is unknown, but the "Irish Trotskyists" responsible, working in relative isolation during war time, have produced an early attempt at explaining the National Question in Ireland, using Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution as a guide. As far as we are aware, the theses were not officially adopted by the Fourth International after the war.

The pamphlet is highly polemical, and deliberately so. A principled alternative to TOM and its successors will only be forged out of struggle over ideas, in the first instance. Yet Workers Power does not regard polemic alone to be sufficient. Points of common activity can and must be found. The Left Faction urged IS to help launch Troops Out work in the Labour movement. Workers Power has responded to events such as the hunger strikes by throwing the organisation into taking up the anti-imperialist cause within the working class. At the moment, independent work on Ireland, joining with others where possible, is the guide to our activity. Yet, as a fighting propaganda group, and given the political confusion on the Left, this pamphlet is one of the biggest contributions

we can currently make in Britain to the cause of Irish freedom. If the politics contained in this pamphlet help to re-orient anti-imperialist solidarity work in Britain, then the heroic fighters for Irish freedom will for once have been well served by their brothers and sisters on the mainland.

Workers Power

January 1983

WORKERS POWER has a fraternal organisation in Ireland, the IRISH WORKERS GROUP.

The IWG produce a regular journal, "Class Struggle", which deals with the key issues of world politics, and major questions facing the Irish working class.

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# IRELAND, THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

## FOREWORD

The origins of the Workers Power Group lie in the formation and struggle of the Left Faction of the International Socialists (IS) (now the Socialist Workers Party). The main document in this collection - "Ireland, the National Question and I. S." was produced in the summer of 1974, and deals with the issues which brought the Left Faction into existence two years earlier.

Nine years on, the document has lost none of its relevance. It does not pretend to be exhaustive, yet confronting the problem of an IS membership which was woefully and deliberately undereducated by its national leadership on the Irish question, the document was a deliberate attempt to re-state some basic Marxist analysis of Irish history. It tries to sketch the attitudes of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky to nationalist struggles. Above all, it exposes the distance that lay between that tradition and the practical record of the IS. In doing so it necessarily confronts the IS membership with the real character of Republicanism, the role of the Protestant working class. It confronts the IS leadership's attempts to charge the IRA with "individual terrorism". In stripping away the ideological cover for IS's own inactivity over Ireland and its capitulation to chauvinism when put to the test, "Ireland, the National Question and IS" establishes the practical urgency of internationalism in revolutionary politics, and outlines the principled basis for Irish solidarity work.

Despite the correctness of the criticisms levelled against the IS leadership in the document, it should still be seen as a factional document. It was the product of a faction still discovering the real significance of the aberrations of the IS leadership. It tends, therefore, to treat the Socialist Worker Editorial reaction to the Aldershot bombings as novel (see Appendix 1). Yet this reaction was but a logical outcome of the whole political method of the IS. Although one could find formally correct statements in Socialist Worker before the Aldershot bombings, they had been made before there was any mass hostile anti-Irish reaction in Britain. Before it was necessary to stand firm against chauvinism in the British working class. The Left Faction was yet to draw together the disparate threads of its critique of the leadership into a complete factional platform. By the 1975 pre-Conference discussion, this had been done, and the root error of the IS (and of the SWP today) method pointed to - Economism. In the 1975 platform of the Left Faction it was recognised that the neglect of Irish solidarity work was not the only error of IS, but:

" All have in common a tendency to accommodate towards and tail the immediate economic struggles of the class. We consider this to be a

consistent feature of the politics of IS. The organisation has an economic tendency to view with hostility all politics not posed directly within the economic struggle of the class. For this reason IS puts forward the wage and unemployment policies that it does. For this reason it considers the question of government, women and Ireland to be diversions " (1)

Such an approach to politics was well illustrated by the fact that Tony Cliff's book on "The Crisis" written in the mid-1970s had nothing to say about British imperialism and Ireland. The document does not make it clear that economism is bound to repeatedly fail the test of twists and turns in the international class war. The response to the Aldershot bombs in the February of 1972 could have been expected given the response of Socialist Worker to the British troops being sent into the Six Counties in August 1969. The Catholic Civil Rights movement had met with fierce loyalist repression, mainly via the notorious B-Specials. Callaghan, then the Labour Home Office Minister, justified the troop placements as providing protection to the Catholics. The task of revolutionaries was to expose the hollowness of this claim and to point out that the real reason was to stabilise the situation so that continued British domination, via the Ulster Loyalists, could be secured. Instead, IS accommodated to the paternalistic chauvinism of the British working class, which Callaghan relied upon and bolstered:

"The intervention of the British troops only allows a temporary breathing space in which defences of the Catholic community can be strengthened " (2)

The fact that the troops' role was primarily to halt the process of an independent defence being built by the nationalist minority against Loyalist pogroms was ignored.

Because the method of economism is incapable of a scientific and consistent analysis of the Irish struggle, it was inevitable that the leadership's attempts to come to grips with events in the Six Counties would be gems of impressionism, leading to conclusions forgotten the day after they were sanctified as holy writ. For example, Cliff was to argue by 1972 that the IRA were finished, just before the Aldershot bombings proved the contrary. The 1973 IS Irish Conference stated that the Irish crisis was over due to the Sunningdale Agreement. The Left Faction refuted these at the time and were proven correct.

After Aldershot the IS leaders ran for cover, either dropping the position of "unconditional but critical support", or making a nonsense of it. For some two years after 1972, the IS did virtually no work around Ireland. Even the opportunities opened up by the formation of the Troops Out Movement (TOM) in 1973 were subjected to sectarian dismissal. The demagogic device of the leadership used to oppose work in TOM - doing it independently - was a sham. Eventually, IS's fraternal organisation in the Six Counties, the Socialist Workers Movement (SWM) was moved to officially criticise IS, a criticism which was kept from the members. Even the IS Irish Conference of 1973 was forced to confirm the scandalous state of IS Irish solidarity work.

The Left Faction produced a considerable body of material during its existence. However, the IS leadership never saw fit to grace the membership with one word of reply to any Left Faction position. A leadership which refused to respond politically to the criticisms was bound to deepen its errors. And so

it was to be. The Birmingham Pub bombings of November 1974 resulted in 21 deaths, mainly civilian. Many more, some 100, were injured. Although the IRA denied responsibility, and the possibility of a Special Branch provocation remains to this day, the assumption of IRA involvement had to be met head on. All the failures underlined by the Left Faction a few months earlier in "Ireland, the National Question and IS" were amplified. Socialist Worker completely capitulated to the wave of chauvinist hysteria. Its front page proclaimed "All socialists must condemn these killings". (3)

Socialist Worker's response to Birmingham was an attempt to placate the chauvinism of British workers, rather than challenge it. Not only did IS not subordinate criticism of the Provos to unconditional support for their right to carry through these actions, but the criticisms themselves were made from entirely the wrong standpoint. Socialist Worker did not criticise IRA actions from the point of view of the atomising effect they have upon the anti-imperialist struggle within the working class of Ireland. On the contrary, IS criticised the IRA from the vantage of the injured sensibilities of the British working class.

The record of the SWP since 1974 is equally depressing, and no less disgraceful. It should be stressed that the responsibility lies upon the shoulders of the IS/SWP leadership for failing to develop an anti-imperialist movement. Within the far left there was no other organisation in the early to mid 1970s with a bigger implantation in the working class. The proletarian make-up of the SWP has never been higher than at that time. The failure to turn these favourable conditions to the advantage of TOM from 1973 were squandered. Gradually, after 1975 when repression was stepped up, isolated SWP branches showed an interest in TOM. Eventually, in 1976 the SWP helped produce the first edition of a Troops Out newspaper. But its relationship to TOM was always half-hearted, happy to service TOM and in return be given credibility via a place on TOM platforms. It was certainly at odds with any serious work in the trade unions on Ireland.

The IS never took a political lead in TOM. When TOM split in 1977, it was left to Big Flame and the IMG to make the running. The IS only committed itself to UTOM at its 3rd Conference in 1978. The last five years have seen nothing change. The Socialist Worker response to the Le Mans bombing in 1978, to Warrenpoint and Mountbatten's death in 1979, to the Chelsea barrack bomb of 1980(81) have been but echoes of Aldershot and Birmingham.

Launching no initiative of its own, the SWP has been content to tail the work of others 'mimicing the political bankruptcy of others in the process. This was as true of the August 14th 1979 march initiated by the Young Liberals as it was of the Hunger Strike campaign when Socialist Worker mirrored the humanitarian approach of the pacifists, the liberals and the clergy. We can expect little more in the 1980s from Socialist Worker. The SWP tamely tacked themselves onto the February 1982 Labour Committee on Ireland conference, which was not built for by the SWP, hardly attended by them and barely recorded in the pages of their newspaper. They will hibernate until the resistance of the nationalist population in the Six Counties makes it diplomatically impossible, at which point they will devote a fraction of their resources to offsetting criticisms by peddling their latest variety of broad (ie cross-class) solidarity movement. Bold anti-imperialism, the very least the Irish deserve, will appear, if at all, after the event in the pages of a theoretical review. The shameful episodes in



the SWP's history, recorded in these pages, will likely return to shape the future, unless the serious militants in the SWP launch a concerted fight against their past.

Footnotes:

- 1) "Workers Answer to the Crisis" (Left Faction Platform) p 17
- 2) "Socialist Worker" 21/8/69
- 3) "Socialist Worker" 30/11/74

## INTRODUCTION

Why is it necessary to write this document? For at least the last two years, IS's work on the Irish question has been in decline. Indeed it has been in decline since the highpoint of involvement in the 1969-1971 period. This should be surprising to all comrades since the struggle in Ireland has since that period intensified; we have seen the Fall of Stormont, the Bloody Sunday Massacre, the Provo's campaign, the rise and fall of 'power sharing' and the Protestant General Strike (1). Recently the first signs of "war weariness" have begun to appear in Britain, and the ruling class have opened up a semi-public debate on whether or not to get out of Ulster (2). All this at a time of mounting economic and social crisis. It seems hardly credible that a revolutionary organisation would let its Irish work decline in such a period.

Why is Ireland so important for the British working class and for those trying to build a revolutionary party? Firstly, as it is part of the current crisis of our ruling class - having immediate repercussions here; a "get the troops out" call could well become important if the bi-partisan Labour/Tory agreement breaks down. Ulster is also an area where the ruling class can try out some of their "solutions for the crisis. Our rulers have an army well trained in techniques ranging from riot control to full scale urban fighting. The occupations of Heathrow and the utterances of Kitson show how close this situation is to us at present. On the other hand an army weakened and demoralised by its lack of success in Ireland is that much more vulnerable if used against workers in Britain.

Secondly, Ireland is important ideologically. It is an issue for the yellow press, the radio and TV to stoke up chauvinist passions amongst workers, hatred of the Irish (including Irish workers in Britain), identification with "our boys" in Ireland, hostility to "violence and terrorism" when the oppressed fight back, tolerance of "law and order" when repression is stepped up. We can expect an intensified use of this weapon of anti-Irish chauvinism parallel with racist propaganda. We can expect it from the same sources in varying forms, Labour Party MPs, Tories and the National Front. The latter are at the moment in closer alliance with the Orange bigots which may bring them some large scale support in Glasgow and perhaps Liverpool (3). Ulster itself could be a bridge-head for a real fascist movement which would threaten both the Irish and the

British working classes. Thirdly for us as revolutionaries, our attitude to the Irish national struggle is a key test of our internationalism. It is a key issue on which to build an internationalist current in the British working class. A British worker committed to internationalism over Ireland is a comrade who can 'swim against the stream'.

In the light of this it is nothing short of a scandal that I. S. has done so little to even educate its own membership on Ireland. It can certainly lay no claim to have done any more than an episodic propaganda piece in Socialist Worker with some factual reporting from Mike Miller and Eamonn McCann.

The comrades on the Irish sub-committee cannot be made scapegoats for this. The responsibility, we believe, lies squarely with the leadership. We believe that I. S.'s practical failings flow from a political weakness. Though I. S. stands formally for "unconditional but critical support for all those socialists and republicans fighting British Imperialism" it has never given this position an agitational cutting edge - a clear defeatist slogan. This is not to say we didn't attack British policy on Ireland. For many workers under the influence of chauvinism this was tantamount to openly espousing the cause of the IRA. However, for those who were deeply concerned with Ireland and whose attitude was nearer pacifism (hostile to the troops but also to the IRA) - those in short most likely to join I. S., our line was equivocal, somewhat shame-faced and half-hearted. "We support the IRA's right to defend the catholic workers homes"; "We support them but we cannot support terrorism". Our statements time and again avoided outright support for the armed struggle (war) of the IRA against the British troops. Indeed the National Committee and the National Conference refused to take up the defeatist slogan "For the IRA against the British army" a sharp contrast with its use of "Victory to the NLF" in 1968. (4)

We believe it is vitally important that I. S. undertakes a whole-hearted agitation to build a non-chauvinist movement in the British working class for the withdrawal of the troops. We believe that in such a movement I. S. must raise its own anti-Imperialist position, and that in this work the political level of our membership can be raised, and many workers won to revolutionary socialism. We believe that this can only be done with a fundamental and honest re-appraisal of the group's politics on Ireland.

#### WHY SUPPORT THE IRA?

I. S. in the four points for left unity adopted in 1968 stressed its "opposition to imperialism and support for all movements of national liberation"

The group has subsequently adopted with regard to the situation in Ireland a position of

"unconditional but critical support for all those socialists and republicans fighting British Imperialism"

Why is this position an absolute necessity for revolutionary socialists attempting to build a party in and of the working class in Britain? Why is an internationalist position crucial to our own success?

The political basis of internationalism is that the class struggle cannot be understood simply in terms of the capitalist/worker antagonism in a single country. Imperialism has made all national crises a part of a world crisis - the increasing competition of ever larger capital units determines the relationship between the British ruling class and the British workers. And in Britain as the oldest imperialist power this has been true for a longer period than in any other country. The crisis of British imperialism has been the major determinant in the class struggle since the First World War.

Internationalism is the recognition that the working class cannot liberate itself without uncovering the full nature of the interests and policies of "its own" ruling class. The last 70 years have seen great upheavals of militancy, major clashes with the employers and the state, but only one or two episodes in which large sections of the class have broken with the imperialist policies and ideas of the bourgeoisie. One such episode was opposition to the British intervention in Russia in 1920. (5)

How does imperialism affect the class struggle in Britain? First, it creates the basic economic conditions of the class struggle - such as the crisis of the 20's and 30's and that of the 60's and 70's. Secondly the crisis of imperialist domination is part of the political difficulties of the British ruling class, both in its relations with its allies and rivals, and with those forces of resistance which its exploitation and oppression call into being. And the simultaneous problems faced by the ruling class in Ireland and Britain reinforce one another - the employment of over 20,000 troops in Ulster, the expenditure of large sums of capital both militarily and to 'buy off' sectional interests and maintain social stability, at a time when the ruling class is attempting to achieve a strong position in the Common Market, in the process of having to use heavy coercive measures on the working class in Britain.

They obviously try to turn the situation to their advantage - ideologically by linking domestic "chaos" with that in Ulster, by posing as 'peace-seekers' and guardians of the national interest in both areas, and by stoking the fires of chauvinism. They further experiment with means of repression which might be useful also in a domestic situation. Our duty to the British working class is to attempt to minimise the successes of the ruling class and exacerbate its difficulties. This is vital in the situation which workers in Britain now face, in the battle with the present Labour government (6) and any future government.

Just as in industrial struggles we oppose the ideology of the national interest which is invoked against sections of "greedy workers", or against the Asian immigrants who "take British jobs", so we must oppose the same national interest which states that British workers have a common stake in the exploitation of a subject nation, whether it be ruled directly or indirectly. Against this "national interest" we counterpose not the pacifistic, little-England approach of the Labour Lefts and the CPGB(7), but our complete solidarity with all those oppressed by imperialism who fight back. The more openly, consistently and militantly they oppose "our own" rulers, the more wholeheartedly we support them. We are not pacifists, not simply for an end to the fighting, but for the complete defeat of the ruling class, its state forces and allies. A blow struck at them in Ireland is objectively a blow struck at our chief enemy and is to be welcomed openly as such.

Nevertheless we must recognise that few workers see things in this light. Just as many workers accept the ideology of the national interest when used against other sections of the class (as with the hostility to the power workers in 1970), so to an even larger extent, the working class supports the "peace-keeping" British in Ireland. And this becomes open chauvinism when the oppressed fight back against "our boys". Even among those militants who do not consciously sympathise with British repression and are sympathetic to socialism, this takes the form of a failure to understand movements of national liberation. Genuine socialists may often say: "we oppose British nationalism but isn't Irish nationalism also a merely a diversion from the real working class struggle?"

Marx and Engels had this particular argument with British trade unionists as early as the 1860's. The British objected to the Irishmen's concern with the freedom of Ireland as a 'breach' of internationalism, and a diversion from the emancipation of the working class. Engels is reported to have replied thus:

"If members of a conquering nation called upon that nation they had conquered and continued to hold down, to forget their specific nationality and position, to "sink national differences" and so forth, that was not internationalism, it was nothing else but preaching to them submission to the yoke, and attempting to justify and to perpetuate the dominion of the conqueror under the cloak of internationalism."(8)

Marx and Engels saw the British dominance in Ireland as a stone around the neck of the British working class. This position was later maintained by Lenin in arguments with those who took the "internationalist" view outlined above. And he was most sharp with those genuine revolutionaries like Luxemburg and her Bolshevik sympathisers such as Platakov and Bukharin who thought that their extreme anti nationalism was somehow more working class, more purely proletarian.

"This is the essence of Rosa Luxemburg's amusing error.....in their fear of playing into the hands of bourgeois nationalism, people play into the hands not merely of the bourgeoisie, but of the reactionary nationalism of the oppressor nation."(9)

Lenin called this attitude "Imperialist Economism" because, like the old Economism which he attacked in "What is to be Done", though on a higher level, it restricted the class struggle to a simple worker/bourgeois conflict. The earlier Economists had tried to restrict the class struggle to the "economic" worker/boss conflict. They obscured the political fight with the state, and the historic role of the working class as leader of all oppressed strata: the peasantry, the intellectuals etc. They believed that this would all flow automatically from the economic struggle. Likewise the Imperialist Economists thought that the struggle for national liberation was a diversion from the struggle with capitalism. They ignored imperialism and the need for the working class to fight it in alliance with all those who suffered its oppression.

