

# AN REABHLOID

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## No Trade Union sellout to Haughey!



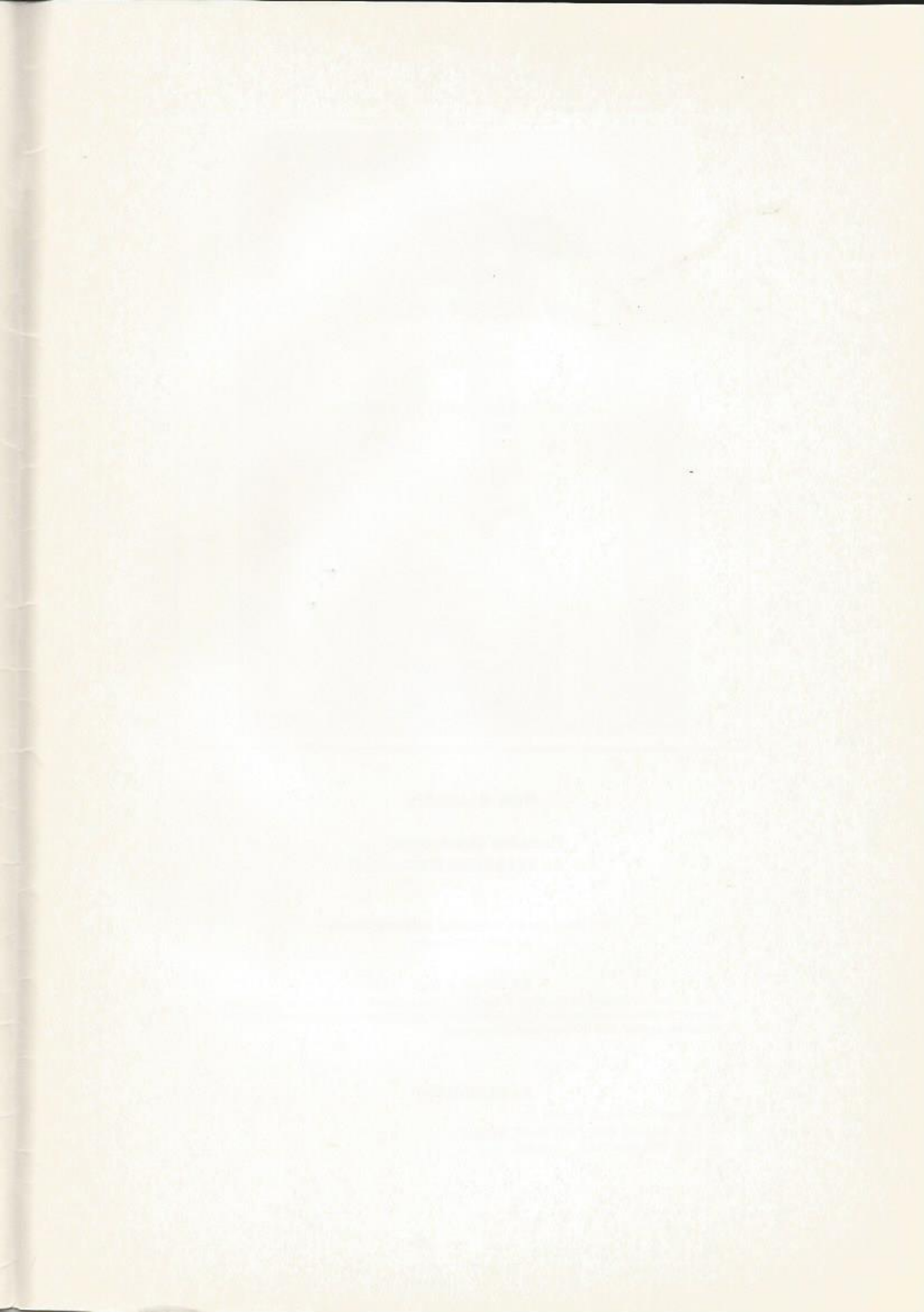
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**Armed Struggle, Revolution and the IRA**





# AN REABHLOID EDITORIAL

## DISBAND THE UDR!

Who's making the call?

A BBC 'Panorama' programme in February investigating Loyalist activity in the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) had two centrally revealing episodes. The first was an interview with the commander of the UDR admitting that only Republican and Nationalist "targets" were the subject of the regiment's activity and that they had no central check on Loyalist thugs who were brought before the courts. The second was a remark by British secretary of state Brooke in response to reports that Coalition Minister Gerry Collins was outraged and demanding immediate action to the effect that this was not what Collins was saying in private.

The first is important because it indicates that at a time when the British have brought 'Shoot to kill' back unto the streets of Belfast, Loyalist killer squads are increasing their activity on the basis of state intelligence, the Stevens investigation into 'leaks' running into the sand and preparing a whitewash and even the right to defence denied (a West Belfast man who removed the ignition keys from the car of undercover soldiers who crashed into a funeral was recently sentenced to 3 years) - that this is all **structural** - the British openly admit that they are running a sectarian militia and will continue to run it because it is an essential component of their military control of the North.

Brooke's statement indicates that the Dublin government understand this and, whatever they may say in public, will continue to go along with the activity of the UDR as an unpleasant but necessary part of capitalist and imperialist rule in Ireland. Recent decisions on extradition should be seen in this light. Prisoners awaiting extradition in the 26 counties have become hostages in much the same way that internees were in the North. Dublin are using them as bargaining counters to win cosmetic reforms and make their own collaboration more palatable.

There is a simple call to be made that would upset the cosy arrangement - **Disband the UDR!** No other force outside the most oppressive dictatorships would survive the revelations that have littered the history of the UDR. Even a number of English liberals have

called for disbandment. Lord Hunt, who was responsible for setting up the regiment, now wants to see an end to it. No representative of any of the major nationalist parties has made such a demand.

Anti-imperialist organisations certainly support such a call. Why aren't we able to mobilise and make it an issue? It does after all involve a direct issue of the defence of the nationalist community in the North and the physical survival of many militants who are under threat. The answer we believe lies in the political programs of the anti-imperialist organisations, and especially the leading organisation - Sinn Fein. Their recent Ard Fheis was a lacklustre performance lacking any real orientation to the working class and indicating a shift to the right on the whole issue of alliances and mass activity.

In this issue of *An Reabhlóid* we document the way in which Militarism blocks the development of real class politics, the economic problems facing workers in the South and the need to orient to their struggles and the problems with the latest attempts to build united action.

We have come to the conclusion that in order to battle effectively on the streets there will have to be a battle for ideas in the resistance movements. The best way to do this is as a supporter and distributor of *An Reabhlóid* or as a member of Peoples Democracy



Thatcher in her UDR beret



# EDITORIAL

## THE ALTERNATIVE TO STALINIST DECAY

In the last issue of *An Reabhloid* we reported an opinion poll in East Germany which claimed to show the vast majority of East Germans opposed to unification (in reality takeover) with West Germany. 3 months later elections have shown an equally massive majority voting for just such a policy. There is no reason to doubt the truthfulness of either result. What is shown is the extreme volatility of events not just in East Germany but also in the rest of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The gross corruption of the Stalinist regimes once praised here by the Workers party and Communist party as the greatest defenders of socialism was a shock even to East German workers well used to hypocrisy. More importantly, as in the Nicaraguan elections, people voted for the West's money in the naive belief that the West German 'economic miracle' would be replicated in East Germany.

No such thing will happen. There will be no repeat of the 'Marshall Plan' by the U.S. which rescued capitalism in Western Europe after the second world war. Despite the boasts of right-wing politicians capitalism is not strong enough to deliver the goods as East Europeans hope and expect. In Poland capitalism means rocketing prices, factory closures, unemployment and soup kitchens. Britain's great contribution to Czechoslovakia's liberation is the Department of Employment flying out to advise on the setting up of dole offices.

The issue now is capitalist reality rather than election promises. (Already West German politicians are toning down their election pledges). We are entering a period of class struggle in which working people, having thrown off Stalinist oppression, will look for an alternative to capitalist oppression.

When they look West what they see is Thatcherism, either in conservative blue or social-democratic pale pink colours. The major parties of the left offer no alternative to the 'Free Market' while in opposition and implement capitalist policies when in

power.

There will be no rebirth for Stalinism. Irish Stalinists of the Workers party and the Communist party will not choose the revolutionary tradition of Trotskyism. As in Eastern Europe, their path leads to the right. The Communist party seem to be edging towards Social Democracy. Judging from recent statements the Workers Party have decided to go the whole hog and become a Thatcherite party!

There is a third alternative in working class history. That alternative is the programme of the Left Opposition in Russia and the Comintern. That programme of workers democracy and workers power was crushed by Stalin and preserved by Marxists who grouped around Leon Trotsky. Today it is represented organisationally by the Fourth International and in Ireland by Peoples Democracy.

Peoples Democracy Is a tiny organisation. The Fourth International has much larger and more influential sections but is not much bigger on a world scale. Yet at least one historical factor is on our side. Workers are on the move. In Eastern Europe there exists a class which has just gone through the experience of smashing an overwhelming oppression. No capitalist restoration can take place without subjugating that class. In the battles to come workers in the West will see more and more examples of the practice of a workers democracy which is denied them and demands for the right to work and to control their own lives that stand in glaring contradiction to the promises of capitalism.

'Practical Revolutionaries' in Ireland will tend to dismiss this as they have dismissed many questions of socialist theory. We believe that the practical thing to do is to prepare for the coming upsurge in class struggle and that revolutionary militants should be working with us in that preparation.

### SOVIET TRADE UNIONISTS CALL FOR AID

Following the struggles of Soviet Miners last year a new independent trade union organisation, SOTSPROF (The Federation of Socialist Trade Unions), has been formed. One of the leaders, Boris Kagarlitsky, has launched an international appeal for funds to buy printing equipment.

Donations from individuals, groups and trade unions should be sent to;

Matt Merrigan,  
SOTSPROF Appeal  
c/o 24 Crotty Avenue  
DUBLIN 12



## PROGRAMME FOR NATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

# NO SELLOUT TO HAUGHEY!

Union democracy is the key to a fightback, argues Kevin McCracken.