The duty of British revolutionaries is first and foremost to fight our own Imperialism. Condemnation of US Imperialism in Vietnam is relatively easy. But our fight must be based on unconditional solidarity with all those fighting for national freedom for Ireland, not only with the Irish working class, even though we recognise that they alone can lead this struggle to final victory. We must not dodge behind formulations such as support for the Irish working class, or for sympathetic groups like the SWM.(10) This would be to accommodate our-

selves to chauvinism in the same manner as the Militant group or the "Workers Revolutionary Party".

All the exposure of British atrocities, all the calls for the withdrawal of the troops, cannot on their own do duty for a clear defeatist position. We believe that unconditional but critical support is correct. But this has to be translated into our propaganda and agitation. We must fight for this line in the working class movement, in the factories, the mines, on the building sites - trying to build the base of solidarity not merely in a movement like the AIL, (11) and not restricting it to "Irish Work" undertaken among Irish workers in Britain, important as both these tasks are.

Nobody could underestimate the difficulty of this, the hostility provoked. But this hostility experienced most sharply by our militants in the factories testifies only to the magnitude of our task. Many comrades will be concerned with the effect of this work on our growth at certain critical periods. But without it we shall be living in a dream world and our gains shall be illusory. Were we to trim our line on Ireland we might more quickly build a larger organisation, but it would undoubtedly shatter on the major obstacle which it faces.

These are the fundamental reasons for a clear defeatist position on Ireland - and they require restatement. The confusion which followed the Aldershot events, the failure of previous conferences to clarify our position and the adoption subsequently of a series of false positions, have reduced many comrades to bewilderment on the Irish question.

Others may think we are making a mountain out of a molehill. We are concerned that a scratch leads to the danger of gangrene.

#### UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT? THE RECORD OF I. S.

##### Editorial 261 Aldershot (12)

Before the Aldershot bombing, several SW editorials spelled out loud and clear what is meant in practice by unconditional support:

"The IRA Provisionals are also using force and violence with the opposite aim: of bringing down Stormont - It is the duty of British socialists to give unconditional support to those fighting imperialism in Ireland"

"We defend the right of the Irish people to use whatever means, violent or otherwise, that seem expedient to them in order to achieve national independence and unity".

These statements are unequivocal. But then came the Aldershot bomb. Socialist Worker Worker addressing readers who had been subjected to nearly a week of press hysteria, included in its editorial no statement of support for those fighting imperialism, and condemned the bombing as "individual terrorism" which "cannot be supported by socialists". This editorial was closely followed by raids on the homes of I. S. comrades in London and by garbled statements to the press from cdes. Higgins and Palmer. These made clear our condemnation of Aldershot without making clear our support for the IRA. Subsequently, the membership was treated to an article in the internal bulletin by cdes. Higgins and Hallas, explaining why the IRA were guilty of individual terrorism.

At the Easter 1972 Conference, Cliff's main defence of the editorial

was in terms of the individual terrorism of the IRA who were anyway "almost finished". And the upshot of all this confusion can be seen in a letter printed without editorial disclaimer in SW, which deals with the I. S. position in terms of the reply given to the question: "Do you support the IRA?"

"Yes of course we support the IRA's defence (the writer's emphasis) of the harrassed catholic working class; no we cannot support the weapon of terrorism - not because of any moral scruples but because it does nothing to build a real degree of political consciousness among the working class to see that the real enemy is British imperialism and capitalism which is international. (15)

Now this statement is clearly conditional support, support for a defensive struggle. By stressing harrassed catholic workers, any element of support for the national struggle is removed. The attack on terrorism allows any-one to think we disapprove of the killing of soldiers - unless they are attacking catholic workers. In sum the answer to the question is a wretched equivocation, and no organisation should tolerate members who put this sort of line. And yet in subsequent statements of support for "all those socialists and republicans fighting British imperialism" the stress on defence of catholic workers has been retained.

We argue that the answer to the question "Do you support the IRA?" should be roughly:

"Yes we support the right of the Irish people to drive the British army out of Ireland. The IRA is fighting to do this, and, though we strongly criticise some of their tactics as counterproductive to this aim, we support them unconditionally as long as they struggle for this."

To present criticisms outside the terms of clear unconditional support is unprincipled. Without such a statement, criticisms become conditions as in Editorial 261.

None of this detracts from our duty to criticise, but criticism is not a means of avoiding unpopularity in the British working class movement. In Britain, criticism must be subordinate to support. What is more, it should not solely be objections to this or that military tactic, but a clear explanation of the weaknesses of the politics of the IRA.

## INDIVIDUAL TERRORISM

The major red herring which was dragged into the debate by the Aldershot editorial was the characterisation of the incident as individual terrorism, and the implied extension of this characterisation to the Provisionals bombing. It is worth pursuing this argument because of the trail of errors to which it led, though the term itself, "individual terrorism", has been quietly dropped in our coverage of Ireland, to be replaced by the even more dangerous "terrorism".

The NC claimed that the Aldershot bombing and also 'the bombing of buildings and the assassination of politicians' are to be condemned on the grounds of the classic Marxist case against individual terrorism. But what is individual terrorism? "The bomb and the revolver as a substitute for mass action - a substitute for politics." is the formulation of the editorial. So far we can agree. But from here we need to be careful. Neither the bombing of buildings nor the assassination of individual politicians, heads of state etc. are by their nature

acts of individual terrorism. We mention this because, on this point, we witnessed some confusion in statements from NC members. Comrade Harman argued against bombing buildings because the proletariat wants to take over the means of production and is therefore not in favour of their destruction. But were we to take this argument seriously, then armed insurrection, street fighting and civil war would be ruled out for the working class. For revolutionaries tactical expediency, that is the safety of the revolution, is the only criterion.

The same is true of the assassination of politicians. NC members again argued its uselessness, since politicians can be replaced. This is the case with policemen and soldiers, but it is precisely when a certain person can not easily be replaced by the ruling class, when it would throw them into confusion, that assassination might be completely expedient as one means among others.

Lenin in 1906 pointed out that Marxism "positively does not reject any form of struggle", and in the same article he states that "guerilla acts in the form of terrorism were to be recommended against brutal government officials and members of the black hundreds." (16) Now should anyone object that Ireland is not Russia, Lenin characterised Carson as "that black hundred landlord", and his followers as "armed gangs of black hundreds." Nor was Lenin being momentarily un-marxist or bending the stick a little too far. Marx had himself written in 1850:

"Far from opposing so-called excesses, instances of popular revenge against individuals or public buildings that are associated only with hateful recollections must not only be tolerated but the lead in them must be taken." (17)

Marxists do not oppose terror in itself - indeed the Red Terror is a necessary feature of the suppression of the bourgeoisie. What makes an act individual terrorism is its taking place when there is no mass movement, no action by the masses to which it relates. Lenin attacked the anarchists or Narodniks in that they attempt in periods of reaction or apathy to substitute for the masses, or to summon the masses with a startling act, but when the masses are on the move these gentlemen are not to be found. If such acts are placed within the context of mass struggle with the forces of the ruling class, they may be criticised as being effective or ineffective, but they cannot be characterised as individual terrorism. Trotsky made this clear writing against the background of the Spanish Civil War:

"however under conditions of civil war, the assassination of individual oppressors ceases to be an act of individual terror. If we shall say, a revolutionary bombed General Franco and his staff into the air, it would hardly evoke moral indignation even from the democratic eunuchs. Under conditions of civil war a similar act would be completely politically expedient." (19)

Different NC members attempted to defend their characterisation of IRA tactics as individual terrorism in different ways. Cliff denied that the question of the mass movement was decisive - after all had not the Narodniks (Narodnaya Volya) got a mass movement, and yet were they not individual terrorists? He should have read his old article 'On Substitutionism', where he says:

"In the sixties and seventies of the 19th century, small groups, mere handfuls of intellectuals, pitted themselves against the mighty autocracy, while the mass of the peasants in whose name and interests these Narodniks acted remained indifferent and even hostile to them." (20)

Comrades Higgins and Hallas remembering their Trotsky (and Cliff) a little more clearly decided to rest their case on the absence of a civil war:

"If a state of civil war exists then certainly the case would be entirely different..... the argument about terrorism would be irrelevant" (21)

But wars are defined by Marxists as the "continuation of policy by other means", and if anyone doubts that "other means" besides normal political methods are used in Northern Ireland she or he must be blind. The British need not drop Napalm on Belfast for there to be a war. Socialist Worker prior to the Aldershot bombing did not hesitate to recognise a war:

"The Tory Government is waging a colonial war in Ireland.... the working class movement must make it impossible for the Tories to continue their war against the Irish people" (22)

Civil war is the continuation of the class struggle by other means, that is by military methods. It is a war between the exploited and the exploiters. In Ireland the war is both national, with the British Imperialist bourgeoisie assisted by the Green Tories (23), and civil, with the Orange bourgeoisie. The national colonial war is therefore civil war, and it is precisely the inability of the Republicans to fully appreciate this which hampers their struggle.

The more recent article by James Tait evades open support for the armed struggle. To say - "we understand the accumulated bitterness and repression that makes men and women take to the bomb and the bullet. We do not however believe that is the way to end that repression" (24), would appear to write off the whole idea of armed resistance as wrong. The reference to terrorism does not even try to distinguish which actions are terroristic as the NC supporters of the Aldershot line did in 1972. In the resulting confusion this article, like so many others, fails to say openly - yes, we support the IRA's fight against the British Army.

In no sense can the characterisation "individual terrorism" be applied to the tactics of the IRA between the introduction of internment and the abolition of Stormont. The IRA had mass support not only in the six counties, but also in the border counties of the Republic and in its major cities. The IRA could not have carried on successful guerilla warfare without their support. Indeed as the breakdown of the ceasefire over Lenadoon Avenue evictions demonstrated, the provisional units cannot long abstain from action when the population needs and demands it. (25)

The careless use of a term like "individual terrorism" at a time of the Aldershot bombing was not only the abrogation of support, but also a violation of the method of Marxism. In Lenin's words:

"Marxism demands an absolutely historical examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism." (26)



Our behaviour over this period was also a violation of the spirit of Marxist criticism - not animated by regret at the mistakes of the movement at a crucial point of a life and death struggle, but anxious to distance ourselves from the "terrorists". Lenin in similar circumstances remarked:

"When I see a Social-Democratic theoretician or publicist not displaying regret over this unpreparedness, but rather a proud smugness and a self-exhaulted tendency to repeat phrases learnt by rote in early youth about anarchism, Blanquism and terrorism, I am hurt by this degradation of this most revolutionary doctrine in the world." (27)

## MARXISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

Marxism is not indifferent to the existence of nations. Marx and Engels recognised that nation states were the "normal political structures of the European bourgeoisie" and that the development of capitalism awakened peoples to national life and gave rise to national struggles, fights for unity and independence. What is more such states were, in general, preferable for the proletariat in that any national oppression obscured the class struggle in the oppressed nation and involved the workers of the oppressor nation in at least acquiescing in other peoples enslavement. The way for revolutionaries to deal with this situation was not to ignore national oppression in favour of the class struggle. Indeed such an attitude in the oppressor nation was a form of nationalism. The workers movement in a nation that enslaved others had a primary duty to fight for the right to independence to these nations. Marx saw national oppression as a means by which the bourgeoisie neutered the workers movement. He himself saw and fought this tendency in the British working class movement.

Marx observed the growth of chauvinism in the British working class:

"In relation to the Irish worker, he (the British worker) feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself." (28)

Marx saw how this divided the workers in Britain. Writing at the height of his involvement with the leaders of the powerful amalgamated unions in the first International, he stresses that "this antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation." (29)

Marx and Engels together worked for the taking up by the British Labour Movement of the demand for Irish emancipation, and of support for the Fenian struggle against the British government. And this activity in no way obscured or was at odds with their objective view of the Fenians. Though Marx considered them a "lower orders movement" and "a socialistic tendency" on the land question, he also heavily criticised their conspiratorial tactics and Engels pointed out that their leadership was made up "partly of exploiters". Marx and Engels did not condemn publically even the Clerkenwell bombing, which both considered a "stupid affair of a few specialised fanatics" likely to alienate the mass movement of support for the Fenians, but saw that the unity of the British workers with the Irish national movement required greater concessions from members of the oppressing than from members of the oppressed nation. Indeed the most positive thing for Engels was that:

"The London proletariat declare every day more openly for the Fenians and, hence, -an unheard of and splendid thing here- for a violent and, secondly, an anti-English movement". (30)

Above all, Marx and Engels took up the question of Ireland with such vigour because they held it was the key to overcome the political backwardness of the labour movement in Britain. 'The prime condition of emancipation here' was struggle by the British proletariat to break the enslavement of Ireland. Marx had already experienced the evasive behaviour of some of the trade union leaders on the Irish question, evasive behaviour which reappeared when it came to open defence of the Paris Commune. The 1870's saw the beginning of the distribution of official honours and positions to working class leaders. Marx in 1870 noted with alarm:

"England today is seeing a repetition of what happened on a monstrous scale in ancient Rome. Any nation that oppresses another forges its own chains". (31)

#### LENIN ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION.

Lenin's earliest writings on the national question are largely devoted to a defence and systematisation of the views of Marx and Engels outlined above. The 'revisionist' with whom he had to deal was Rosa Luxemburg. But they did not dispute whether the Polish workers should fight for independence—they disputed whether the Russian workers should fight around the slogan of the 'right of nations to self-determination. Here Lenin stressed the difference between socialists in an oppressor and those in an oppressed nation. The latter were free to fight for independence or not. Anyhow, their first duty was to emphasise the international nature of the class struggle, and to expose ruthlessly all bourgeois nationalism. The socialists in the oppressor nation, however, had to fight their own, totally reactionary, nationalism, and therefore had to emphasise the right to freedom and secession of the enslaved nation, and had to fight all oppression by 'their' government.

Lenin's major work in this polemic was, of course, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination". (Stalin's work on the national question dates from this period and deals with roughly the same arguments but in a more schematic and wooden fashion). But Lenin's thinking at this time was dominated by a picture of capitalist development which he subsequently abandoned, and this change altered some aspects of his attitude to national movements.

In "Critical Remarks on the National Question" (32) Lenin sees in the development of capitalism two tendencies as regards nations: First, a drive to the creation of national states, the awakening of mass national movements; secondly, the tendency for capitalism to obliterate national peculiarities by means of the world market. The first tendency Lenin sees as predominating in capitalism's youth, the second in its maturity, indeed its ripeness, for socialism.

Lenin realised that capitalism had not developed evenly, and considered that the first stage had not begun in Eastern Europe and Asia until after the 1905 revolution. To Lenin,

"National movements belong to the period of the final victory of capitalism

over feudalism". (33)

The task of the 'bourgeois-democratic' revolution here is one of the demands of the 'programme-minimum'. Lenin emphasised its limited and negative nature, "To throw off the feudal yoke, all national oppression, and all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat as a democratic force and is certainly in the interests of the proletarian class struggle which is obscured and retarded by bickering on the national question. But to go beyond these strictly limited and definite historical limits in helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie. This task is largely a negative one." (34)

Lenin again and again stresses capitalism's developing role in backward countries, and also its progressive assimilation of groups like the Jews. What is clearly absent from Lenin's thinking is the question of imperialism.

By January 1916 Lenin recognised that the latest phase of capitalism was far from one of peaceful assimilation of nations by the operation of world trade. National oppression was not simply the remnant of feudalism. Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, is characterised by:

"..the growth of militarism, more frequent wars, more powerful reaction, the intensification and expansion of national oppression and colonial plunder." (35)

As the result of his analysis of imperialism, Lenin defined a third category of national situation (the other two being the advanced countries, and the countries of central and Eastern Europe). In this third category were the semi-colonial and colonial countries - those oppressed by modern developed imperialism. And the attitude of socialists in this situation is no longer merely "negative":

"Socialists must not only demand...the right to self determination; they must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising or revolutionary war, in the event of one against the imperialist powers which oppress them." (36)

Further, when Lenin wrote "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" he pointed out that "reactionary imperialist capitalism" was in fact restoring national oppression to areas which had been freed in the period of capitalism's "competitive" face. Arguing against the Luxemburgists (including Bukharin and Piatakov in his own party), who took the position that since imperialism doomed independent small states to subordination and extinction then socialists had no interest in supporting national struggles. Lenin pointed out that it was precisely the violence with which imperialism did this which roused resistance and would lead to broader and more far-reaching movements of national liberation. The Luxemburg/Piatakov position he called "Imperialist Economist" - drawing political conclusions undialectically from an economic analysis. Imperialism's oppression of nations provokes national revolts which are not merely "capitalist", anti-feudal but, in tendency, anti-imperialist and therefore potentially part of a united onslaught on the world bourgeoisie. For this reason, Lenin's earlier "negative" approach is reversed:

"Formerly the main thing was to fight "against Tsarism" (and against certain

small-nation movements which it was using for un-democratic ends), and for the greater revolutionary peoples of the West; the main thing today is to stand against the united aligned front of the imperialist bourgeoisie and the social imperialists, and for the utilisation of all national movements against imperialism for the purposes of socialist revolution." (37)

To ignore national struggles would then be a disaster from the point of view of the strategy for proletarian revolution. But just as important for Lenin is the struggle which imperialism has opened up within the workers movement itself:

"In the epoch of imperialism, owing to objective causes, the proletariat has been split into two international camps, one of which has been corrupted by the crumbs that fall from the table of the dominant nation bourgeoisie - obtained, among other things, from the double or triple exploitation of small nations - while the other cannot liberate itself without liberating the small nations, without educating the masses in an anti-chauvinist, that is anti-annexationist, that is "self-determinationist" spirit." (38)

For this reason, Lenin stresses, support for national movements is not as if were something external to the real class struggle, but is of the essence of the fight for a revolutionary leadership within the working class. It is no concession to the petty-bourgeoisie, nor does it obscure the 'pure' proletarian goal of the socialist revolution. In the era of imperialism the old Economist's arguments were being repeated on a world scale by Luxemburg, Piatakov and others. As before, Lenin had to fight those who wanted to reject all struggle except the economic struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

"The idea that the slogan of socialist revolution can be overshadowed by linking it up with a consistently revolutionary position on all questions, including the national question, is certainly profoundly anti-Marxist" (39)

Lenin flays those who see the revolution as a straight fight between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and who characterised the Irish Rising of 1916 as a "putsch" organised by the petit-bourgeoisie:

"Whoever expects a "pure" social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip service to revolution without understanding what revolution is" (40)

Lenin's mature position was finally summed up in his draft theses on the National Question accepted by the Second Congress of the Comintern (41). Simply put, they argue:

1. The existence of imperialism means an end to the idea that the backward nations will simply follow the pattern of the advanced. Imperialism intensifies national antagonisms among the developed states, assimilation is halted, and movements of national liberation break out in the colonies and semi-colonies.
2. The proletariat has to support these struggles. Workers' parties have to participate in and even lead these struggles. Involved here is the perspective of permanent revolution.
3. The national struggles must be taken up as an integral part of the class struggle in the imperialist epoch. They are part of the programme of the proletarian revolution in the epoch of transition.