The recent Irish Congress of Trades Union's (ITCU) conference on the Programme for National Recovery (PNR) showed a picture of decay and corruption within the Irish Trade Union Movement. The programme itself is a monument to collaboration and betrayal by the ITCU leadership. Since its inception they have witchhunted opponents at every level of the movement, acted as police against any sign of working class revolt and sabotaged and fragmented a series of fightbacks against Haughey's austerity policy. The rationale was that cutbacks, redundancies and job losses would restore profitability to Irish business and generate new jobs.

Profitability there certainly is. Both local and multi-national capital have done well from the deal. Jobs have not appeared and criticism and opposition has emerged even in the bureaucracy itself. In desperation, the leadership let no vestiges of union democracy stand in their way. Many unions did not consult their members. Unions that did hold meetings did their utmost to confuse the issue and ignore the feelings of their members. The ITCU conference itself was accompanied by public arm twisting and intimidation. In fact the leadership did not hesitate to play the Orange card - using partitionist arguments to deny northern delegates a vote, attempting to break

the rules and constitution of the movement and going as far as effectively threatening to repartition the movement.

The narrow way in which they squeezed home shows that the ground is beginning to shift under this corrupt leadership. Workers have fought back despite them, and the narrow victory will encourage and legitimise further struggles. It is clear that combativity by itself will not be enough. A new struggle for union democracy will have to pose a class struggle alternative to the union leadership's support for imperialism.

Below Kevin McCracken explores these issues.

In the months before the conference the consensus of not publicly criticising the PNR or the ICTU leadership has begun to break. Several unions, MSF, MPGWW and the ESBOA have condemned the PNR and come out against a PNR Mark II.

The most prominent critic has been Brian Anderson of MSF and ICTU. He recently debated the agreement with Phil Flynn (LGPSU) - a former vice-president of Sinn Fein who has emerged as the most vociferous defender of the deal. While it would be hard to find fault with Anderson's critique of the PNR (the statistics on poverty, unemployment and emigration contrasted with soaring profits speak for themselves) his conclusions and the alternatives he proposes defy credibility. He does not break with the concept and main content of the PNR, that is, trade union's assent to the economic programme and much of the political programme of the Fianna Fail government but pursues the narrowest of trade union demands. He concentrates his fire on the fact that the most



profitable sections of the private sector have benefited from very low wage increases and have failed to create jobs. His main contention is that the private sector should return to free collective bargaining as many trade union members including those in his own union could have done better given the economic upturn and the rise in profits. There is much that is divisive in the arguments that are coming from Anderson and others in the T.U. leadership. An impression is given that the PNR was just a public sector agreement and that gains were made here while the private sector made all the sacrifices. This view is completely at variance with the nature of the PNR and underestimates completely the scope and severity of the austerity offensive against the whole working class. In regard to the profit boom in some sectors of the economy one would have thought that experienced T.U. officials such as Brian Anderson would understand the direct relationship between the increased 'business confidence' and the austerity offensive embodied in the PNR. There was very little of this fighting talk in 1987 when the PNR was being negotiated. In fact only one TU official broke publicly with the ICTU on the agreement and gave TU members an opportunity to judge it on its real contents and not the glossy picture the ICTU and Fianna Fail presented, that was John Mitchell (formerly IDATU and ICTU).

Brian Anderson's attack does not point any way forward as he does not break with ICTU's policy of 'social partnership' (class collaboration). In fact, Phil Flynn and ICTU have already indicated that two tier bargaining - national and local - might be necessary under any new agreement to take account of ability to pay.

If the only opposition to the PNR is of this weak-kneed, parochial self interested type we will undoubtedly end up with another.

### **A Programme of Total Capitulation.**

When the ICTU were promoting the PNR two years ago it was presented in reverse order of importance. Job creation, industrial development, tax reform etc. - all the purely aspirational aspects of the agreement were pushed to the fore while the concrete commitments were glossed over. There seems to be still a reluctance to deal with the full enormity of ICTU's treachery as contained in the PNR.

It is worthwhile reexamining the main areas of agreement between the ICTU and the government. They are not simple TU/ employer agreements on immediate issues but political accords more far reaching than any previous deals and of longer duration than the agreement itself.

### **SECTION I - European Community Dimension**

Commits the unions to support for the EEC and to the single European Act with all its implications for Independence, neutrality and economic sovereignty. The implications are of course very far reaching and outside the scope of this article but suffice to say the EEC is less about the grants and hand outs we hear so much about but the untrammelled restructuring of the major European capitalist monopolies through mergers, takeovers and unrestricted competition in which our weak economy and industries will get no special consideration. There are also grave implications for our public services and the struggle against privatisation as the SEA commitments to deregulation and open competition also opens the public services to competition.