## TROTSKY - PERMANENT REVOLUTION AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The theory of permanent revolution, developed by Trotsky in 1906, explains the relationship in backward countries between the bourgeois-democratic and the proletarian-socialist revolutions. Trotsky observed the uneven development of Russia relative to the "advanced" states of the West. He observed the weakness of the bourgeoisie and its dependence on the autocracy and on French and British finance capital. At the same time he saw that Russian industry and above all the Russian proletariat had developed on the level of the most advanced industry in the West. From this he concluded that the bourgeois-democratic revolution would not be implemented by the bourgeoisie (as the Mensheviks held), nor could the working class in alliance with the peasantry carry out its tasks without passing onto the tasks of the socialist revolution (as was suggested in Lenin's theory of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry").

Trotsky was later attacked (by Stalin) for "ignoring the difference between the bourgeois and the socialist revolution". This would have of course been the same kind of error as that of the Imperialist Economists - collapsing the national struggle into the socialist revolution, indeed ignoring the specific features of the former as at best a diversion from the "real struggle". But Trotsky makes clear that this is not what he means:

"...the permanent revolution is described as a revolution that welds together the oppressed masses of town and country around the proletariat organised in Soviets; as a national revolution that raises that proletariat to power and thereby opens up the possibility of the democratic revolution growing over into the socialist revolution."

"The permanent revolution is not a 'leap' by the proletariat, but the reconstruction of the nation under the leadership of the proletariat." (43)

The theory of imperialism deepens and explains the theory of permanent revolution. It shows its applicability not only to Russia but to all countries oppressed by imperialism - the basis of the 'permanence' being, in Trotsky's words, that

"in the movements of colonial peoples the social element blends in diverse forms with the national element, but both of them are directed against imperialism" (44)

It is the presence of national exploitation by imperialism that leads to the struggle against it, a struggle involving a broad strata of oppressed people - petty-bourgeois, intellectuals, peasants etc., as well as urban workers. To say that the working class alone can end national oppression is not to counterpose the class struggle to the national, but to say that the working class must achieve leadership in the fight against imperialism.

It is this need to lead, not to replace, which requires the political and organisational independence of the proletariat from all petit-bourgeois formations:

'The Communist International should collaborate provisionally with the revolutionary movement of the colonies and backward countries and even form an alliance with it; it must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is only in an embryonic stage.' (45)

The 'Permanent Revolution' can be, and has been, distorted in a number of ways, very clearly so on the question of Ireland. The post-Waldershot I. S. line has consistently ignored the significance of the national question and has baldly posed the working class struggle as an alternative to the mistakes and disasters of the actual struggle taking place in the North. Great play has been made of resisting the allurements of petit-bourgeois romanticism- far more dangerous according to comrades Cliff and Hailas and Palmer than British chauvinism.

Such compacency is unforgivable in socialists working in the oldest imperialist country, one which created in the British Empire a greater 'prison-house of nations' than Tsarist Russia. Trotsky joined with Lenin in stressing the 'active' role demanded of communists in opposing their own bosses' oppression of other nations:

"The British socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy- such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet." (46)

On the other hand, the IMG have, in the past at least, and in line with their distortion of Trotskyism in general, held out the view that petit-bourgeois movements can somehow 'grow over' into proletarian movements. This collapses the class struggle into the national struggle.

These two opposing distortions in the imperialist country lead to rightist and ultra-leftist abandonments of Marxism. But an organisation operating and striking roots in the British working class movement will most likely be pulled rightwards on the national question unless it fights hard for its line. While remaining hard and intransigent on the role of the working class in Ireland (a relatively easy task for British as opposed to Irish revolutionaries) we should remind ourselves with equal hardness and intransigence of the essence of an internationalist position for socialists in an imperialist nation:

"What characterises Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude towards oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not concern itself to recognising their 'right' to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in the capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of the civilised executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary marxism in action." (47)

#### PERMANENT REVOLUTION AND IRELAND.

We accept the theory of permanent revolution with respect to the struggle against imperialism in Ireland. (48) The national revolution, having as its aim the unification and independence of Ireland, is in these terms a bourgeois-democratic revolution or, rather, its completion. In purely formal terms the 'natural' leadership should have been the Irish bourgeoisie. But British imperialism, by the uneven development it imposed upon Ireland, divided the bourgeoisie and incorporated the northern section in the nineteenth century. It also incorpora-

ted the southern bourgeoisie and in the twentieth century the leadership of the national revolution fell to an alliance of the petit-bourgeoisie and the working class, of which the Rising of 1916 and the guerilla war of 1918-21 were the chief expression. But the working class after the death of Connolly were unable to extend, or even to maintain, its role in the revolution. The British were able, in 1921, to dictate their settlement of the national question, with the Irish bourgeoisie liquidating the demand for a republic and agreeing to 'Home Rule'-the 'Free State' within the orbit of British imperialism. Reformists effectively subordinated the working class movement to the bourgeoisie. (49) But the petit-bourgeois republicans fought on, as during the Civil War of the early 1920's, and socialists and working class militants were thus largely forced to work within the basically petit-bourgeois republican movement- the IRA.

The IRA has for fifty years provided the leadership of the forces of resistance to British imperialism and to the collaborating bourgeoisie. But, as might be expected, its attitude to the bourgeoisie has been inconsistent and vacillating. So has been its stance with regard to the working class.

In the epoch of imperialism only a national revolution which takes up the tasks of the social revolution can release the hold of Britain over Ireland. Obviously neither the petit-bourgeoisie as a class nor the IRA as a political expression of it can do this. The success of the national struggle requires the leadership of the working class, and the working class to lead requires an independent revolutionary socialist party. But this is not to say that the national question is an irrelevance, a diversion from the simple class struggle. Indeed it is within the national struggle that the working class must achieve leadership. The permanent revolution is not a leap by the proletariat over the national revolution, but the reconstruction of the nation under the leadership of the proletariat. It is what Trotsky describes as the 'growing over of the democratic revolution into the socialist revolution'. (50)

#### THE NORTHERN STATE AND THE PROTESTANT WORKING CLASS

The ability of IS to explain away the inconsistencies in its various statements on Ireland stems to some extent from the confusion in the minds of many comrades with regards to the protestant workers of Ulster. What is the nature of the relationship of the protestant working class to orangeism and unionism, and what is the possibility of working class unity for the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism?

Those who begin by looking at the supposed economic militancy of the protestant workers (itself problematic, as has been shown recently with the role of orangeism in the Harland and Wolff dispute), and who then wonder why this militancy has not led to socialist consciousness, or those who think that more militancy would unite protestant and catholic workers and overcome prejudice - such comrades are the victims of economism. They ignore the question of the state. It is insufficient simply to point to historical examples of united action such as that led by Larkin before the First World War, or the unemployed campaigns of the 1930's. Permanent unity for the catholic and protestant workers can only be unity on an anti-imperialist basis. United economic struggle though necessary can and will be, as it has been in the past,

terminated with renewed sectarian pogroms if it is achieved on the basis of "ignoring the differences". The relationship of the protestant working class to the state is unique. This was true with regard the whole of Ireland before "Home Rule" in the North - it became more concentrated and effective after 1921.

The Northern state of 1921 created a united bloc of class forces; small farmers, landlords, workers and capitalists welded together socially, politically and religiously in the Orange Order. The protestant worker was tied to the state not only by ideology but by material privilege also. His relationship to his catholic fellow-workers was that of a labour aristocrat. He had first call on jobs and housing, he was the last to need to emigrate. It is no matter that the protestant worker may earn less than his British counter-part, that he is more likely to live in a slum. Relative to the Catholic worker, the protestant enjoys jealously-guarded privileges; privileges which come through membership of the unionist bloc, the orange order, privileges which have to be maintained by wholesale gerrymander, by denial of democratic rights to the minority, by membership of state para-military forces, and by "illegal" armed black hundreds, by periodic pogroms. And all this had to be justified by a semi-racist ideology which comes near to a colon-type consciousness. It is this which has deluded some comrades into considering the protestants as a separate nation.

Within this artificial state, with protestant workers tied structurally into its ruling party, no class unity could be achieved. Connolly recognised that such a situation would be a godsend to both the Orange and green bourgeoisie, and that in both states the worker's movement would be crippled.

Any resistance by the catholics has met with brutal repression over the last 50 years. The Civil Rights movement appealed basically for "one man, one job". Taken within the context of the Northern state, this meant unemployment for some protestants, an attack on their privileges which, poor as they were, were better than nothing. Likewise, the Civil Rights call for "one man, one vote" meant in certain areas loss of control of the councils, and of the job and housing allocation that went with it. Though the leaders and many of the participants of the civil rights struggle failed to raise the question of the Northern state, these simple demands did so for the protestants. They brought the movement into immediate conflict with the state forces of the regime, the RUC, with the legal para-military squads of the 'B' Specials, and with the protestant terror organisations, the UVF etc. The so-called protestant backlash is produced not by the bombs or 'sectarianism' of the IRA, but by every attempt of the nationalist minority to alter the status quo.

Now it is true that the British have the aim of a united bourgeois Ireland. Their chosen method was for the Unionist leaders gradually to reform Stormont and the Northern state out of existence. But any move by the catholics produces protestant retaliation. The British may have wanted to get rid of Stormont, but they did not want it destroyed by the nationalist population.

Nevertheless, the military and civil resistance of the catholics and the Protestant reaction made impossible the task of carrying on British rule in the old way through Stormont. The British were forced to introduce direct rule in a way and at a time which inflamed the contradiction between them and unionism and which fractured



the unionist class alliance. The British were forced to 'rationalise' in the most difficult of circumstances. Their survival is a tribute not so much to their strength as to the limitations of the republicans particularly with regard to the South. Simply to point out that British imperialism still rules, as did comrade Harman in his article at the time, is banal. To point out that 'the slums still remain' and hotly deny that anything significant had happened was an act of historical blindness of the first order. The overthrow of Stormont, as the result of a mass movement involved in armed conflict with massive British forces which were doing their utmost to preserve it, when the British ruling class had, as they still have, no viable alternative of any stability with which to replace it - was this not a victory though not the victory?

This success testifies to the correctness of the Provisionals in making the smashing of Stormont their object of struggle, testifies to the necessity and fundamental correctness of the military campaign. The destruction of Stormont and its privileges, and the clear realisation that there is no way back, is a prerequisite for real class unity in the North. Protestant workers will finally unite with Catholic only when they take up an anti-imperialist position. Their distrust of the British forces and hostility to direct rule is an important blow to their "unionism", but it is at present offset by rabid determination to preserve the ascendancy. No retreat or concession to the imperialist forces by the nationalist will help woo the protestants. No posing of unity in purely economic terms by socialists will by-pass the question of unionism. The more resolute the struggle against imperialism, north and south, the more shall the protestants be wracked by the contradictions of their position. Indeed paradoxical though it may seem the clash with British policy engendered by its 'concessions' to the Catholics (ie. the abolition of Stormont) has resulted in Protestant workers undergoing a profound disillusionment with layer after layer of 'their loyalist leaders. At the moment this takes the form of more and more desperate (and reactionary utopias - an independent Ulster. It has led them into a mass confrontation with British state power - the 1974 general strike. Though the objects of the strike were reactionary to the core and many of its methods sectarian and anti-working class, nevertheless, they demonstrated to the protestant workers the power they had as workers. It is these sort of contradictions that only a workers party committed to real workers' councils, to real non-sectarian (secular) workers power on both sides of the border. The sooner the working class in the South brings its strength into the struggle against imperialism, the sooner will protestant workers see the uselessness of further resistance. The sooner the working class in the South opens up a life-and-death struggle with the Green bourgeoisie, the sooner will protestant workers see that they have nothing to fear. The more revolutionary socialist ideas and organisation gain in the "Catholic" workers' movement, north and south, the more will protestant workers be drawn for the explanation and way out of their predicament.

This is in no way to deny the importance of the unity of the working class. But the goal of unity cannot be used as an obstacle to a resolute pursuance of the anti-imperialist struggle - which in the short term, will only still more incense the protestants. To see the one as an obstacle to the other is to yield to reformism. The Officials' opportunistic wooing of the leadership of the UDA and other black-hundred organisations flows from this perspective. (51)

Objectively the dialectic of a resolute anti-imperialist struggle will further fracture protestant consciousness, presenting opportunities for the winning away

from loyalism of many of these workers. But to realise this requires a working class party which not only gains a foothold in the day-to-day battles on wages and conditions, but also takes the lead in the struggle against imperialism.

In Ireland as elsewhere, involvement in the economic struggle cannot be seen as self-sufficient. As Lenin pointed out:

"Only the late and unlamented Economists believed that the 'slogan of a workers' party' are issued only for workers. No, these slogans are issued for the whole of the labouring population, for the entire people". (52)

In Ireland where the social revolution can triumph only as the triumph of the national struggle against imperialism, roots must be put down which unify these struggles from the outset. The absence of the Southern Irish working class from the national struggle since the early '20's (not of course as individuals), the syndicalism which marked the origin of the working class as an organised movement, is as dangerous for revolutionaries in Ireland as seduction into petty-bourgeois republicanism.

#### THE NATURE OF THE PROVISIONAL IRA

The provisional IRA and the battle they have waged over the last few years are testimony to the continued vitality of the Irish national movement. Though this has, in the last two centuries, passed through various stages and combinations of class interests, the battles on the streets of Belfast, the most intense and bloody conflict with British troops since 1916 - 21, testify that the Irish people are and feel themselves to be enslaved by British imperialism.

The Provisionals inherit from the movements which preceded them (the Fenians, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the post-treaty IRA) the two most enduring strands of republicanism: the duty of Irishmen to take up arms against the occupying power, and abstention from parliamentary activity which involves recognition of the division of Ireland. (53) Their irreducible 'republican' demand is therefore a united Ireland free of British state forces. In this sense their basic political position does not transcend a bourgeois-democratic goal. But the abstract application of definitions from a political dictionary can only obscure the issue.

From the 1870s onwards, the British and Irish bourgeoisies have seen the answer to the Irish question in a politically independent state on bourgeois-democratic lines and with the forces of British occupation removed. This lay behind the Gladstonian Home Rule crisis of the 1870s and '80s, the similar crises pre - 1914, the aborted settlement of 1921 and the manoeuvrings of the early and mid-1960s.

The problem has been to keep the process at such a tempo as to ensure that the Irish people, workers and petty-bourgeoisie, took no independent initiative, or could be successfully crushed were they to do so. Initially the British most feared an agrarian rising, but with the growth of the Irish proletariat, the fear of a workers' rising necessitated the fostering and maintenance of the separate Orange class bloc in the North. Popular republican forces cannot be allowed to gain the initiative in the struggle for unity and independence because there is every likelihood that, with these forces unleashed, the national revolution will become permanent - that these forces will challenge the imperialist solution of a formally

independent, united bourgeois Ireland, economically subordinate to British capitalism.

But although this is, in the last analysis, a creation of British imperialism for use against popular republicanism, the Orange forces have on a number of occasions blocked the imperialist solution with their opposition to any move against the Northern state. The British strategic goal has constantly tended to come into violent contradiction with British tactics.

The Irish bourgeoisie (Green) is basically content both with the British goal and with the essentials of British policy in that direction - no popular initiative. The two bourgeois parties in the South and the SDLP in the North play the role of presenting national aspirations in this sense alone.

The Provisionals' programme 'A New Ireland', is a classically petty-bourgeois document. All talk, such as the IMG's of its demands as transitional is absolute nonsense. Demands cannot be evaluated out of the context of a programme and of the way in which it is to be used. 'Eire Nua' calls for nationalisation of the resources of the country, for decentralisation of political government into the four historic provinces, each of which would have its own Dail. Further it demands the breaking up of the larger estates and the extension of the co-operatives. The programme is petty bourgeois because it attempts to put the clock back and create an Ireland for the small farmer and the small businessman. And, what is more, none of the Provisionals' leaders take it at all seriously in the here and now. Since the miserable failure of the attempt to set up assemblies in Ulster and Connought, the programme has been relegated to the status of ideological baggage.

But the politics of the Provisionals, though far from socialist, differ in essentials from those of the bourgeois parties. They are prepared to expel the British from Ireland by armed force and at the head of the people. These characteristics define them as a dynamic anti-imperialist force, and they or the groups like them will remain such a force until they are replaced in the leadership of this struggle by a working class revolutionary party. Politics like nature abhors a vacuum.

The political limitations of the provisionals are rooted in their inability from the standpoint of petty-bourgeois nationalism to see the particular economic nature of the exploitation of Ireland, and the class nature of the forces engaged in the national struggle. Let us take the two features of republicanism which set it apart from the Irish bourgeoisie and give it an anti-imperialist dynamic; the use of arms against the occupying power, and the abstention from the "normal bourgeois politics". The lack of a clear understanding of the basis of imperialist exploitation of Ireland leads to the taking on by the military struggle of the role of an all-consuming strategy instead of a tactic. The British are oppressors simply because they have any army in Ireland - just as they have had for 800 years, etc. This leaves the "political wing" of the movement with an essentially auxiliary function. Indeed any encroachment of the 'politicians' on the military is sharply rebuffed. The abstention from parliamentary politics simply leaves the provisionals at the mercy of bourgeois parliamentarians when non-military manoeuvring is necessary. Since they have no socialist perspective, the "political wing" tends to hanker after the lush pastures of parliamentarianism, whether quasi social-democratic or plain bourgeois. But compromise beyond a certain point leads to a split, as in '69 and as has been narrowly avoided within the Provisionals on occasions since.