### **SECTION II - Macroeconomic Policies**

This is essentially a commitment to losing the 'Debt' problem by massively cutting public spending. This was central to the government creating a so - called 'climate of confidence to stimulate economic activity'. When Haughey refers to the PNR as his governments greatest success he is referring to his achievement in getting the unions to agree that the working class and poor bear full responsibility for the 'National Debt'. It was the erosion of the 'social wage', Health, Education and other services which was the most destructive and demoralising blow to the working class and provided a lot of the impetus for the so-called economic recovery.

### **SECTION V - Employment**

Part of this section contains a commitment to continuation of the policy of attracting overseas companies to locate here through IDA bribes - a policy discredited by the Telesis Report commissioned by a previous government. The ICTU must be as aware as anyone else that this policy has not created jobs. On the contrary, the multi nationals engage a large section of the Irish workforce in





Workers picket the vote on the programme for national recovery.

creating wealth which is then vacuumed tax free out of the country. We are ripped off on the double by these policies, between 1981 and 1986 subsidies and tax remissions cost an average £1,848,000,000 and last year £1.7 billion of the profit raised thereby left the country. If we add to these figures the £1.9 billion exported by Irish capitalists last year and the £2 billion lost in 'debt' servicing it is plain that claims that the PNR is about job creation are nonsense except we are talking about creating jobs abroad.

### No Role For The Working Class

In his defence of the PNR Phil Flynn claims that they made modest gains which they could not have otherwise made. Rather than try to repeat ICTU's exaggerated claims for the PNR individually I will deal with the flawed reasoning behind the claims. The central motive for the deal put forward by Flynn was to head off the prospect of Haughey's minority government becoming through an alliance with the 'new right' in Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats the government with the greatest majority ever. There are very few outside ICTU who believe that Haughey's government was lacking in 'new right' monetarist policies. In fact, the Progressive Democrats and Fine Gael spent the whole term of government whining about Haughey stealing their clothes and, in the case of the Progressive Democrats, their votes in the general election.

Flynn also claimed that the trade unions had been marginalised and pointed to the resolution adopted at

ICTU's 1986 annual conference calling for a deal with government of a national understanding type to justify their position. This resolution ends.....'The power and influence of the trade unions are not what they were'. These are all totally contradictory claims but reflect the type of thinking which typifies ICTU. The trade unions are marginalised, presumably the employers and government have the intelligence to understand this yet they must have been so beguiled by the silvery tongued negotiators of ICTU that they neglected to press their advantage home and made concessions instead.

It is the Alice in Wonderland concept of 'Social Partnership' that leads the ICTU to see themselves as central and the vast mass of the TU movement and working class as marginal. The history of ICTU over the last 20 years has been to stand against the trends of militancy and resistance in the working class. They joined in with employers in condemning unofficial strikes when they negotiated away the right to strike in various national wage agreements and national understandings. When condemnation didn't work they broke traditional solidarity and respect for pickets by introducing the two tier picketing policy. They sidetracked the massive campaign of work stoppages and marches on the PAYE tax issue and avoided tackling repression and discrimination in the 6 counties under the excuse of avoiding political strikes and political issues; but they are quite prepared to accept the political and economic programme of Fianna Fail and of the IMF lock, stock and barrel.



Despite being atomised and disorganised by the ICTU the working class are far from marginal in Irish society. The employers and Haughey are well aware of their potential power even if ICTU are not. They are very anxious not to provoke workers too far and rely on ICTU to keep the lid on while emigration and unemployment gradually take their toll. Still Haughey got a rude awakening in the elections when the anger over cutbacks experienced at the doorsteps caused panic in Fianna Fail's election machine and forced them to backtrack desperately to avoid a total eclipse in the election. The seats they did lose, one of which was lost solely on the basis of the threatened closure of a hospital are proof that if the ICTU had supported the protests against cuts in 1987 they would be riding high today.

The victory of the ICTU leadership at the special conference does not marginalise working class struggle. Rather, it begins to marginalise the ICTU.

At the time of signing the PNR An Reabhloid pointed out that the working class had suffered a blow. Fianna Fail, which had retained leadership over the majority of workers by a combination of nationalist rhetoric and populism, had accepted the Anglo-Irish agreement and launched an unprecedented austerity offensive. ICTU, their industrial leadership, had

joined in promoting and policing the offensive.

Building such a leadership and programme has now become an urgent necessity.

Where ICTU stands for lies and intimidation we should stand for a full trade union democracy.

Where they stand for partition we should stand for an all-Ireland movement opposed to imperialist domination.

Where they stand for collaboration with capitalist and imperialist interests we should stand for confiscation multi-national assets and the restructuring of the economy in the interests of working people.

Where they stand for making working people pay for the crisis we should stand for the repudiation of the national debt and taxing the rich.

Many workers still have illusions in the ICTU leadership. Many socialists and republicans enter the debate the leadership's actions as mistaken rather than criminal. The PNR conference should help to clarify matters. The ICTU leadership is a block against effective working class defence. They must be defeated and removed.

## TRADE UNIONS - PLAYING THE ORANGE CARD

Many Workers see the outcry against Northern Delegates at the PNR conference as only another example of the dirty tricks and intimidation employed by the ICTU leadership to win the vote. It is much more than this - the open expression of a long standing partitionist agenda given new strength and organisational form through the organisation of NICTU in the '60s.