Failure to see the class nature of the forces in the Irish national struggle leads the Provisionals to see the Green bourgeoisie's betrayals in moral terms, leads them therefore to maintain relations with those right-wing politicians who are "patriotic". It leads them to ignore and even to oppose specifically working-class methods of struggle, strikes, occupations, etc. Mass involvement is not ignored by the provisionals, but is seen as auxiliary to the military struggle and often as passive 'support' for the IRA. (54) At certain periods, often quite protracted, military priorities do and must take overall priority. With 20,000 occupying troops and intensive terrorisation of the nationalist population, calls for "mass action" can be utopian. But the political helplessness of the Provisionals drives them to military actions which are political disasters. The 25 bombs in the centre of Belfast on "Bloody Friday" meant as a reply to Whitelaw's refusal to talk, simply opened the way for Operation Motorman and stunned and demoralised the masses. (55) Coming after an attempt to compromise with the British, there revealed the twin poles of the Provisionals activities: in a crisis they will show utter disregard for the masses either by compromise or by acts of indiscriminate terror. This is when their politics and the situation bring them to acute impasse. But it does not explain their relationship to the masses, as is testified by the way in which this relationship survives the shocks.

The Easter demonstrations each year bring many thousands out behind the banners of the Provisionals. The continued support for the guerilla struggle shows the link unbroken; the guerilla fighters and the areas from which they operate. From the introduction of internment to the abolition of Stormont they stood at the head of a mass campaign, giving military cover to the rents and rates strike, keeping the state forces pinned down by the sniping and bombing campaign. Their slogan "Smash Stormont" represented a campaign of the nationalist population which went beyond the question of internment. In this period there was a positive offensive on the monolithic Orange state. The fall of Stormont and the fracture of Unionism were the direct result of their military activity indissolubly linked to mass resistance. This was a partly successful offensive struggle.

Since the fall of Stormont the political crisis has deepened for the Provisionals. The military struggle was continued with no clear idea of its goal, other than the final expulsion of the troops, or the hope that the British would sue for peace and agree to a date for withdrawal. The Provisionals again, even in the face of severe repression by the Southern government under both Lynch and Cosgrave, refused to mobilise in the South. Macstiofan's arrest and hunger strike produced the first mass stirrings in the South since the burning of the British Embassy - the Provisionals sabotaged this movement. (56) All the worst features of their politics have developed apace since the abolition of Stormont. They have even abandoned the demand for the immediate withdrawal in favour of a phased withdrawal or an announcement by the British government of a date some years hence when they will withdraw. All this makes clear the crying need for a revolutionary workers' party, to raise the banner of a workers' republic, to win the organised Irish workers for the anti-imperialist struggle and to draw into its ranks the devoted rank-and-file of the Provisionals (and Officials). Such a force alone can take the struggle forward to final victory. Nevertheless a defeat for the Provisionals would be a terrible defeat for the Irish revolution. It would greatly strengthen and stabilise the Irish bourgeoisie and the British ruling class. At the moment, the Provisionals remain the major active obstacle to a solution favourable

to British imperialism.

Given all this, why then cannot the Provisionals simply be written off as a reactionary petty-bourgeois formation? Why must we continue to give them our unconditional support, and why in this country must our criticism be clearly subordinate to this support?

To designate a movement "petty-bourgeois" is not to declare it reactionary except in the most abstract sense. Its class goals may often be reactionary, they may seek to return to the conditions of early capitalism. But its conflict with imperialism dictates our need to support it. The nationalists of 1916, Pearce and the rest, were if anything even more dominated by a mystical religious utopianism than are the republicans of today. But Lenin was able to say:

'To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices ... to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution' (57).

## CONCLUSION

How can we correct our line on Ireland? How can we amend our past errors? How can we undertake serious revolutionary work on the question in the British working class? We will outline here a position which we will argue for within the organisation. The first suggests we take up the Irish question so as to be able to recruit Irish workers into the organisation. We want, of course, to recruit Irish workers. This cannot however determine the nature of the work we do. Secondly, comrades argue that we should raise the question of Ireland so as to show the dangers ahead for British workers. Lots of nasty tales of torture and brutality in Ireland on the part of the British ruling class will aid our propaganda here. This position has led to a coverage of Ireland in Socialist Worker that has effectively dodged the major issues raised for as long as possible.

In building IS we are seeking to build a revolutionary internationalist leadership in the British working class. Such a leadership needs to be uncompromising in its anti-imperialism. Our Irish work, then, must be central to this task. In our agitation and propaganda we must take up clearly and resolutely our support for those fighting imperialism. We must take a clear position for the defeat of British forces in Ireland. We must recognise that the national struggle waged in the north by the forces of the Provisional IRA is a war, albeit a guerrilla war, against British imperialism and that we are for the defeat of the British forces:

For the IRA - Against the British Army.  
British Troops Out of Ireland.  
Self-determination for the whole of the Irish people:  
Down with the sectarian Northern State.

These demands sum up the basic tasks that face us amongst British workers in building the revolutionary party. Our work must go further however, than merely arguing for the correct slogans and positions. Inside IS discussion and education on Ireland has been hopelessly neglected. This must be rectified.

It is appalling that we take up the issue only as immediate issues and events in Ireland force us to. The organisation has produced no pamphlet on Ireland except a short history. The result is a membership largely unaware of the issues and their importance.

As well as having our own correct anti-imperialist position and ensuring discussion of the issues inside the organisation, there is another crucial dimension to our work. WE must fight to build a broad anti-chauvinist movement in Britain. Such a movement could be of major political importance in the crisis ahead. Around the two slogans of, 'Troops Out Now' and 'Self-Determination For The Irish People', we must work with those sections of the Labour Party and also the Communist Party, who will take up those demands. The history of our own work shows that this must be a national initiative. It is not sufficient to ask all branches to hold meetings on the question. We must work to build the Troops Out Movement as a national movement in the working class. (58) Every branch must be involved in that work. To build a bridge between the socialist left and the anti-chauvinist tendency in the working class, IS must utilise its industrial strength to the full. Our work to support the Socialist Workers Movement must be strengthened. We must do this in a series of ways. In Britain we must stress the need for an independent working class party and on the need for the Irish workers to take the lead in the fight against imperialism in the North and South. We must stress the need to link the struggles against the Irish bosses (on wage restraint, for example) with a struggle against the client role to British imperialism. We must publicise and discuss the ideas of the SWM in our organisation fully and openly. We must increase our sales of 'The Worker', although comrades should beware of seeing such sales as the basis of our work on Ireland. We must campaign for our membership to read and financially support 'The Worker'.

These positions must be adopted as the basis of a long-term orientation by the organisation. We must ensure that our position on Ireland is corrected. We must then proceed to systematically work to raise the question of Ireland in the British labour movement.

FOOTNOTES TO 'IRELAND , THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND I. S. '

- (1) Stormont was the name of the Protestant-dominated 'Parliament' in the Six Counties. It sat from 1921 until 1972 when, in the March of that year, the government collapsed, giving way to direct rule. A successful military campaign by the Provisionals provoked a crisis in the ruling-class after Bloody Sunday (January 1972) when fourteen unarmed civilians were murdered by the British Army during a protest demonstration against internment. 'Powersharing' is a reference to the aborted attempt of the Tories to patch together government in the Six Counties after the fall of Stormont. The Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, announced proposals in June 1972 to hold a conference in March 1973 to study a new formula for integrating the Catholic middle-class (via the SDLP) into the sectarian state. In December 1973 a provisional agreement was announced, known as the Sunningdale Communique. The hardline Loyalists' response to this mild questioning of their privileges culminated in May 1974 when the Ulster Workers General Strike brought down 'power-sharing executive', an event which saw widespread, and open collusion between the army, UDR and Protestant para-militaries.
- (2) The correct use of terms in relation to Ireland is most important. The city of Derry, for example, was rechristened 'Londonderry' in the seventeenth century to acknowledge the part played by the City of London in the pillage of that part of Ulster during 'the plantation'. 'Ulster' is one of the historic provinces of Ireland and comprises the Six Counties of N. Ireland in addition to Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan. The name 'Ulster' was retained by the British and Loyalist population and has become a symbol of the 'legitimacy' of the continued occupation of the Six Counties. The occasional use of the term 'Ulster' is, therefore, an error for which we can only apologise.
- (3) The N. F. were, when this document was written, working in close collaboration with the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Despite the fragmentation of the fascists after 1977 the links with the paramilitaries have been maintained. See, for example, "Searchlight", December 1978. (no. 42.)
- (4) The slogan 'For The IRA, Against The British Army' is not the same as 'Victory To The IRA', employed at one time by the IMG. Only a movement led by the working class can lead the national struggle to 'victory'.
- (5) Less widespread, but still visible at the time, was the British labour movement's opposition to British imperialism's war in Ireland. For example, Sheffield Trades Council's 'Open Letter' (27th April 1920) supported the demand for Irish self-determination and backed the call for strike action against military transport supplies and the immediate release of political prisoners.
- (6) That is, the Wilson-Callaghan government of February 1974-May 1979.
- (7) ie, the Communist Party of Great Britain.
- (8) F. Engels. To the General Council, 14th May 1872. In Marx and Engels, 'Ireland and the Irish Question' (Moscow 1971 p303.)

- (9) Lenin. "The National Programme of the RSDLP" (Collected Works (CW) Vol.19 p.544)
- (10) SWM is the Socialist Workers Movement, the fraternal group of the SWP.
- (11) AIL is the Anti-Internment League (1971-73). It was the forerunner to the Troops Out Movement in Britain.
- (12) For the full text see Appendix 1.
- (13) 'Socialist Worker', 27th November 1971.
- (14) *ibid*, 12th February 1972.
- (15) *ibid*, 22nd April 1972.
- (16) Lenin. "Guerilla Warfare". CW Vol.11 p.222.
- (17) Marx. "Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League 1850" Marx/Engels Collected Works (CW) Vol.10 p.282.
- (18) The Narodnicks were Russian populists. They argued that Russia could avoid capitalism and develop socialism directly through the peasant commune. They were followers of Herzen and Bakunin. 'Narodnaya Volya' (Peoples' Will) was a terrorist offshoot that was responsible for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1879.
- (19) L. Trotsky. 'Their Morals and Ours' (New Park 1968 p.46)
- (20) T. Cliff. "Trotsky on Substitutionism" in 'Party and Class' (Pluto Press p.28)
- (21) "Marxism and Terrorism" in 'IS Internal Bulletin'
- (22) 'Socialist Worker', 5th February 1972.
- (23) This is a reference to the two bourgeois nationalist parties in the Twenty-Six Counties; Fine Gael and Fianna Fail.
- (24) See 'Socialist Worker', 29th June 1974.
- (25) The reference to the 1972 ceasefire is to a truce arranged between the Tory Government and the IRA which lasted from 26th June until 9th July. It crumbled over the Lenadoon evictions. M. Farrell's account recalls,
- " The crunch came in Lenadoon, a new mainly Catholic housing estate on the fringe of Andersontown. The N.I. Housing Executive allocated some empty houses formerly occupied by Protestants to Catholic refugees. The UDA objected, and when the Catholic families tried to move in the Army stopped them. There were two days of angry riots in Lenadoon and on 9th July 1972 the Provos opened fire again." 'Northern Ireland: The Orange State' (Pluto Press. p.298)
- (26) Lenin. "Guerilla Warfare". Op Cit. p.214.
- (27) *ibid*, p.231.
- (28) Marx. To Meyer and Vogt. 9th April 1870. Marx/Engels 'Selected Correspondence' ( Moscow 1975. p.222)



- (29) *ibid.*
- (30) Engels. Letter to Kugleman, 8th November 1867. "Ireland and the Irish Question." Op Cit p.145
- (31) Marx. "General Council to the Federal Council of French Switzerland" in Marx/Engels 'Articles on Britain' p.358.
- (32) Lenin. C.W. Vol. 20 p 17-51.
- (33) *ibid.*
- (34) *ibid.* p.35.
- (35) Lenin. "The Socialist Revolution and the Rights of Nations to Self-Determination". C.W. Vol. 22 p.143
- (36) *ibid.* p.151.
- (37) Lenin. "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed-Up". C.W. Vol.22 p.342-43.
- (38) *ibid.* p.343.
- (39) *ibid.* p.344.
- (40) *ibid.* p.356.
- (41) For the full text of these theses see 'Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses'. Ink Links 1980. pp.76-81.
- (42) See L.Trotsky: "Results and Prospects" (1906) and "Permanent Revolution" (1929) in 'Permanent Revolution' (Pathfinder Press, 1978)
- (43) Trotsky. "Permanent Revolution" *ibid.*p.186-87.
- (44) L.Trotsky. 'First Five Years of the Communist International' (New Park, 1973. p.153)
- (45) See "Theses, Resolutions....etc" Op Cit. p.80.
- (46) L.Trotsky. 'First Five Years of the C.I.' Op Cit p.153.
- (47) L.Trotsky. "Germany, What Next?", in 'The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany.' (Penguin, 1975. p.180-81.)
- (48) This section was originally directed against the leadership of I.S. who counterposed the economic to the national struggle and was intended to show that the task of the working class in a country where the national question had not been solved was to take an independently organised leading role within the national struggle. This section, therefore, does not pretend to be a full statement of Workers Power's positions on permanent revolution and Ireland.
- (49) For example, the Irish Labour Part's refusal, in 1918, to stand their own candidates against the nationalists.
- (50) That is, after the seizure of political power by the proletariat.
- (51) The Officials was the name given to the other half of the split in Sinn Fein in 1970 when the 'Provisionals' left in a group around Sean MacStíofáin and

(52) Lenin. "A Caricature of Marxism: Imperialist Economism" C.W. Vol. 23. p.64.

(53) Abstention from such activity was the original 'principle' over which the Provos split in 1970. In fact, for the Officials, the abandonment of abstentionism was but one part of a complete accommodation to the existence of the Six Counties and acceptance of its historic legitimacy. The Provisionals have, recently, also abandoned their abstentionism with regard to elections in the Six and Twenty-Six Counties. For the moment, however, this remains within the context of opposition to partition and the continued use of revolutionary violence. On its own, standing candidates shows more political acumen since there is much propaganda value to be derived from this tactic. But the programme of the Provisionals remains, as before, petit-bourgeois, utopian and, in the last analysis, hostile to the working class.

(54) The truthfulness of this was most recently underlined (1980/81) in the mobilisations across the 32 Counties in support of the Hunger Strikers. For a full account see 'Class Struggle' (Nos.8&9, July-October 1981) by the Irish Workers Group.

(55) Operation Motorman took place on 31st July 1972 when the British army smashed their way into the nationalist 'No-Go' areas of Belfast and Derry. The operation came soon after 'Bloody Friday' (21st July) when 22 bombs (not 25 as the text states) exploded in Belfast. Nine civilians and two soldiers died. One week later 4,000 extra troops were drafted in in readiness for Operation Motorman.

(56) Sean McStiofain, in his 'Memoirs of a Revolutionary' describes the situation when he was near to death:

"Political tension had not been so high in Dublin for decades. These troops were completely inexperienced in serious riot situations on the Northern scale. Bloodshed in the south would have heavy repercussions, with general bitterness and division and there would be untold consequences for the Republican Movement."

So he began to take water the next day and explained why;

"I want all protests to be peaceful, by which I mean no rioting, no stone-throwing, no abuse or name-calling of Twenty-Six county forces. The fight is centred in the North and must be kept there. I do not want anybody hurt or blood spilled on my behalf in the Twenty-Six counties, That is why I am taking liquids."

Nobody can blame McStiofain for ending his hunger strike, but the political justification for it was reprehensible and typical.

(57) Lenin. "Discussion of Self-Determination Summed-Up" C.W. Vol.22 p.355  
Emphasis in the original.

(58) This is no longer the position of Workers Power. See the article on TOM in this pamphlet.

# TEN YEARS OF SOLIDARITY WORK

## THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT (TOM).

One of the political conclusions reached by the Left Faction in the document 'Ireland, IS and the National Question' was that IS must seriously seek to build TOM. Workers Power inherited that position and although we were far from uncritical of the leadership and politics of TOM we maintained that position until after the 1979 TOM conference when we withdrew. From that time we have regarded TOM as an obstacle to the building of an anti-imperialist movement in the working class. A political balance sheet of the rise and fall of TOM is offered here not merely to show the correctness of our attitude to TOM then and now, but to underline the major lessons that must be learned and acted upon if future campaigns are to prove more fruitful.

With the demise of the Anti-Internment League (AIL) in early 1973, the Left Faction were the first on the British left to call for a 'Troops Out' Campaign. Yet due to the opportunism of both the I. S. and the IMG it was left to a few individual activists in London to form the nucleus of Tom in August 1973. From the very beginning of TOM the Left Faction, and later Workers Power, had a conception of how to build TOM that was sharply counterposed to the individuals in the leadership. We always stressed the dangers of impatience. It was always necessary to approach Irish solidarity work stripped of illusions as to its ease, to be wary of always seeking 'high-profile' activities and 'get-big-quick' stunts, unconnected to serious day to day work in the trade unions. A movement for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland was and is unlikely to be on the scale of the 'French out of Algeria' or the 'US out of Vietnam' movements, which involved hundreds of thousands. This is because, in the first place, there is no conscript army in the Six Counties suffering massive casualties which fuels a 'get our lads out of it' sentiment or even a more politically neutral war weary mood. Secondly, British Labour's complicity in imperialism's ruination of Ireland has always been deep-going with only momentary and partial breaches in bipartisanship.

From the start of our work in TOM we insisted upon putting the campaign on a principled anti-imperialist basis. As recently as February 1982 Workers Power had reason to repeat its position to a labour movement conference on Ireland against almost universal opposition. It is worth stating it here:

" Only 'Troops Out Now' expresses the principle that the working

class must be won to. There is no progressive role for British imperialist troops in Northern Ireland. The call for self-determination is inextricably linked up with the chauvinist 'get the boys back home' call and makes clear our opposition to ruling class moves to devolve military responsibility for a unionist state upon the UDF or the RUC. It directly condemns partition." (1)

Contrary to this view the TOM leadership downplayed the political importance of the two central demands and peddled the illusion of an easy road to a 'mass and broad-based movement' If that perspective involved leaving aside the anti-imperialism then so it had to be. In a document-'What is TOM?'- written by the leadership faction in 1975 it was argued;

" The two demands of TOM were never seen as a limitation and a straight-jacket on TOM's activity, but rather as a way of allowing TOM the necessary flexibility to operate with the new forces active on the Irish question."

This attitude subsequently led to dropping the principled slogans in practice. For example, on the October 27th, 1974 demonstration the main TOM banner was "British Troops Out of Ireland" which deliberately failed to distinguish itself as an anti-imperialist demand. In justification for this, and other, examples that were to follow the TOM leaders would judge success or failure only in terms expressed in 'What is TOM?': "Did this demo help to build the TOM?"