The present structure was imposed on the the workers movement - a legacy of the old Stormont government. The unionists in power were not only sectarian - they were also violently anti-working class and refused to recognise the unions. When they did move towards recognition the organisation of NICTU as a six-county body largely independent of the overall movement was part of the deal. The

bureaucrats were quick to agree - and quick to see the advantages for them in continued division.

A good example of this is the various Northern conferences. Because they are regional conferences Southern delegates don't attend or vote. But this also gives the bureaucrats a whip hand over the agendas and a springboard to set the tone for the full congress. It gives a rationale for banning discussion of the North and preventing 'political' motions

The bureaucrats are not victims of imperialist rule but collaborators. They and their two-nationist ideology must be swept away if the working class is to organise and advance.

Frank Rossa



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# TRADE UNION 'DEMOCRACY' IN ACTION

The meeting of the EETPU to decide its policy on the PNR which was held two days before the special conference is probably a fairly representative example of the wheeling and dealing used to rig the conference in favour of the PNR.

At the meeting Mick Brennan the Area Secretary presented a deal for a review of wages in the construction industry. Wages in the industry have fallen far behind those of plumbers in maintenance and the public sector. The proposed review had been cooked up in the days immediately preceding the meeting in talks between Mick Brennan, the ICTU and the Construction Industry Federation (CIF). Talking to an audience probably 80% working in construction Mick Brennan orientated the meeting totally around the proposed review, promising almost cast iron guarantees that such a review would yield increases of £50 to £60, but that this deal 'the best he ever negotiated', depended on the continuation of the PNR. Despite the confusion the speech caused the PNR was overwhelmingly rejected.

At the end of the meeting it slipped out that the unions full delegation was in doubt. This was news to the accredited delegates in the hall and proposals that full delegations of six votes be sent to the special conference were not taken. The revelation that ICTU was prepared to deny full delegations on the basis of partition caused outrage and played a good part in ensuring a 'NO' vote. The meeting or the delegates did not learn until reading the following mornings newspapers that their votes had already been cut from six to two without any consultation. In the meeting itself the fact that the branch committee had recommended against the PNR was barely referred to. Such is trade union democracy in action. It has also to be remembered that very many trade union members were denied any chance to discuss or vote on the PNR proposal.

## NEW ANTI-STRIKE LAWS

It seems strange for the government to be bringing in new anti-strike legislation (The Industrial Relation Bill 1989) at a time when strikes are practically non-existent. Even stranger that the ICTU should immediately welcome the changes announced late last year by the Minister for Labour, Bertie Ahern. On

loser examination the new laws follow quite logically from recent history particularly the advent of the PNR to which they are a corollary. Unlike the ICTU the government and those they represent do not believe that industrial peace is assured and class antagonisms ended because of ICTU's capitulations. The Industrial Relations Bill sets out to institutionalise the ICTU role by making industrial action by workers totally dependent on ICTU approval. It also reinforces their policing role by removing statutory immunity from industrial action which has first gone through an obstacle course of procedures and arbitration. In effect unofficial strikes, strikes which occur before all procedures have been exhausted and strikes caused by disputes between different sections of workers will be illegal and will be met with the full force of the law including liability for losses incurred by employers.

## New Measures

The new measures include:

1. The setting up of a Labour Relations Commission to which all disputes must be referred. This is in addition to existing procedures such as the Labour Court, Rights Commissioners etc.
2. Compulsory secret ballots and legal sanction granted to trade union executives to introduce secret ballots whether the members want them or not. A union failing to comply will have their negotiating licence removed.
3. The removal of immunity from unofficial actions.

There is much more to this bill that is detrimental to workers interests and An Reabhlóid will deal with it in more detail in future issues. What is essential is that the ICTU is not allowed to let it pass into law behind workers backs. There has been no criticism so far from any trade union leaders and there is a danger of the working class losing many of their traditional trade union rights without even a debate. It is up to rank and file activists to begin an information campaign to alert the trade union movement to this latest threat.

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## LIMERICK OPPOSITION

In Limerick opposition to the PNR has been strong. Prior to the ICTU conference to consider withdrawing from the programme the number 2 branch of SIPTU in the city wrote to the National Executive calling on it to abandon the programme. The Limerick Council of Trades Unions also instructed its two non-voting delegates to speak against the PNR at the same conference. All the indications are that any proposal for another agreement of this type will be resoundingly rejected by Limerick workers.



## IRISH NATIONAL CONGRESS

# A WAY FORWARD?

For some time Peoples Democracy has been calling for in the pages of *An Reabhlóid* for an open conference of anti-imperialist militants to rebuild mass struggle and to hammer out a programme on which we could unite and begin the task of remobilising the resistance. An 'Open Conference' in Dublin on January 20th launched a new organisation, The Irish National Congress (INC). Unfortunately there are problems with the openness of the new movement, its authority and with its political orientation and programme for unity, argues John Mc Anulty.