These incidents served to illustrate the political gap that separated the TOM leadership from Workers Power. We tried to turn TOM into a vibrant united front organisation of labour movement bodies with a leadership that reflected this base. This was never to happen. On the one side, there was the wilful abstention of the left groups in the early years of TOM, which thereby allowed the leadership clique to go largely unchallenged. On the other, there was the obvious willingness of TOM to give up the fight for a small base in the working class and with it, the preparedness to undertake a lengthy period of patient propaganda within the rank and file of the trade unions. The substitute was to be a 'broader' approach which meant 'raising' the question of Ireland in any form with the aid of labour-movement 'progressives'. In fact, the practical implication of this was to limit the political impact of the Irish question to that allowed by the 'progressive' fellow-travellers, namely, to liberal pro-imperialism.

The labour movement approach of TOM, whilst formally a priority before 1977, was angled around the Labour Party M.P's who habitually voted against the PTA renewal in the House of Commons. However, since TOM had not previously laid down some solid roots of anti-imperialism in the trade union and Labour Party branches, TOM was constantly forced to let the political running be made by the MP's. If no Labour MP's were prepared to support 'Troops Out Now' then the cost of continued liason was not fighting for an anti-imperialist approach which would inevitably involve clashes with these 'progressives'.

For TOM this relationship with labourism was most important. It was established in 1974 before a national structure for TOM existed, with local branches doing serious work in the labour movement to gain the vital political independ-

ence. Consequently, the illusion grew that it was possible to split the PLP over Ireland and TOM's criticisms of the PLP became muted. Workers Power was never opposed to relating to Labour MP's but as we said, as early as 1975;

" The crucial issue in the 'use' of Labour MP's is do they bring their supporters into the movement? Do they help revolutionaries to get through to the broad strata of LP influenced workers?"(2)

The answer to this has generally been 'no'. Invariably, for example, TOM did not, and does not, find Joan Maynard MP opening up her supporters to anti-imperialist propaganda; rather, TOM laid open already committed activists to leftist pro-imperialist apologies. In place of sharp polemic with the likes of Maynard and united fronts in action with her and her supporters around limited but progressive measures TOM created a mutual admiration society with left-reformists.

The willingness of the TOM leaders and the 'progressives' to use each other, and in particular, the failure to draw in labourites into the responsible positions of leadership meant that TOM inevitably degenerated into an introspective and comfortable clique. 'Building TOM' became, not the building of a united front with a leadership that was constantly fluid representing the fortunes of TOM's work in the unions, but the building of a separate organisation with a separate set of politics and membership. Way back in 1975 Workers Power warned that continued lack of an independent anti-imperialist base,

"...leaves the TOM not a proper united front- indeed, not a united front at all. It creates a TOM leadership and members, a most unusual situation, since united fronts only have the leadership and members of their constituent parties. It is clearly undesirable that TOM crystallise into an organisation ( you cannot have a party on one issue, and in TOM's case, not even a full programme for that issue either). Such an organisation, once formed, would act as an obstacle to the building of a real united front drawing in trade union delegates at a local and national level" (3)

Between the first public event of TOM- a meeting in Fulham Town Hall in November 1973- to 1977, the tendencies we warned about came to dominate. Yet in that period there were important steps taken which, if developed, could have augured better things. By its activities TOM did recognise that the working class was the social force that had to be the focus of Irish solidarity work. Labour movement delegate conferences were held in the May of 1974 and again in May 1975, the latter attracting some 328 delegates. The October 1974 Irish solidarity demonstration attracted 21 labour movement organisations less than four months after TOM was given a national structure.

All this was, of course, positive up to a point; yet it should be remembered that both at the conferences and the demonstrations the anti-imperialist core was very small. From the outset TOM took the easy, but eventually self-defeating, path of holding educational forums where labour movement delegates would learn of the current events, hidden from them by the media. Whilst there was, and is, a role for such events, they cannot be the main aim of an anti-imperialist solidarity movement in its infancy. Smaller conferences of delegates, having already been won to an anti-imperialist position in the branches

by prior argument would have been more meaningful, allowing these events to be working conferences to discuss how to take the work forward. Instead, they would meet, drawing together people united only by an 'interest' in Ireland. Politically disparate, they would commit themselves to little. Invariably, the potential of any initiative would evaporate after the conference.

Exactly the same can be said of the various labour movement delegations to Ireland. The Autumn 1976 delegation was first of all organised by TOM in such a way as to prevent the organising committee of sponsoring bodies from being formed to determine the activities and policies of the delegation. Even worse was to follow. The planned report-backs were a disaster. A conference was called over a year later with less than half the delegates in attendance. In short, it was a nine-day wonder designed to create publicity to keep membership and funds alive but with no really serious attitude to developing work in the class.

#### THE SPLIT AND THE CREATION OF UTOM.

The enveloping and dispiriting cliquism that pervaded TOM by the mid-1970's coincided with a real downturn in the fortunes of the national struggle in the Six counties, together with increased repression and decreased sympathy on the mainland after the Birmingham pub bombings. As a result there was a serious disintegration in TOM in the 1976/77 period, with a massive drop in membership and a decline in the number of branches active in the localities.

The demoralisation culminated in a split in 1977. This was engineered by Big Flame and the IMG at the April conference where they demanded the removal of the Sean Read leadership and left when they failed to achieve it. However, although they went on to form the United Troops Out Movement in July 1977 with some 200 people, it was not a principled political alternative to TOM. The IMG and Big Flame in fact objected to the concentration on the organisations of the working class, although they couched it as an objection to 'pressure group' politics orientated to the Committee Rooms of the House of Commons. In its place they desired 'mass action', raising Ireland in the course of existing struggles that workers were already or would be engaged in. At one level the relative vitality of UTOM ensured the virtual disappearance of TOM. But at another level it was a further step away from an anti-imperialist solidarity movement.

UTOM brought the subjective desires of the petit-bourgeois activists into line with the objective difficulties of raising Ireland in the working class. In short, UTOM's activities were tailored to the needs of its members. The delegate structure of TOM was abandoned and the labour movement prioritisation was overthrown. Thus, in the October 1977 issue of UTOM's paper, 'Troops Out', it was announced that the labour movement was now to be but one 'field of interest' alongside many others. Sub-committees existed for the suitably motivated on the trade unions, Labour Party, women's movement, black movement, Irish community, students and youth.

If anything UTOM (which changed its name back to TOM in 1979) was a political step backwards. Tailoring UTOM's work to the easiest periphery and the imme-

diate concerns of that periphery did result in greater numbers, mainly non-working class, being involved. In July 1977 UTOM had only seven branches but by mid-1978 the total had climbed to about thirty. Yet the activities of UTOM almost completely obscured the formal anti-imperialism of its two demands. UTOM/TOM was to become increasingly like the Second International with the two demands informing the odd article or speeches to the converted, while moral humanitarianism dominated 59% of practical activity.

The nadir of this method was reached with the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland. From 1978 this dominated the work of UTOM. Of what did it consist? As with the Amnesty and Bennet Reports, to get reputable personages to document and prove the existence of torture in the Six counties. Explicitly not anti-imperialist (and containing several pro-imperialists), the Tribunal was conceived as an exercise which would expose the real depth of violence and torture in NI to the British working class thus making it easier to win the anti-imperialist arguments later. As Pat Arrowsmith, a leading UTOM member argued;

" For although the Tribunal does not (and by its nature cannot) call for troops out yet, by exposing the atrocities being perpetrated by the British in the north it may lead more and more people and organisations to the realisation that troops must be withdrawn." (4)

UTOM's reasoning is absurd. It is first of all based on a misconception about the real nature of the 'conspiracy of silence' over news from the Six counties. Mere acquaintance with the facts of British repression do not convince a British worker of its injustice. As far as s/he is concerned torture may well be justified because s/he sees the IRA as 'thugs' and 'unfeeling cowards'. It makes the job of an anti-imperialist no easier. In fact, other organisations will, to one degree or another, reveal these facts. There are precious few anti-imperialists however, to shape an argument that breaks the worker from their tacit acceptance that the troops or RUC are fully justified in engaging in torture. In the last analysis, the British state does not fear the revelation of British violence (witness the Bennet Report). It does, however, seek to cover-up the truth about Irish resistance to the troops, its successes and the degree of support for the resistance in the nationalist ghettos.

The leading ideologues for the Tribunal on the centrist left- the IMG- made the greatest claims for it. In a paper to the June 1979 UTOM/TOM conference they argued;

" The Tribunal will not breach the wall of silence- it will step right through it."

Who remembers its findings today?

At that 1979 Conference Workers Power initiated the only principled opposition to this course, along the lines of the arguments in this pamphlet. So entrenched was the opportunism within UTOM that our resolutions received only seven votes.

In many respects UTOM/TOM was traumatised by the failure of the Tribunal to produce the breakthrough envisaged. It was just one failed stunt too much. The crisis of direction, similar to 1976/77 reappeared. It reacted to the 1980/81 hunger strikes with all the moralism that failed in the case of the Tribunal,

rejecting the centrality of the case for political status and seeking, in its place, a 'broad' alliance on the basis of a humanitarian desire (worthy, but ineffectual) to save lives and improve prison conditions. Once again, TOM failed the test, failed to present an anti-imperialist argument. They thus failed to confront head on the political bond that tied workers to Thatcher and Foot who were immune to the maudlin sentiment of the clergy.

The hunger-strikes came at a time of ebb for TOM. It failed to galvanise itself through its low key campaign. Today TOM is moribund, eclipsed by the Labour Committee on Ireland carrying on TOM politics in the Labour Party and the Irish Freedom Movement. It can only preserve a semblance of organisational life, it appears, by 'broadening' its concerns beyond Ireland to the all-embracing issue of anti-repression, dragging black youth, gays and others into its clutches. A failed clique, a swamp of centrist moralism; TOM has been everything but what the Left Faction called for ten years ago - a principled anti-imperialist, Troops Out Now, Self-Determination, current patiently laying foundations in the rank and file of the trade union movement.

#### FOOTNOTES.

- (1) Workers Power No. 30.
- (2) Workers Power; Perspectives for Irish Work.
- (3) ibid.
- (4) 'Troops Out'. February, 1979.



# SECTARIANS FILL THE VACUUM

## THE IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT

TOM has not been the only solidarity campaign on the British left since 1973 which has attempted to organise support for the Irish freedom fighters. The Prisoners Action Committees, run by the RCG, had a high profile in the late 1970's. The Labour Committee on Ireland has, since 1979, increasingly taken over TOM's franchise on Irish solidarity work within the Labour Party. In addition, the vacuum created by TOM's demise has allowed a sectarian force to rush in. Originally formed as the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act (SPTAC) by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency (RCT) in late 1979, and now called the Irish Freedom Movement (IFM), this solidarity campaign has an obvious organisational vitality as compared to TOM. It can usually rally greater numbers for pickets and conferences than TOM. During Easter 1982 the IFM even managed to organise a 100 or so strong youth delegation to Derry and Belfast, an enterprise invented, and once the preserve of, TOM itself.

How then do we assess this challenge to the opportunism of TOM? Does it offer a principled alternative? We do not think so. Many of the formal criticisms the IFM makes of TOM are correct. They are made in this pamphlet and were articulated by Workers Power and the Left Faction long before the RCT were born. Nevertheless, the conclusions that they have drawn are flawed and need to be rejected by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and those drawn to the IFM if they are to participate in the building of an anti-imperialist solidarity movement in Britain.

## THE POLITICAL BASIS OF IRISH WORK

Our first set of criticisms of the RCP's work concerns the political criteria that governs activity around the Irish question. Namely, what are the answers to the following; what are the tasks that a revolutionary group faces in carrying out 'unconditional but critical support' for an anti-colonial struggle? How are the two sides related in practice, that is, what relative weight should they be given?

Appalled by the capitulation of the centrists in the face of the reaction to republican violence, the RCP have saddled themselves with a one-sided notion of what 'unconditional support' entails. It has been argued, for example,

"The RCT gives unconditional support to national liberation movements and we particularly give such support to the movement

for Ireland's liberation. We have our criticisms of the programmes of the organisations leading the movements ... But we have never used our review to criticise the IRA..."

because,

"Today any criticism of the IRA only gives succour to the forces of British chauvinism."

Furthermore,

"When we have won large numbers of British workers to respond to IRA bombs with jubilation, when explosions result in trade unions calling for strike action and mass demonstrations to force the immediate withdrawal of British troops, then there will be a time to criticise the programme of Provisional Sinn Fein." (1)

We disagree strongly with this view. Workers Power centres its work around the need to develop an international communist programme for the working class. Our propaganda is focussed towards that task. As revolutionary communists, seeking to train a vanguard, we have to steel the working class to be irreconcilably opposed to the state, but also to those political currents who cannot lead the fight against the state to a successful conclusion. Whilst it is clear that the concrete tasks within the respective labour movements of Ireland and Britain are different in their tactical emphasis, there is no brick wall between them. To build one is to renounce the task of training a communist cadre. For the RCP, internationalism is merely nationalism stood on its head -uncritical support for physical force republicanism- even though it is known that this force cannot lead the fight against the British state to a proletarian victory.

The RCP have explicitly denied that a propaganda group can and must develop a programme for the international struggle, despite such a groups inability, on a number of fronts, to implement it practically. Only when the RCP have a group in organisational competition to the IRA on the ground would they consider raising criticisms of the Provos. As a result the RCP renounce the need to develop a programme in opposition to republicanism now.

In Ireland the chief task of revolutionaries is the political exposure of the physical force tradition together with their centrist apologists. Only through the elaboration of focussed propaganda around the perspective of Permanent Revolution and practical united front work against the RUC and the Army, can a party be built which brings the working class to the head of the nationalist struggle and so smash partition and institute a 32 county Irish Workers Republic. At every turn it is necessary to confront and break down the allegiance of the nationalist population to all brands of republicanism. In Britain, we subordinate this to a merciless attack on the British state. We do not place any demands on the Provos or INLA to give up any of its methods of struggle before we will work in the trade unions and Labour Party to get the working class to side with the IRA against the state.

However, our unconditional support only extends to their actions against British imperialism or its agents. This includes its economic structures, political representatives or military goons. Yet we remain highly critical of its relation and practice towards the working class and progressive petit-bourgeoisie in Ireland.

This distinction between the British imperialists and Loyalists on the one side, and the working class on the other is crucial for our conception of unconditional but critical support. In its place, the RCP make a false distinction between the methods the IRA and INLA use in their struggle and the content of their programme for social change. (2) The RCP are unconditional with regard to the methods employed (bombs etc) and critical (although silent!) with respect to the latter. This error, for example, leads them to apologise and, worse, advocate, the forms of elitist tactics used by the Provos. They maintain that revolutionary communists would inevitably use the same tactics. They thereby obliterate the distinction between the need for secrecy in the planning and execution of individual operations and the need for the nationalist working class to exercise political control, through its elected representatives, over the political direction of the military campaign.

It is simply wrong of the RCP to divide up the means and the ends of physical force republicanism. The forms of struggle adopted by the IRA and INLA are the means by which they implement their programme. We are equally critical of both from the standpoint of the interests of the Irish working class, yet we will support the nationalists right to use any methods at hand which serve to break up or destabilise British imperialism's oppressive rule.

Workers Power does not draw any distinction between civilian or army casualties that result from attacks made on British imperialist interests. Both are inevitable in a war of national liberation and the responsibility for deaths must lie with the British state which ensures them through their oppressive presence. We even support the IRA's right to carry out such attacks on the mainland. Despite this it is still nonsense to argue, as 'the next step' has done, that, "To question a particular act of violence carried out in the struggle is to question the right of the Irish people to fight for their freedom". (3)

With typical ultra-left over-generalisation the RCP obliterate what is a crucial distinction for revolutionary communists; namely, the right of the oppressed to resist by whatever way it can, and the political limitations of the resistance movement. It is not a matter of singling out a 'particular act' for criticism. All acts of resistance carried out under the leadership of the Provos will have the same defects; it is immaterial what the precise nature of the target was, where it was located, or what was the composition of the casualty list. As long as they are targets that are part of a discernable struggle against the British state we defend their right to carry it out and we will resist the attempts of 'our' government to confine it or destroy the exercise of that right. But we must and do use the occasion of a 'particular act' to use it as a symbol of the bankruptcy of the Provo or INLA strategy.

The real point of issue is how, in what manner, is the criticism raised? In what context does it appear? It is obvious, as the Left Faction document shows, that the SWP, for example, have criticised the IRA's actions in such a way that they are merely echoing the prejudices of the bourgeoisie as they filter through the British working class. Yet the SWP are an easy target. Workers Power believes that the way we have reacted to such tests is wholly different. (4) Criticism is subordinated to support but not absent; and it is critical from a revolutionary point of view. In short, it is a communist response.

Against this the RCP are reduced to the argument that our readers will interpret our support as just a subtle form of chauvinism; that is, that he or she is not intelligent enough to grasp what is really being said. In the end this kind of nonsense is derived from the rigid, formal thinking that characterises the whole political method of the RCP. Our method allows us to differentiate between the responsibilities that fall upon a communist propaganda organ and the necessary tactical flexibility that is a vital part of practical work within the labour movement. Workers Power is responsible enough, for example, to realise what the tasks of the moment are in a chauvinist trade unionist branch in the immediate aftermath of republican violence. The stick may have to be bent considerably in the direction of unconditional, as opposed to critical support. Yet the party press, especially of a propaganda organisation, (and the RCP objectively remains one also despite its pretensions) demands a rounded position. It testifies to the confusion of the RCP that its paper, 'the next step' is half a party paper and half a solidarity bulletin for various causes. If the IFM had any real political independence from the RCP, that is, it drew in other labour movement forces, it would have its own bulletins. These bulletins would carry material explaining the nationalists case in an anti-imperialist context, and in every way seek to undermine the arguments of the imperialists. But if that were to happen, what would the RCP have left to publish in 'the next step'?

For the RCP and the IFM solidarity work consists in part in confusing the working class vanguard about the distinction between republicanism, its tasks and methods, and revolutionary communism. They have become so disgusted at the record of the British labour movement on Ireland that, not content with working to break the rank and file from complicity in the crimes of its official leadership, the RCP intend to punish the working class by rallying it uncritically to physical force republicanism, at which point, having served its political penance, no doubt it will be rewarded at a future date with 24 carat RCP bolshevism.