### OPEN CONFERENCE

The INC conference was 'open' in the sense that it was advertised and anyone who registered could attend. However the decision to form an INC had already been taken at an earlier meeting in August. This invitation list included 'disillusioned Fianna Fail members', Sinn Fein, anti-repression, cultural and 'green' (environmental) organisations. It did not include any organisations to the left of Sinn Fein or organisations directly representing the working class. It is hardly surprising that these organisations showed little interest in the conference.

In any case remobilising a fragmented mass struggle requires a great deal more than the routine calling together of anti-imperialist militants leavened with a few present or ex-Fianna Fail members. It requires a campaign that will go out to all the groups and campaigns in struggle and mobilise on the streets to build a conference of all the oppressed.

More seriously the restricted base on which the conference was built led to a narrow definition of a programme for unity. The programme put forward by the INC is essentially around democratic demands for national independence - summed up as 'Freedom, Justice, Peace'.

The name INC is modelled on the ANC (African National Congress) and reflects some of the ANC's historical political weakness about the possibility of alliances with sections of the capitalist class. Alongside this, the composition of the organising group gives an indication of the reasons for restricting the programme. It is to draw in sections of Southern Nationalism around the Fianna Fail party. As such it represents a massive step backwards by Sinn Fein, rather than a way out of the present isolation of the movement.

### 'THE NATIONALIST FAMILY'

This sort of programme is influenced by the old republican notion of the 'nationalist family' - the idea that the republicans and the nationalist parties are in some sense on the 'same side' against the British. This is strengthened by Stalinist notions of a 'popular front' of all classes - sections of the Communist Party talk about a 'progressive wing' of Fianna Fail. These ideas ignore the reality of class struggle in Ireland today. Fianna Fail is in the forefront of attacks on the working class in all areas of Irish society. We have already seen evidence in elections of workers turning away from that party. An orientation to Fianna Fail can only further isolate anti-imperialists.

A loose framework like 'Freedom, Justice, Peace' means nothing unless it is tied to definite proposals for action. The present proposals get concrete expression only in terms of the British military occupation in the North. And because the INC is a 26 county movement focused on the 6 counties it leaves room for endless posturing and all sorts of

reaction by the capitalists and right-wing forces - pushing to one side the issue of the church-dominated neo-colony in the 26 counties.

A clear example of this sort of danger was shown by a motion opposing the EEC which referred to the right of an Irish government to adopt policies 'appropriate to their special problems and circumstances' - generally seen as code used by the extreme right to justify the ban on abortion, divorce and other reactionary laws against women and to continue the domination of Catholic moral codes in state laws.

### ELECTIONS

Another motion called for electoral support for INC candidates who mentioned in their manifesto and publicity support for the INC. This wasn't just someone's bright idea. The original call for an INC had been a call for an electoral alliance between Fianna Fail dissidents and Republicans.

The dangers should be clear. The Irish people need a new 'Republican' Fianna Fail like they need a hole in the head. Any electoral alliance between Sinn Fein and such a grouping or the use of republicans as cannon fodder in an electoral campaign to elect candidates of such a party would totally discredit the republican movement and smash any project to build united mass action.

Interestingly enough, this motion was massively opposed. However it was not voted down, but referred back to the committee. (Referral back was also the fate of all motions from the floor put to this 'Open' conference)>

### BASIS FOR UNITY

Peoples Democracy believes that unity should be non-exclusive. A United Front should be open to anyone who supports its aims and is willing to build mass struggle. By bending the stick towards the right the INC is in effect putting a powerful barrier between itself and the working class.

What then is the basis for unity? We believe that democratic demands form a link between the working class and other oppressed sectors of society. Not selective democratic demands but all democratic demands - including demands for the separation of church and state which go right to the heart of the neo-colonial regime in Dublin and would quickly expose those members of the 'Nationalist Family' who have already been tested and found wanting by the rigours of Irish history.

Peoples Democracy is willing to put its position to the test. We are willing to participate in future activities of the INC and any united attempts to build mass action. We look forward to discussing INC proposals for a 'Freedom Charter' - an issue discussed at the conference and first raised in the columns of *'An Reabhlóid'*.

We remain convinced that a true 'Freedom Charter' will only emerge from the actual experience of mass struggle and from the battles of the oppressed. For that reason we repeat again our call for the Open Conference of the oppressed necessary to plot a forward course for the Irish revolution.

**Because of the importance of the issues raised in this article, we will seek to interview organisers and supporters of the conference in coming issues**



# Armed struggle, Revolution and the IRA

**In order to aid debate we are taking the unusual step of publishing an internal document by Joe Carter. The document is not P.D. policy, but it does reflect the general tone of our internal discussion. We welcome comments from readers.**

There is no example in history of a ruling class voluntarily and peacefully giving up its power, wealth and privileges. To believe that the capitalist class of any country would allow itself to be extinguished as a class without a struggle would be equivalent to believing in collective suicide. The taking of the wealth and power in society by any working class will only be done by force or at the very least the overwhelming threat of it.

## HISTORY

This is especially true of a country like Ireland whose whole history is one of imperialism ignoring popular demands and protests and retreating only with the threat and use of violence. This does not mean that the Irish Revolution need be particularly violent and bloody. Real revolution involving the vast majority of the population - the working class and rural workers - can use its strength of numbers and economic power to wrest power sometimes with comparatively little violence.