Blurring the important distinctions, 'bending the stick' until it breaks, has led the RCP to peddle unpardonable confusions in a totally light-minded fashion. Take, for example, the slogan 'Bring The War To Britain'. This was meant to summarise their position on solidarity and first made its appearance in the build-up to the Tameside Conference on Ireland, scheduled for March 1980. The RCP has never justified its use. In a reply to an attack on the slogan (5) they merely use long quotes from Lenin and Trotsky which stress the duty of revolutionaries to support nationalist uprisings. Yet this uncontentious, if demagogic reply aside, no reason as to why that particular slogan best summed up the position of unconditional support was advanced. The fact is, of course, that the RCP designed it to be ambiguous. Bring the war to the attention of British workers? Advocating a bombing campaign on the mainland? Take your choice. Political precision and the need to clarify the issues comes second place to the sectarian desire to be provocative for its own sake, to encourage, again for its own sake, the wrath of the TUC in order to produce meaning less martyrdom for the SPTAC. It is a disgraceful tactic precisely because it gives the labour bureaucrats an easy target and allows them to maintain the conspiracy of silence that ensures workers remain immune to anti-imperialist arguments.

That the usage of the slogan was not derived from any scientific understanding but rather the pressing needs of a sectarian stunt is proven by the ease with which it was dropped, without any explanation. Having served its purpose, it was replaced by the formulation 'open up a second front of the Irish war in Britain'. (6) This itself was soon phased out. By the time the February 1982 IFM conference came around the slogan had become the politically innocuous and potentially opportunist, 'Ireland: time for British workers to act.'

The last two years have seen tremendous developments in Ireland. From the start of the first hunger-strike to the Assembly elections in the Six Counties, the nationalist population have taken to streets and left them again, the Provos, through Sinn Fein have turned to the ballot box and INLA has emerged as a serious rival to the IRA. What are workers to learn from these events?

Before these events the RCP said this;

"At a certain stage of the struggle the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois leadership of the national movements realise that their class interests can only be defended through a compromise with imperialism. It is the failure of the leaderships of the national movements to pursue a consistent struggle against imperialism that socialists must criticise." (7)

This isolated reference to the duty of socialists has remained a dead-letter for the RCP. Whilst they have taken Charles Haughey—a bourgeois nationalist—to task, they have stood back from critically analysing the practice of the Sinn Fein during the hunger-strikes or assessing the significance of the electoral turn. Have we not seen a failure of leadership, have we not witnessed any compromises with imperialism? One will look in vain to 'the next step' for an answer. (8)

#### FROM SPTAC TO THE IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT.

It is with these political conceptions that the RCP have organised their Irish solidarity work. When we look at the record of SPTAC and the IFM it is clear that they are guilty of two, interrelated errors. First, they organise the work in a sectarian fashion, disavowing genuine united front work, and inviting support only on condition that one observes the political monopoly of the RCP. Secondly, (and increasingly since the formation of the IFM) the building of the IFM's initiatives smack of rank political opportunism that even TOM would be proud of.

Before detailing this record let us once more remind ourselves of how Workers Power has argued the case for Irish solidarity work. 'Troops Out Now!' and 'Self-determination' are the indispensable minimum for an anti-imperialist 'troops out' campaign. We would not make it a condition of building that movement that workers agree with unconditional support for republican military actions, although revolutionaries are obliged to try and win them to that position. At the heart of this attitude is our understanding of the united front, that is, an agreement for common action which has a principled progressive thrust around a part of our programme, through which it is possible to draw in vitally important sections of the working class. In doing this we are recognising that a struggle around a limited but positive demand provides the best

conditions for convincing workers of the superiority of our politics over those of their present leaders. Most crucially, it provides the best opportunity for provoking the present leaders into action or stand condemned in their eyes as saboteurs of positive action, action which does not require them to renounce their whole political outlook, which would strike workers as an unreasonable condition given the as yet partial nature of their awareness on the issue themselves.

The RCP considers it in an altogether different manner. For them the record of the Labour Party and trade union officialdom is self-evidently appalling. It is merely enough to acquaint workers with this record and organise an alternative pole of activity in order to break workers from their complicity in this crime against the Irish people. The RCP deny the validity of proposing to work in this way—on two grounds. First, that it implies that the labourite leaders can become something that they cannot, namely, revolutionaries. Secondly, that because the revolutionary vanguard is small, with little leverage in the labour movement, it can be safely ignored by the leaders of social-democracy. As a result, the RCP maintain, continued attempts in this direction inevitably leads watering down one's politics to make them more acceptable to Labour M. P's and trade union lefts, which deguts the politics of anything positive.

The first objection misunderstands the aim of the united front which is not to dress up reformists as revolutionaries but seeks to unite as large a section of the class as possible around demands (eg political status) which does not require them to become revolutionaries overnight but puts the politics of reformism under strain and creates the best climate for those politics to be transcended. The second complaint is a typical piece of impressionism, a wild generalisation based on the practice of several opportunist groups such as the SWP or IMG whose impatience has led them persistently to smooth down the rough edges of their politics to ensure they do not cut against certain reformist currents. Of course, this is not to deny that marginalisation does not provide problems and backward pressures on groups seeking to implement united fronts; but propaganda along these lines is as important in that it can underscore the treachery of reformist leaders who are seen to refuse the possibility of action against a common enemy.

Nobody is suggesting that we wait for labourism to organise action before we undertake it, or that we undertake it only on condition that they involve themselves at some point. Nevertheless, in seeking to mobilise the rank and file for action it must never be lost sight of that that part of the task is to generate pressure upon the leaders to force them to reconsider their inactivity. This is not because we want the likes of Tony Benn and Alan Sapper involved for their own contribution but because we recognise that whatever early successes are achieved, people such as those command influence over the majority of potential activists that are indispensable to us if we are to wrest even the smallest concessions never mind great victories. As we shall show the RCP so carry out their work that in scorning this approach they exclude the possibility of involving the leaders of the labour movement or sections of them in organisation and mobilisation of the united work so undermining its effectiveness.

The SPTAC was launched in late 1979. In itself there is absolutely nothing wrong with a labour movement campaign designed to getting the Act removed, or at least rendered ineffective. In fact, it provides an excellent example of how it is possible to 'raise Ireland' in the labour movement. The PTA is used to terrorise the Irish community in Britain and to harras trade unionists. Many rank and file trade unionists, Labour Party members and others are opposed to it or at least uncommitted to its use. They might well support such a campaign. It would not, could not be a surrogate for an anti-imperialist solidarity movement but it could and should draw such people towards such a movement. It would, of course, be nonsense to make it a condition of work in a campaign against the PTA that militants be conscious anti-imperialists or support the right of the nationalists to resist arms in hand. But work alongsid those militants against the PTA would give us every opportunity to win them over. In addition it would be a measure of the success of such a campaign that the revolutionary wing could relinquish its organisational control by drawing in reformist delegates from trade union and Labour Party branches, while maximising its political influence.

This is not how the RCP viewed the SPTAC. Its aims were set out as follows;

"The campaign has three immediate objectives. First, to organise defence for victims of the PTA by means of legal aid, pickets and publicity. Secondly, to obtain and disseminate information about the use of the PTA.... Third, and most importantly, to play a part in building an anti-imperialist movement against the Irish war in the British working class!(9)

The first two aims would form the basis of any PTA campaign. Yet there is a crippling limitation to the campaign when they are simply left at that level. The RCP's sectarian view of the Labour Party prevents them campaigning around a very important demand, namely, the repeal of the PTA and, in particular, a call on the Labour Party to include a manifesto committment to scrap it. Without mobilising the energy of activists to this end amongst others a vital offensive aspect of the campaign is lost, leaders are not put to the test, and the campaign is for the most part reduced to a minimal, defensive campaign, which leaves the political initiative in the hands of the state.

As a complement to the minimum programme, the declaration of aims has a maximum programme, 'the building of an anti-imperialist movement'. What does this mean? It is very unlikely that reformists, participating in a campaign against the PTA would be subjective anti-imperialists from the outset. Presumably, people who did not support 'Troops Out Now' were excluded from SPTAC? Even though we think that would be wrong it would be the only principled conclusion to be drawn from the third aim of SPTAC. In fact, behind this rather general third aim is something altogether more demanding, and certainly something that would guarantee the non-participation of even the best reformists opposed to the PTA. One editorial in the 'next step' argued;

"The labour movement conference on Ireland called by the SPTAC in Coventry on March 14th will be an important stage in extending a working class outlook on the Irish war in Britain. On no other question is the proletarian position- unconditional support for the republican movement- so sharply counterposed to the bourgeois view."(10)

Moreover, in the same issue, Dave Halsworthy (RCP) stated that;

"The Coventry conference has been called by the SPTAC with a view to drive the class collaboration policy out of the TUC."

Now the sectarian logic has been made absolutely clear, nobody can remain in doubt. To be part of a campaign against the PTA it is necessary to support all aspects of republican violence and be already an implacable enemy of TUC policy on Ireland. Thus it precludes in advance serious militants who remain unconvinced on these last two points. The SPTAC, then, was never about the PTA at all; it was a front organisation for the RCP to draw in the least organised and the unwary. By blurring the distinction between the tasks of a revolutionary organisation and those of a more limited, yet principled initiative, the RCP and the SPTAC did a great disservice to the labour movement and squandered the chance of organising an effective anti-PTA campaign. By its ultra-left stance it allowed the TUC to easily distance itself from a genuine campaign against the PTA. Not that the latter would have been likely, but it could have prevented them from acting in a draconian fashion against those who were opposing the use of the PTA by depriving the TUC of some of their most effective political ammunition. The absence of a serious campaign on this issue has also let the bi-annual abstainers in the Labour Party (when the vote for PTA renewal comes up) off the hook. Such is the sterility of the sectarian.

Yet as Trotsky never ceased to remind us wherever sectarianism was to be found its political twin-opportunism- was to be seen lurking close by. The RCP have not escaped this logic. Because the SPTAC was the RCP it could not involve labour movement leaders or bodies in it on an equal basis. A real united front requires action, requires real forces to be drawn into the campaign by those leaders who support it. That is the cost we make the reformists pay for our tactical compromise. The SPTAC could not do this. All it could, and did, do was to advertise its existence and say, 'Take it or leaveit' to the labour movement.

This was the attitude of the SPTAC towards the Irish march they organised in September 1981, a march on the TUC Conference. Its sponsors included Ken Livingstone. We have been told, correctly, many times by the RCP that this man is not an anti-imperialist (See N.S. No.23 & 31). What then are people to make of Livingstone's support for the march on the TUC, a march which has as its political basis everything the SPTAC stood for, up to and including 'unconditional support for the national liberation struggle'. We are forced to conclude that it was a deeply cynical and opportunist manoeuvre by the RCP to generate interest and respectability for the march. It was a deal between Livingstone and the RCP. Livingstone lends his name and asks for no control over the event. The RCP in return allows Livingstone to dress himself up as an anti-imperialist and is not required to do anything which tests his support such as mobilise those over whom he exerts some influence. Blank cheques all around.

This opportunism became more pronounced during 1982 as the limits of a purely sectarian drive against the TUC became apparent. The change from SPTAC to IFM in February 1982 signified nothing new save the realisation



that the Prevention of Terrorism Act was becoming peripheral to the SPTAC. The SPTAC was no match for the TUC; its ultra-leftism guaranteed that it would make no real headway into the trade unions, making itself too easy a target. On the other hand, the RCP's politics will ensure that it is always easier to make inroads into the least organised sections, into those layers who are least weighed down by the traditions of labourism (eg blacks, youths, students.) The hunger strikes of 1980/81 impressed the RCP by the number of youth that showed support (11). Recruitment is generally easier among these layers. For these reasons the SPTAC was given a new coat of paint and re-named the IFM. It has the same politics as its predecessor and the same opportunist invite to the unwary;

"...any supporter of Irish Freedom (sic) whatever their political affiliation are welcome to join our movement".(11)

The RCP pulls the strings, you jump. The Easter 1982 delegation to Derry and Belfast was built for in a similar opportunist fashion. It was neither recruited to or sponsorships sought on the basis of anti-imperialism. On the contrary, the youth were invited to go merely on the basis of 'seeing what its like' and labour movement bodies invited to support it on the same lines. It appears as though the ghost of TOM has returned to haunt the RCP.

There can be no doubt that in a period when there is very little solidarity activity in evidence over the Irish struggle, the organisational vitality of the IFM appears seductive. But activity, however frenzied, cannot be a substitute for a correct political orientation. Until the IFM and its warden the RCP rejects the method upon which both were founded they will be unable to build an anti-imperialist solidarity movement within the strongholds of the working class.

#### FOOTNOTES.

(1) 'the next step' No.10.

(2) *ibid.*

(3) See F. Richards, "No Equivocation" in 'Revolutionary Communist Papers' No.2.

(4) See, for example, the pieces in 'Workers Power' Nos. 8 & 37 on Warrenpoint and Ballykelly.

(5) 'the next step' No.4

(6) See, 'the next step' No.8

(7) 'the next step' No.10. "Why we give unconditional support."

(8) For an assessment of the political failures of the IRA see W.P.no. 27.

(9) 'the next step' No.2

(10) 'the next step' No.10

(11) 'the next step' No.23

# FOURTH INTERNATIONAL THESES ON IRELAND (1944)

## Vested Interests and the Border

Britain, far from deriving super-profits out of her occupation of the six North-Eastern counties of Ireland, suffers a considerable financial loss; for, while it is true that there are British businessmen with interests in Ulster, it is also certain that these interests would be completely compensated, and a residue retained, if the British Exchequer were to withdraw its subsidies towards the upkeep of the swollen Orange bureaucracy and the maintenance of social services in Ulster at the British level. Even in wartime Ulster is a depressed area. Despite the 40,000 skilled workers driven to find work in British war industries there are still 25,000 officially unemployed out of a total population of a million and a quarter. Peacetime unemployment is considerably higher than in any other part of the United Kingdom. Several million pounds sterling are mulcted annually from the English taxpayer for the upkeep of the Orange puppet statelet.

The fact is, however, that British overhead expenses in Ulster fall into precisely the same category as do grants to the armed forces, or the police - even when these expenses take the form not of direct outlays on behalf of the colossal Ulster police force, and other sections of the state, but of maintenance of social services and the provision of orders to Ulster industry during the 'normal' depression periods. Britain maintains its garrison in Ulster, not primarily as a means of coercing the Irish people, but to counteract the possibility of a rival imperialism establishing a military bridgehead in the British Isles. The occupation engenders sentiments of revolt, however, and necessitates the preservation of 'order', ie, the coercion of the nationalist population...

The Orange bosses and bureaucrats, for their part, need to have their fingers directly dipped in England's economic pie. That is why they are given representation in the Westminster Parliament. At a time when great monopolies largely derive their super-profits by a barely-concealed plundering of the Exchequer, and when worthwhile orders come only to those directly in the swim, it is a life and death question for Ulster capitalists to maintain a direct connection with the British state. That is why all De Valera's promises of virtual autonomy for the North within a united Ireland, if only Stormont would agree to sever its direct connection with Britain, have gone unheeded. Without State representation at Westminster their industries would die,

for out of sight is out of mind. If Britain sacrificed them in a deal with De Valera they would look for a new imperialist paymaster. Orange 'loyalty' has its world market price.

### Eire and the Border

As her neutrality in the war underscores, Eire is de facto a sovereign Irish Republic, notwithstanding the slim pretence of British Dominion status kept up by Westminster. British Liberalism bought out the absentee landlord class (with the Irish peasants' own money to be sure!) to stave off a revolutionary seizure of the land. The Easter Week rising and the Anglo-Irish war brought an end to the foreign occupation of the South. Under the De Valera regime fiscal autonomy has enabled a host of petty manufacturing industries to struggle into being. Saddled with exorbitant interest rates on capital borrowed from British investors, and dependent on British monopolies for all primary materials, costs have been excessively high; and the dwindling, impoverished population cannot provide a market sufficient to absorb at a profitable level the output of labour-saving machinery in use elsewhere. Already the pathetic 'industrialisation' period, begun only a few years ago, is at a close.

A chronic unfavourable ballance of trade, rapidly dwindling foreign assets, a falling birthrate, mass unemployment and wholesale immigration to England revealed that the incurable maladies of world capitalist economy were eating at the vitals of the new sovereign statelet of Eire. The Second World War has only accentuated this disintegration. Today there are a hundred thousand unemployed within the 26 counties of Eire; while scores of thousands of others have been forced by unemployment into British war industries or the British armed forces. The export of men, sending home part of the proceeds of their earnings, has come to rival the agricultural export industry in importance.

Irish bourgeois nationalism had already exhausted its mission as a vehicle for the development of the productive forces before any real development took place. International socialism alone can ensure a fresh upswing in production for Ireland; and it is precisely for this reason that the one uncompleted task of the bourgeois revolution, national unification, can only be solved by the proletarian revolution. The inclusion of the six Ulster counties within the framework of the national state would only hasten the decline of the already stagnant heavy industries in the North without furthering the development of Southern industry to any appreciable degree. National unification under the capitalist system, by plunging the hostile Protestant proletariat of the northern industries into permanent unemployment, would either lead straight to the victory of the social revolution or to fascism. There could be no middle way...

At times in the recent past the nationalist fervour of the common people of Ireland must have seemed dim, or dead, not only to the casual observer but to the workers themselves. But it only lay dormant, ready to blaze into life again. For the famous patriotism of the Irish people is something more than a traditional hangover, or a state of mind induced by bourgeois propaganda. It is an emotion of revolt, engendered by centuries of national degradation, kept alive by the knowledge that yesterday's powerful imperialist oppressor still

occupies a part of the national territory and may yet lay a claim to the South of Ireland.

When Tom Williams was hanged by the Stormont regime last year, flags were flown at half mast throughout Eire, the shops of the main Dublin thoroughfares closed as a mark of respect and protest rallies, organised by the Reprieve Committee, were held throughout the country. The threat of conscript in Ulster in 1941 created a crisis in Eire overnight and a wave of anti-British sentiment swept over the Southern workers. The workers' patriotism is their pride in their age-old fight against imperialism. This is an ennobling sentiment, notwithstanding the poisonous bourgeois chauvinism mixed into it by the capitalist politicians and their reformist and Stalinist hangers-on who at all times seek to manipulate the freedom-loving aspirations of the workers for their own reactionary ends.

The rich ranchers and rentiers are pro-British. The small farmers and the basic section of the bourgeoisie which is interested in production and trade for the domestic market look to England with strong forebodings. Britain is still a bourgeois democracy and it is not so easy just yet to get down to seizing the Eire ports; for, besides the huge numbers of Irish in British industries and the army, the English workers in uniform would not go willingly into an aggression against the 'almost English' people of Eire.

#### Catholic Church's Mass Basis

If Ireland has hitherto proved to be the most impregnable of all the Vatican's citadels, this is not due to accident. During centuries of national degradation the social classes were mixed into a common Catholic cement by the British, who persecuted the native Irish ostensibly on account of their Catholicism... Sentiment against the foreign imperialists was always uppermost and the masses encased themselves in the rituals and doctrines of the mother Church as in a suit of armour in lieu of more material means of defence. Catholic fanaticism the more easily became synonymous with the spirit of outraged nationality because, unlike in the other countries, the Irish priesthood never directly functioned as an exploiter.

For 700 years Ireland was a colony. Against this, for barely two decades an uncertain independence has lasted for the South; and, during this time, the fledgling Eire statelet has been sedulously inculcating a psychology of national exclusiveness among the masses by fostering all those ideological distinctions and cultural pursuits which set the Irish apart from the neighbouring English nationality. It is well to remember in this connection that in its long-drawn-out trade war with Britain the Fianna Fail Government received the backing not only of the bourgeois and peasant interests involved, but also of the majority of the workers. So long as imperialism remains intact in the North and a serious threat to the South, and until the workers find a revolutionary socialist leadership, we will have to reckon with the power and prestige of the priesthood...

On the surface the Catholic church looks unassailable. Yet its coming eclipse can be discerned precisely where the appearance of strength seems greatest. A picture of Christ on the Cross pinned to a Falls Road window is a demonstration against the imperialist status quo, but

the Church cannot lead the change. The republican workers will throw away their icons as soon as the ideals of socialist internationalism begin to take shape among them.

To expose the treacherous role of the allegedly neutral Christian ideology is an essential part of the struggle to develop a revolutionary consciousness among the workers...

The cowardly Eire Labour Party, on the other hand, has consistently pursued a shameful policy of appeasement towards the Catholic Church, even going so far as to claim that its programme is in conformity with the Pope's Charter of Labour.

The Church will be a colossal weight on the side of counter-revolution. It is one of the main propaganda tasks of our movement to explain this to the workers. Every insolent interference with the affairs of the labour movement must be combatted. In particular the role of the Vatican in the present European situation must be mercilessly exposed. It would be treason to socialism to keep silent on grounds of expediency.

In every important strike the bourgeois press is forced to drop its spurious neutrality. So likewise, in the hundred-and-one minor sorties leading up to the decisive revolutionary struggle, hunger marches, strikes, during every spate of which the bourgeoisie and its henchmen will take panic and cry 'wolf', the role of the clergy will become more and more obvious...

It is reformism, holding out no hope of escape from the drab routine of poverty, that turns the backward masses over to conservatism and clericalism and in a crisis makes them storm troopers of the reaction. Notwithstanding its tirades against the Stalinist bureaucracy, to which it attributes the original sin of the Bolshevik Revolution, it is precisely thanks to the opportunist politics of Stalin that the Papacy is still a world power despite its notorious role in Spain and elsewhere.

However, the era of Stalinism and reformism is drawing to a close. The great class struggles impending throughout the world will find an echo in the remotest corners of rural Ireland. Certainly reactionary clericalism will still retain a formidable following, but the majority will be won for the revolution.

#### The Nationalist Workers

At present the living standards of even the Southern workers depend in the last resort upon the British Empire. It is the Colonial Empire which bolsters up profits, salaries and wages in England, thus permitting the absorption at a relatively high price level of Eire's agricultural export, on which the remainder of the economic structure rests. Freedom of access to the British market and state independence especially in regard to fiscal policy, are the twin needs of the Eire bourgeoisie and, so long as they cannot surmount capitalism, also of the workers. The Northern nationalist workers, on the other hand, are as economically dependent upon direct incorporation into the United Kingdom as are the Protestant workers. In the days of self-sufficient peasant tillage the Catholic masses had an economic stake in fighting for an Ireland freed from the British grip on the

land. Today, however, when all trades and occupations draw their life blood from the heavy industries which only survive by virtue of Ulster's political unity with Britain, a bourgeois united Ireland could only bring pauperisation to its most ardent partisans - the Northern nationalist workers.

The Tory regime at Stormont is the oldest in Europe - preceding Mussolini's assumption of power it has outlasted the Roman Duce. The main props of its rule are: (a) its mass following amongst the Protestants based on Britain's financial bribes and the spectre of republicanism; (b) constituency gerrymandering; (c) the Civil Authority (Special Powers) Acts which give almost unlimited power to the colossal army of the police.

Ireland was partitioned by the British in such a way as to assure the Tory Unionist Party of a fool-proof majority over its nationalist opponents. Stormont in its turn gerrymandered the six county electoral seats so effectively that the nationalist voters can only obtain a mere fraction of the representation to which their numbers entitle them. In consequence abstention from the vote has become a tradition in many Republican areas, so much so that a Unionist can get into Stormont by mustering the merest handful of Protestant votes.

Only a few of the far-reaching powers vested in the Civil Authority can be listed here:-

- (a) By police proclamation publications may be banned, meetings and demonstrations forbidden and a state of curfew imposed.
- (b) The police hold the right to enter and search premises without a warrant and to confiscate or destroy property.
- (c) Arrest and internment may be ordered on suspicion.
- (d) Habeas corpus is suspended and internees and their relatives may be prevented from seeing or communicating with one another.
- (e) One of the most sinister clauses relates to the right of the Civil Authority to withhold the right of inquest.

A jailed or interned Republican is automatically disqualified from obtaining his family allowances under the Unemployment Insurance Acts on the grounds that he is not available for work. A former political prisoner or Republican suspect finds it extremely difficult to keep employment owing to the police practice of warning employers against them. An isolated incident may kindle with unexpected suddenness into a crisis during the course of which hundreds of suspects are rounded up and scores of families, deprived of a breadwinner, are menaced by the spectres of hunger and debt. This explains why the barometer of parliamentary contests registers such startling overnight changes.

At the last Labour Party Conference it was resolved that the Party should take the initiative in inaugurating a Northern Ireland Council for Civil Liberties. This is a welcome development from the days of Midgley. The Trotskyist movement has conducted a long campaign for the setting up of such a council to combat the injustices meted out under the Special Powers Acts. Militants in the Labour Party, and the workers generally, must see to it that this decision is really implemented by the building of a genuine Civil Liberties Council supported by and representative of every section of the labour movement. Militants in the Eire labour movement must demand similar measures.

By bringing into the clear light of day the full, unimpeachable facts on every case of arbitrary search, arrest and intimidation; by demanding full facilities for inquiry into every case of alleged police intimidation and brutality; by spreading information regarding the unsanitary overcrowded conditions under which political prisoners live; by exposing the farce of the police-influenced Internees' Appeals Tribunal; and, in short, by making a public display of samples of the British 'democracy' being meted out to hundreds of Ulster citizens, a Civil Liberties Council has a revolutionary role to perform. It can hasten the downfall of the regime. It can set on fire the conscience of the whole community, shaming and shocking even the Protestant petty bourgeoisie into protest.

The fight for civil liberties is an integral and immensely important aspect of the class struggle. It is instructive, therefore, to perceive from this angle how low the Stalinist renegades have sunk in their clownish eagerness to act as sycophants to Tory Unionism. Stalinist policy, as is well known, is to give undivided attention to 'democracy's' battle against Hitler. However, the tyranny endured by the Ulster minority is too near at hand and affects too large a number of workers to be passed over in silence. At their recent Congress, therefore, the Stalinists passed a resolution 'demanding' an end to (religious) sectarian discrimination in the hiring of labour and 'insisting' on various other laudible changes in the direction of greater justice for the Catholic workers. However, this was a resolution for the record only. Civil liberties cannot be wrested from the vested interests without the maximum effort of a united proletariat, but complete and unconditional independence from the Orange capitalist state is the prerequisite for proletarian unity. The Stalinists, however, are the most steadfast and unswerving supporters of the Orange Tory Cabinet.

Actually, the Stalinist Party is completely opposed to the extension of civil liberties. Its recipe for ending discrimination against the Catholic workers clearly amounts to this: "Put the Protestant workers in the same boat: abolish civil liberties for them also!" This can clearly be seen from the March 13th, 1943 issue of their paper 'Unity'. In the front page editorial, while whole-heartedly professing agreement on the need for special powers, they permitted themselves to indulge in a light criticism of the sectarian character of the Civil Authority (Special Powers) Acts, and - without forthrightly demanding the abolition of these acts - suggested that the British Emergency Powers Act would be a 'fairer' weapon in the hands of the government. This is equivalent to a demand to abolish hanging in favour of electrocution.

#### The Communist Party of Ireland

Protestant-Republican working class unity can be forged only on the anvil of the class war. National independence will be won either as a by-product of the Irish and British revolutionary struggles or not at all. Finally, only the victory of socialism on a world scale will end national oppression forever. The Trotskyist movement alone fights under the banner of international socialism and therefore, alone of all parties and tendencies represents the true national interests of the Irish people. It alone is implacable in its hostility alike to imperialism and to all forms of capitalist rule; and alone is the

enemy of every manifestation of bourgeois ideology within the ranks of the working class. On the other hand, the Communist Party of Ireland - Irish, as it is Communist, in name only - confuses, disorients and increases the disunity of the working class. The Stalinist Party is never permitted to absolve itself from a sense of responsibility towards the capitalist system. This follows from its role as a satellite of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

The Kremlin bureaucracy is fully aware that the social stability of the capitalist countries is a prerequisite for its own plunderous role over the Soviet working masses. World revolution constitutes an even greater threat to its vested interests than world imperialism; for while it is possible to hope that the antagonisms dividing the great powers will always drive one of the camps of imperialist predators into seeking an understanding with the Kremlin, no hope whatever can be entertained of the revolutionaries making their peace with bureaucratic tyranny. A revolution in any one of the advanced countries would act as an inspiration and a signal to the Soviet masses to break assunder the chains of Stalinism. Thus, under the totalitarian Stalinist regime, the Soviet Union is as deeply involved as any of the capitalist countries in the jugglery of power politics.

It follows, therefore, that either the Stalin regime will be in the camp of British imperialism or working in collaboration with its (Britain's) imperialist enemies; and that the Communist Party of Ireland will be committed either to supporting the British ruling class or to demagogically opposing them. However, opposition to British imperialism does not mean for the Stalinist Party support for an independent proletarian struggle for national and social freedom. It simply means that an alliance with the Orange dictatorship on the essentials of the Tory programme, is replaced by an attempted alliance with the bourgeois nationalist organisations on their programme. One form of 'national united front' takes the place of another. That is all.

The social set-up in Northern Ireland undoubtedly offers the Stalinists admirable scope for the creation on paper of national fronts to suit all purposes. In reality of course either form of the so-called national front is of an equally fictitious nature. This is not to imply that the fiction is without its effects; but these are wholly on the side of sectarian disunity. What happens is this: each fresh turnabout of the Stalinists not only leaves the caste bigotry of the workers unchanged, but actually leads to a strengthening of the bonds of ideology uniting them to the bourgeois politicians belonging to their own particular side of the community. For instance, during the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact the Communist Party's flirtation with the nationalist organisations had the double consequence of sustaining the worst illusions of the Republican proletariat and, at the same time, hopelessly alienating the Protestant workers. Among the Protestants the Stalinist Party has registered formidable gains over the past two years. Membership has probably increased seven or eight-fold. These new recruits consist mainly of worker and petty-bourgeois elements completely new to politics; drawn towards the 'left' out of admiration for the Red Army but, most of them, unemancipated from the old jingoistic mentality. On the other hand the strike breaking role of the Stalinist Party has alienated most of the experienced industrial militants among the Protestants.



In Eire, following upon Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, afraid to proclaim openly the new policy foisted upon it by the Kremlin - the ending of Eire neutrality - quietly dissolved itself into the Labour Party. Hitherto, despite its imposing record of treachery, Stalinism has always brazenly tried to justify itself in the eyes of the workers. In this single episode is contained the whole preceding twenty years of Stalinist degeneration; its political bankruptcy and its moral spinelessness. The greatness of Bolshevism consisted not merely in its capacity to withstand the material blows of reaction but even more, to swim against the current of popular feeling. Stalinism gives a few short grunts and then sinks to the bottom.

### Nationalism and Socialism

The fundamental tasks of nationalism awaiting the solution of the approaching revolution are: (1) the healing of the sectarian breach; (2) the winning of national independence from British imperialism; and (3) the ending of partition. These form an inseparable trinity. None are realisable as isolated aims in themselves, or possible of attainment except by means of the socialist revolution. Conversely, the socialist movement can turn its back on the problems of nationalism only at the price of prostration before capitalism; for a proletariat divided within itself cannot seize state power. National tasks and social tasks are thus inextricably woven together.

The national question IS a social question and, moreover, one of the largest magnitude. Hitherto, the prevailing tendency among socialists has been to regard the intrusion of Orange and nationalist banners into the arena of the class struggle as a complication of an exclusively detrimental nature to the labour movement; as a plague of ideologies, in fact. Most certainly this judgement holds true under all circumstances so far as Orangeism is concerned. On the other hand, the unsolved national question - which is not at all a religious sectarian issue from the standpoint of the nationalist workers - is not necessarily a brake upon the class struggle but, under favourable circumstances, can act as a dynamo upon it, causing violent accelerations of tempo.

Finally, the best Irish nationalists will always be Trotskyists; for Trotskyism's conceptions of international solidarity and socialist cooperation alone correspond to the national needs of the Irish people. An isolated proletarian dictatorship, even assuming it were not militarily overthrown, could not in the long run prevent a resurgence of sectarian disunity; for ideology cannot take the place of bread indefinitely. With the prolongation of hunger and poverty the wheels of the revolution would begin to revolve backwards. It is only within a system of world socialist economy that the unity of the Irish people will become indestructible for all time.

# THE IRISH WAR (1968-1983)

- 1968. □ Oct. Peaceful civil rights march of 2000 in Derry supported by Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) is attacked by RUC in front of British media. Fighting breaks out throughout the city. Barricades in the Bogside raised for the first time. "People's Democracy" set up in Queens University, Belfast.
- 1969. □ Jan. People's Democracy (PD) Belfast to Derry march begins. The march is harried by Loyalists, a harrassment that climaxes in the brutal 'ambush' at Burntollet Bridge that is ignored by RUC. Many injured. When these reach Derry, rioting breaks out and the RUC reserve force invade the Bogside and run amok.
  - Feb. Northern Ireland election. Unionists split between O'Neillites and hardliners. Paisley only narrowly beaten by O'Neill. Civil rights activists like Hume and Currie split the Nationalist Party.
  - Mar. Castlereagh power station blown up by Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). IRA (virtually defunct) blamed by loyalists.
  - Apr. Bernadette Devlin elected as Westminster MP for Mid-Ulster. O'Neill forced to resign. Replaced by his cousin, Chichester-Clark.
  - Jul. Orange parades. Rioting all over the North. 66 year-old Roman Catholic killed by RUC.
  - Aug. "Apprentice Boys" march in Derry. Violent riots. Bogside Defence Association builds barricades against another RUC invasion. Bogsidiers successfully fight off RUC who use CS gas and armoured cars. In the South, three cabinet ministers: Boland, Blaney and Haughey demand Irish army invade the North. A day later, the seige of Bogside continues. Rioting in Belfast. Lynch says he cannot 'stand idly by' and calls for UN intervention and sets up army field hospitals on the border. The next day, Peacock, RUC Inspector General, cannot subdue (terrorise) the Bogside. He requests troop intervention. Callaghan (Home Secretary) complies. Two days later troops move into Belfast after barricades raised there. Rioting in Dublin demanding Irish troops be sent to NI.
  - Oct. Hunt Report recommends disbandment of 'B Specials' and their replacement by UDR. This soon becomes as sectarian a force as the B-men - 98% Protestant. Young, an Englishman, becomes RUC Inspector General. Protestant riots erupt against the Hunt report. First RUC man killed - by 'Loyalists'.
  - Dec. IRA had been virtually invisible during August (except in Lower Falls). Recriminations at Sinn Fein Ard Feis, together with proposals that SF recognise Stormont and Dublin govt. SF and IRA army council split.
- 1970. □ Jan. 'Provisionals' born out of the split.
  - Apr. After some months of relative 'peace' the Brit army decisively shows itself as a defender of the status quo, ie the NI state.

A loyalist march is allowed to skirt Ballymurphy. Rioting breaks out. The army moves against the catholic (RC) inhabitants, drenching the area with CS gas. Army GOC, Freeland, threatens to shoot dead petrol bombers.

□ Jun. General elections. Tories to power.

□ Jul. Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) Act rushed through Stormont. Troops seal off Falls and impose 36 hour curfew in arms search. Much destruction and resultant bitterness from inhabitants. A mere handful of guns are held in NI, almost all in Protestant hands.

□ Aug. SDLP formed.

■ 1971. □ Feb. First Brit soldier shot. Chichester-Clark declares, "NI is now at war with the IRA Provisionals".

□ Mar. Chichester-Clark resigns, replaced by Faulkner.

□ Apr. Bombing campaign begins in earnest. 37 explosions in Apr.

□ Jul. 2 young men shot dead in Derry. 3 days of massive rioting. Queues to join Provo and Official IRA. SDLP withdraw from Stormont. 91 explosions in July.

□ Aug. In terrment. 340 RCs and 2 Prots ( 1 a PD member, 1 P Republican) interned. Much information years out of date. Barricades go up. Rioting and gun battles all over NI. 2 streets burned down by loyalists. After 4 days: 22 dead, 19 of them civilians. Rent and rates strike in RC areas begins. "No-Go" areas sealed off. 11 internees used as guinea pigs for sensory deprivation torture techniques. 8,000 workers strike for a day in Derry. 130 RC councillors resign. Whole RC population, even middle class, alienated totally from NI state.

□ Sep. All marches are now illegal. 15,000 attend first anti-internment march in Belfast. Paisley forms DUP. Northern Resistance Movt set up. Army strength now 14,000 - before internment it had been 2,500.

□ Xmas Day. NRM march from Belfast to Long Kesh stopped by massive army force. New round of anti-internment marches planned.

■ 1972. □ Jan. Peaceful march and rally in Derry attended by 30,000. Minor riot. Paras invade Bogside and shoot dead 13. Others injured, one of whom dies later - Bloody Sunday.