This was true in that most famous of revolutions - the Russian revolution of 1917. What is always bloody

and violent is counter-revolution which relies on suppressing the vast majority of society, something that can only be done by fear backed up by force and violence. Again this is the history of 1917 and has been the historical lesson all through this century. It was the victorious and bloody counter-revolutions in Italy, Germany and Spain in the '20's and '30's which made the absolute barbarity of the 2nd world war inevitable. No matter how peacefully the attempts to radically change society the capitalist class accepts no such niceties if threatened. That most democratic of Latin American countries, Chile, discovered in 1973 that peaceful revolution will be met with violent counter-revolution.

However in order to try to take power with the minimum of violence it is necessary for the working class to be prepared and able to use force. Only this way can it defer its enemies from using violence to protect its position. That is why Marxists continually explain the need to prepare for the use of force. We continually explain that all imperialist talk of 'democracy' and 'freedom' will last only so long as we do not vote to take away their power and do not oppose their freedom to exploit us. We continually denounce those socialists who spread illusions in the ability of imperialism and its state machinery to be reformed into instruments of genuine workers power and control.

## IRELAND

On Ireland there are particular reasons for warning that the real exercise of power by its people cannot be achieved without force. Britain's history of domination is full of examples of violence from the Black and Tans to Bloody Sunday. Its capitalist allies both unionist and nationalist have long histories



of using repression, torture and murder to defend their two rotten little states. Many books have been written detailing imperialism's bloody history, its determination and ruthlessness. We continually explain this history to the working class because it is the most important lesson it will have to learn in its struggle for justice, democracy and freedom - for socialism.

### WORKING CLASS

We explain to the working class as a whole because it is they and only they who can wield the force necessary to defeat imperialism, destroy the capitalist system and defend a newly created workers state. Certainly in Ireland no 'people's army' no matter how dedicated or professional will free either Ireland or its oppressed. As Marxists we are utterly convinced by history and reason that only the working class can free Ireland from national oppression. 'The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour. They cannot be dissevered'.

This basic point is misunderstood or ignored by every other tendency on the Irish left. The working people of Ireland will free itself and its country by its own autonomous activity or it will never be free. In this activity it will have to use force. This is why we defend the right of the Irish people to take up arms against imperialism.

### REVOLUTION

So how does this inform Marxists view of the IRA's armed struggle? They too defend the right of the Irish people to take up arms although what they usually mean is their own right to take up arms. Our concept of revolution is very different - for us the use of force is the political mobilisation of the mass of Irish workers under a revolutionary programme and leadership which uses their strength of numbers and economic power to seize state power from imperialism and capitalism, north and south. The mass demonstrations, occupations, strikes and insurrection which will be necessary breaks down the division 'mass struggle vs armed struggle'. Force and violence are simply weapons of the mass struggle. The precise methods and extent of the use of arms will be determined by the mass struggle. The republican movement's concept of armed force has failed and will continue to fail. If the political argument we advance does not convince the past 20 years of putting their strategy into practice should.

### TERRORISM

From such considerations Marxists will often define groups who use armed force as terrorist, however well intentioned we consider them, however sincere their attachment to the goal of socialism. This is true of small groups in Western Europe such as the German Red Army Faction. This is not because we do not defend the right of German, French, Belgian or any other working class to take up arms - we do. It flows from our evaluation of these groups being proper and legitimate expressions of the working class struggle in their particular country. So it is the case in Ireland. Is the IRA a legitimate expression of the Irish people's right to take up arms against imperialism? This is quite a separate question from the IRA's effectiveness or the consequences of its military campaign.

### THE IRA

For genuine Marxists there can be no doubt that at present the IRA is a legitimate expression of the Irish people's right to take up arms. We thus refuse to denounce them as terrorists. The grounds on which we do this should be clear because they define the limits to our defence of the IRA as Freedom Fighters and our opposition to those who would denounce them as sectarian murderers etc.

There is a long historical continuity of those taking up arms representing (and from time to time acting as the focus for) the opposition to British rule shared by the majority of the Irish people. This continuity stretches from the United Irish men, to the Young Irelanders, Fenians, IRB and the IRA in its various forms during the 20th century. The present IRA is the latest of this long list. If it is illegitimate then so were these movements as well.

The British would readily agree to this but the Irish capitalist class cannot be so forthright without undermining their own historical legitimacy. So they try to say there is a difference between today's IRA and the 'good old IRA' of the Tan war. They are wrong. This is not just because they both did or do very much the same sort of things (something the southern establishment would try to hide or deny) nor even because of the continuity of activists who maintained allegiance to the republican struggle from the IRA under Collins to the 'provos' of today. It is because they are the same movement; the same ideals and the same programme succinctly put today





The IRA were a defence against the B Specials

as 'Brits Out'.

They now have tiny support in the majority of the country but the Brits are no longer in the 26 counties in the direct sense of an occupying army. In the north where the Brits do tramp the streets, through many peoples homes and over many peoples faces the IRA does have substantial popular support. This is measured not just in the vote for Sinn Fein but in the wider legitimacy (if not clear cut support) which it has in the nationalist community.