□ Feb. Derry funerals. "Day of Mourning" in South. Brit Embassy burned to ground in Dublin. One-day strike in NI, 3 days strike in Derry. 50,000. Bill Craig sets up 'Vanguard' - a semi-fascist 'umbrella organisation' for loyalists. Official IRA set off bomb in Aldershot barracks of paras. Army chaplain and six women cleaners killed.

□ Mar. 40,000 loyalists attend fascistic rally in Belfast sponsored by Vanguard, UDA and LAW. Heath announces closing of Stormont " for a year". Vanguard calls 1 day strike on Stormont's last day. Backed by UDA intimidation, it is successful. Huge loyalist rally at Stormont as it is closed.

□ May. William Best, a Derry RC member of British army is kidnapped by Official IRA and shot. 200 'peace women' march on Official's HQ. Officials declare cease-fire. From now on their guns will only be turned towards republicans and socialists. 'Peace Women' adopted by British media and Whitelaw. Apart from means (violence), women's demands are same as provos.

□ Jun. Ceasefire declared by Provos. 'Special category status' conceded by Whitelaw after hunger strike by veteran republican internee Billy McKee.

□ Jul. 6 Provo leaders flown to London for talks with Whitelaw. Ceasefire breaks down after army stops RC families moving into houses

allocated to them on the Lenadoon Estate. Rioting breaks out as Provos drawn into protecting RC families. On 21st, 22 bombs set off in Belfast. 2 soldiers and 9 civilians killed - 'Bloody Friday'. Provos claim RUC and army ignored warnings. Bloody Friday opens way for 'Operation Motorman' - concerted reduction of no-go areas. Schools and sports grounds occupied by army.

□ Aug. SDLP begin talks with Whitelaw administration. They had acted as intermediaries between Whitelaw and Provos, and Provo talks open the way for the SDLP to fulfil their role as collaborators.

□ Sep. Darlington conference attended by Unionist Party, Alliance and SDLP.

□ Nov. Sean MacStiofain, Provo Chief of Staff, arrested in South on charge of IRA membership. Goes on hunger and thirst strike. Big demos and strikes follow. MacStiofain upset that 'the struggle' has spread to the South. A priest persuades him to give up. Southern govt announces amendments to Offences against the State Act which will set up special courts. Suspects can be jailed for IRA membership on the words of a senior policeman. On night of vote, 2 bombs go off in Dublin killing 2. Amendments passed in atmosphere of anti-IRA hysteria.

Throughout 1972 UDA and UVF carry out an assassination campaign against RCs (as do plain-clothed Brits in SAS or 'Military Reaction Force'). In Feb 2 RCs shot leaving their factories. There follows strike calls of all RCs. Leads to interment of first loyalists. Vanguard/UDA/LAW call 1 day strike. It is a failure. Ramshackle LAW collapses. It will be replaced by Ulster Workers' Council - a much tighter organisation of strategically placed workers in engineering plants, shipyards and especially power stations. South elections bring Fine Gael/LP govt to power.

■ 1973. □ Mar. White Paper outlines 'Sunningdale' proposals.

□ Jun. Elections to Assembly. On Prot side a majority of anti-Faulkner Unionists elected.

□ Oct. Power-sharing executive (7 Faulknerites, 6 SDLP, 1 Alliance) set up. Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act sets up 'Diplock Courts' which dispense with juries.

□ Dec. United Ulster Unionist Coalition (Official UP, DUP and Craig's Vanguard Unionist Party) set up, pledged to bring Assembly down.

■ 1974. □ Jan. Executive meets. SDLP calls off rent and rates strike.

□ Feb. Westminster election. UUUC take 11 out of 12 NI seats. Rees takes over in NI.

□ Apr. Rees announces his intention of restoring 'responsibility for law and order' to the RUC. In order to do this the RUC will be reorganised and greatly strengthened. UUUC conference, including UDA alongside Paisley, Powell etc plans bringing down Assembly and calls for a new Stormont.

□ May. 'Constitutional stoppage' - 'UWC Strike'. UWC, paramilitaries, backed by parties of the UUUC, force executive to resign. During stoppage, UVF plant 3 bombs in Dublin and Monaghan - killing 33.

□ Jul. White Paper published setting out plans for Constitutional Convention.

□ Oct. Long Kesh burned down by inmates. Inmates violently attacked by screws.

□ Nov. Birmingham bombs - 21 killed. 'Temporary' PTA introduced. After being strengthened in 1976 this is now renewed every six months.

Dec. Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) formed from disgruntled Officials disillusioned with rightward drift and peaceful orientation. Joined by nationalists of the Bernadette Devlin stamp. Ceasefire by Provos. This breaks down in Jan and is renewed on a longer scale in Feb and breaks down gradually thereafter.

1975. May. Convention elections. UUUC wins 46 of 78 seats. Report inevitably comes up with a proposal for a new Stormont. (Convention dissolved March '76).

Sep. Craig becomes a 'moderate' - advocates coalition with SDLP. WUP splits with majority taking WUP's place in UUUC as United Ulster Unionist Movt (later Party) under Ernest Baird.

Dec. Last internees released. IRSP splits.

1976. Mar. From now on no new internees - those guilty of 'scheduled' offences will be tried in Diplock Courts.

Jul. RUC reorganised to have 'primacy':- 1. Army to remain 'main security buttress'. 2. Emphasis on intelligence gathering in collaboration with army. 3. Restructuring of RUC as a paramilitary force.

Aug. Unarmed Provo volunteer Danny Lennon shot at wheel of car, which crashes, killing 3 McGuire children. Beginning of 'Peace Movement' (PM).

Sep. 12 year old Brian Stewart killed by plastic bullet. PM leaders attacked by local women when they attend a protest meeting of women. Provos save them. In press conference they thank Provos and condemn army violence. Next day, reaction of Prots force them to withdraw statement. PM will take a few more months to die, but has already encountered its fatal contradiction. Mason takes over from Rees, and takes over the policy of 'Ulsterisation'.

1977. May. Second loyalist 'strike'. Demands greater repression and New Stormont. Fails (or is seen to fail) because of Paisley's failure to enlist support of Ballylumford power workers, who Mason buys off with promises of more repression of nationalists, increased numbers of RUC and UDR. (Thus conceding half the strike demands).

Jun. General election in South. FF win sweeping victory. Local elections in NI show support for DUP still growing despite strike setback.

Oct. Seamus Costello shot (by Officials ? British ? Irish Special Branch ?) SLP formed.

Dec. Throughout the year, the IRA reorganise in face of Brit successes into a much tighter cell-type organisation. Mason interprets their lack of activity as signs of their death, proclaims them finished. At end of year 'new' provos begin major fire-bomb offensive.

1978. Feb. Firebombing continues until warning system breaks down and 12 civilians are killed at Le Mon Hotel near Belfast.

'Conveyer Belt' justice becomes institutionalised. Throughout most of 1977 and into the future internment is replaced by a system that 1. beats a 'confession' out of a suspect (or presents in court an unsigned confession). 2. convicts suspects in no-jury Diplock courts. Evidence of torture, which is necessary to this process, mounts, especially against Castlereagh police station.

Jun. An Amnesty International report finds evidence of torture.

Aug. First of a series of Daily Mirror editorials advocating withdrawal. This shows that a section of the ruling class is ready to contemplate an alternative ruling class 'solution' to direct rule.

- Nov. In order to stay in power as a minority govt LP (in person of Foot) negotiates deal with CUP, promising 5 new seats for NI.
- 1979. □ Mar. Bennett Report confirms allegations of torture in Castlereagh and recommends some cosmetic reforms.
- Apr. Airey Neave blown up by INLA at House of Commons. INLA have arrived on the public stage.
- May. IWG purged from SLP. Westminster elections. Atkins gets NI job in new Tory govt. Ciairon Nugent, first prisoner to be released who has been on the blanket. Secret army intelligence document released by Provos, shows army does not regard Provos as mere 'terrorists' and that there cannot be a purely military solution.
- Jun. Fair Employment Agency report shows that RCs are 2½ times as likely to be unemployed as Prots, also that most of the professional or skilled jobs are held by Prots, and that most unskilled, poorly paid workers are RCs.
- Aug. In one day Provos blow up Mountbatten (while on holiday in the South), and 18 British soldiers at Warren Point. Papal visit is used to attack the Provos and any anti-imperialist struggle.
- Oct. National Smash H-Block Committee set up, largely under political control of Provos.
- Nov. Gerry Fitt (MP for West Belfast) leaves SDLP and is canonised by British media.
- Dec. Haughey becomes Taoiseach (Prime Minister) in 26 Counties.
- 1980. Unemployment rockets in NI as a result of Thatcherite policies. Wages in South shown to be amongst the lowest in Europe.
- Oct. 7 Republicans go on hunger strike for '5 Demands' over prison conditions. Massive campaign of marches, strikes etc in North and South.
- Dec. Hunger strike called off as a result of vague promises, falling short even of 5 demands. Support campaign collapses.
- 1981. □ Mar. Brit govt reneges even on those promises it has given. On 5th anniversary of the withdrawal of political status, Bobby Sands begins his hunger strike, to be followed by others at staggered intervals. At the outset, Sands declares that they are out for political status, but support campaign tones this down to the 'Five Demands'. Sitting MP Maguire dies. Sands wins Fermanagh & South Tyrone election.
- May. Don Concannon chooses International Workers' Day to make his first visit to NI as Opposition speaker on NI to the bedside of the dying Bobby Sands, to assure him that the British LP fully supports the Tories' intransigence. Sands dies on 5th. 70,000+ attend funeral (ie over 10% of non-unionist population of NI, even allowing for thousands attending from the South). Strikes in North and South. Francis Hughes, legendary Provo guerilla fighter, dies. Another massive funeral. Local govt elections in North show defeat of Fitt, who had condemned the hunger strike. H-Block candidates take 51,000 first preference votes.
- Jun. Gen election in South. Anti- H-Block candidates poll highly, taking two seats. Coalition takes over from FF.
- Jul. Paisley launches '3rd Force'.  
Deaths continue.
- Aug. Kieran Docherty TD dies. Owen Carron elected after Brits change law to ban prisoners standing in elections.
- Sep. Prior takes over.

- Oct. Hunger strike collapses after 10 deaths. Church complicit in getting hunger strikers' relatives to revive hunger strikers when they go into coma.
- Nov. Anglo-Irish Council set up. Provos shoot Roy Bradford, OUP MP for South Belfast.
- 1982. □ Jan. Prior announces his plan for 'rolling devolution'. It is condemned by all in North and South.
  - Feb. Election in South. FF back with minority govt.
  - May. Unemployment in NI now 112,000 - ie 20%. It continues to rise.
    - Jun. De Lorean closes. 1,500 redundancies.
    - Jul. It is revealed that the 1981 census showed that between '71 and '81, 10% of NI population emigrated.
    - Aug. SLP disbands.
    - Oct. 20th Assembly elections in NI show over 10% support for Provo SF, third of nationalist population. SF and SDLP boycott Assembly when it meets.
    - Nov. Election in South. FF defeated. FF loses 6 seats (to 75). FG get record 70.
    - Dec. Prior addresses new Assembly. This is the first time since partition that a British govt minister has addressed the unionists in their home 'parliament'. He announces an increase in the RUC by 500 to 8,000. On 7th Dec INLA blow up a pub in Ballykelly, County Derry, a drinking haunt of the Cheshire Regiment. 11 soldiers and 6 civilians killed. This brings the total war deaths in the province to 30 since the Assembly elections. Conference of ILP, under leadership of Dick Spring agrees to place ILP's 16 MPs in coalition government with FG. Fitzgerald has working majority. First chance since recession for major austerity offensive against working class to work.

# APPENDIX

(These two Editorials from Socialist Worker in 1972 show the change in the SWP's attitude to the Irish struggle when British "public opinion" took a chauvinist turn. The first deals with the events on Bloody Sunday, and voices the SWP's defence of the IRA. The second, a mere three weeks later, followed the Aldershot bombings. We leave our readers to draw the conclusions.)

## "Violence in Ireland: Heath is to blame" (12/2/72)

There is more humbug and hypocrisy talked about violence than about almost any other subject. Day in and day out we get condemnations of violence from Tories, Labourites and assorted establishment men. The violence that chiefly concerns them at the moment is political violence, the use of force for political ends and especially its use by both wings of the IRA in Ireland.

What is the attitude of socialists to the use of violence? It is, quite simply, that it depends on the ends which the violence is intended to further and the circumstances in which it is used. Does our attitude differ from that of the ruling class? It differs in this: We tell the truth and they tell lies about this as about other matters.

In every class society the rulers depend on three means to maintain their rule. They are deception (usually politely called education and persuasion), intimidation (the threat of violence against those who are not persuaded) and actual violence against those who are not intimidated. For the last two purposes they maintain police forces, armies and other 'armed bodies of men'.

As the socialist theoretician Frederick Engels long ago pointed out, the core of any state consists of these 'bodies of armed men at the service of the ruling class'. A modern conservative theorist put the same idea in more diplomatic language when he defined a state as 'an entity which has a monopoly of the legal use of violence in a defined territory'. What is legal is what other institutions of the ruling class - parliaments, judges etc - declare to be legal. Broadly speaking, 'legal violence' is violence in the interests of the ruling class and 'illegal violence' is violence against the interests of the ruling class.

It is obvious then that Heath, Faulkner and their stooges inside and out side the labour movement are no more opposed to the 'use of violence for political ends'



than were Adolf Hitler or Gengis Khan. They have supported and directed wars - that is, 'politics continued by violent methods' - all over the world. They praise (and control) the British Army, which, like every other army, is an organisation designed solely for the use of violence on a large scale. Heath condemning violence is like Satan rebuking sin.

#### Political considerations

Today in Northern Ireland British imperialism is employing massive violence against the nationalist section of the population in order to maintain its last direct foothold in the country. The two wings of the IRA are also employing violence - although on an incomparably smaller scale - in order to defeat British imperialism.

Our attitude, like that of the ruling class, is determined by political considerations. We oppose British imperialism because it is against the interests of the working class here and everywhere. We support the right of the Irish people to national independence and unity because 'no people that oppresses another can itself be free', because national oppression is a barrier to the development of class consciousness among British and Irish workers alike.

We defend the right of the Irish people to use whatsoever means, violent or otherwise, that seem expedient to them in order to achieve national independence and unity. We defend the right of the IRA or anyone else to reply to imperialist violence with their own violence. The original violence was the conquest and exploitation of Ireland by British imperialism.

At the same time we do not support the political ideas of either wing of the IRA. We reject both the utopian 'national socialism' of the Provisionals and the 'first the national struggle, then the social struggle' ideology of the Officials. We believe that the national liberation of Ireland and the social liberation of the Irish workers and small farmers are part and parcel of the same struggle, The one cannot be achieved without the other.

The stranglehold of British imperialism in Ireland will be broken when, and only when, a 32 county workers' republic is established. This in turn can be achieved only when a revolutionary socialist movement gains decisive influence in the Irish working class.

Meanwhile our duty is clear: Unconditional but critical support for the struggle of all those, including both IRAs, fighting imperialism in Ireland. By unconditional, we mean support regardless of our criticism of the leadership and tactics. By critical we mean opposing the sowing of illusions that the struggle can finally be won except by the victory of the working class fighting on a programme of social as well as national liberation.

"No substitute for mass action" 4/3/72

The millionaire press campaign against 'violence' is hotting up. The Aldershot explosion is grist to their mill and Heath's calculated smear on television, associating the miners' strike with 'violence or the threat of violence', shows clearly enough the aims of the operation.

Part of the government's plan to revenge its defeat by the miners - by smashing another section of workers in a major strike - is the launching of a campaign of hysteria and abuse to create the 'right' atmosphere. Ban the IRA in Britain and stop 'illegal' (that is, effective) picketing: the two go hand in hand. Heath badly needs to create an atmosphere of uncritical support for his vicious and reactionary administration. 'If the government is defeated', the man had the impudence to claim, 'then the country is defeated'.

He hopes to create a witch'hunting atmosphere in which all real opponents can be isolated and dealt with by victimisation and police action. He will not succeed. Far too many people are suffering from unemployment, welfare cuts and means testing to fall for the absurd claim that 'the government is just a group of people elected to do what the majority of us want'. All the same, many workers who have few illusions in Heath's big business government are vulnerable to propaganda about 'violence' and 'terrorism' and so it is necessary to restate the socialist position.

Governments, all governments, rely on violence, in the last resort, to maintain the power of the ruling classes they represent. That is why they spend millions on armies, navies and air forces - instruments of organised violence on a large scale. These forces exist as much to deal with threats to the rulers from within - 'internal security' - as from without - the threat of other ruling classes.

Anybody who denies this patent fact is a fool or a liar. Any government spokesman who denounces violence is a hypocrite. Any socialist who renounces the use of violence in all circumstances is like a man who goes into a boxing ring with his hands tied behind his back.

What socialists in the marxist tradition do reject is the illusion that by blowing up a Tsar or President or Prime Minister, society can be changed. All that can in fact be changed by these means is the name of the man who holds the office. A real change in society - a social revolution - can be achieved only when the mass of the people 'refuse to go on in the old way', as Lenin put it.

The crux of the marxist case against individual terrorism - the bomb and the revolver as a substitute for politics - is that it does not help but actually hinders the growth of a mass revolutionary organisation that alone can really challenge the social system. That case, developed against the anarchists in Western Europe in the last century and, later, by the Russian marxists against the Narodniks, has been verified time and again by historical experience. No amount of heroism and self-sacrifice by terrorists - and these qualities were

displayed in abundance by Russian Narodniks and Spanish anarchists - can act as a substitute for mass working-class action.

The violence used by both wings of the IRA is not, for the most part, terrorism in the proper sense of that term. It is legitimate self defence by the Catholic community in the Six Counties against the terrorism of the police and military forces of the state. The extension of that self defence into assassination of individual politicians and the bombing of buildings cannot be supported by socialists.

This is not amoral question. We would not shed a tear at the death of that violent reactionary Mr Taylor and we have nothing but contempt for those disgusting scoundrels who raise a hullabaloo about the unfortunate deaths of civilians at Aldershot and at the same time support the indiscriminate slaughter of vastly greater numbers of civilians in Vietnam every day.

It is a political question. Indiscriminate terrorism hinders the growth of the mass movement. It is therefore the duty of every socialist to oppose it, irrespective of questions of popularity or unpopularity in Ireland, Britain or anywhere else.