Although Sinn Fein gets only around 10% of the vote in the 6 counties occupied directly by Britain this is a statistic which can explain only the role the IRA can play in terms of the balance of forces involved in the struggle, its defensive or offensive nature.

That SF gets one-third of the nationalist vote, that the IRA has seen thousands of young working class militants go through its ranks and that it can still today, despite such a powerful enemy, recruit young people and maintain itself is the true indication of its

nature. It maintains a popular base which in more senses than one presents it from being a terrorist organisation.

#### LIMITS

However such support and even active participation should not be confused with the revolutionary self activity which we have described above. The basis of the IRA's armed struggle is ghettoised, now as never before in the last 20 years. Its support is isolated as never before from the mass of Irish workers especially in the south. Even its supporters in the ghettos of Belfast or Derry often do no more than vote, buy Republican News and go to the occasional march. This is still a long way from making a real revolution. Our attitude to the armed struggle of the IRA is determined by how it helps to advance the struggle to mobilise the majority of Irish workers to make this real socialist revolution.

#### MARXIST VIEW OF REVOLUTION

In order to make a revolution the working class must want to make one. They must be organised to do it and they must be mobilised in activity to carry it out. In other words they must be educated, organised and mobilised. They will be educated by those who propagandise and agitate for socialist revolution but most of all they will be educated through their own experience of struggle. They will learn through their own struggles on the streets and in their workplaces that the immediate problems to which they seek answers or the wider political issues which affect them can only be solved through a new society which they control. Both these aspects - of those agitating for socialism and the real struggles which workers engage in and from which they learn are necessary for the coming together of the working class and the project of a socialist revolution.

Of course it is not enough for workers to want socialism they must find the best ways of organising to fight for it and the best ways of using their organisation. Again both their own experience and the experience of socialist revolutionaries who have the lessons of past revolutions are necessary.

All these tasks are brought together and codified in a revolutionary programme. It is this programme which seems to mobilise the maximum number of workers in defence of their own interests leading



them to realise their ultimate interest is in fighting for a socialist revolution. At the same time it defines the way in which this fight will be conducted, it is a programme of activity and not primarily a list of demands.

This is why Marxists spend so much time analysing what the present situation is, what the central issues are which confront the working class, what its response is and what struggles it is spontaneously involved in. How can revolutionaries raise the consciousness of workers by deepening and extending their struggles? In short how can revolutionaries educate, organise and mobilise the working class to fight for a socialist revolution?

### THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN

The question then is does the IRA's military campaign help to educate, organise and mobilise the majority of workers to fight for revolution?

We believe the answer is that it doesn't.

Before we explain this we should be clear about one thing. The IRA has arisen almost spontaneously as

a result of the struggle of the nationalist working class in the north. It is not an artificial imposition on the struggle. It arose as a result of the need to defend the nationalist working class from imperialism and loyalism, a need which remains, which will continue to remain and a major reason why the IRA continues to have popular support.

But we now have to ask how the IRA defends nationalist workers or the working class movement today? It certainly cannot defend nationalists from loyalist assassins. It cannot defend nationalist areas from the Brits or RUC and its actions more often provoke massive repression from the British army. Indeed at times its actions are deliberately designed to provoke such repressions. The Brighton bomb was justified by Danny Morrison in precisely these terms, as if more repression will lead to more resistance. This conception is one that can only be called terrorist.

More generally the military campaign is now used as a cover for all sorts of British political and military offensives against which the military campaign itself provides no defence. What stops the British from



*The remains of Bombay Street after being torched by loyalists*



another Bloody Sunday or a Tiananmin Square is the potential for mass mobilisation against them which exists both north and south (not to mention international protest) if it did try such an adventure. It is certainly not fear of a military response from the IRA. Again it is the mass struggle or the potential to unleash one which is decisive. What logically follows is that defence of the anti-imperialist struggle today means strengthening this political defence.

### IRA STRATEGY

In a way the IRA recognises that the nature of its role has changed since the days it was rebuilt to defend nationalist areas from the loyalists, RUC and Brits. It now claims to be on the offensive in a long war which will demoralise imperialism into a negotiated withdrawal from Ireland. This is the central strategy of the Republican Movement and has been for a long time now. As an IRA statement put it in August last year 'We will, through inflicting continuous and unsustainable losses, break the will of the British government to stay in our country'. (R.N. 28/9/89)

There is no conception here of the need for a programme which relates to workers own struggles throughout Ireland and which seems, as we have said, to educate, organise and mobilise as many workers as possible to achieve their own liberation. Political strategy, in so far as it exists, is added on to this central strategy of the military campaign and is more often electoralist, reformist and opportunist. Winning elections, 'screwing the system' and proposed deals with the SDLP and Fianna Fail are as a result of failure to put the working out of a revolutionary socialist programme at the heart of the whole movement and its activity.

Instead of acting to boost the confidence of the masses and stimulating them into activity the military campaign represents a major barrier to the involvement of the masses in the struggle for their own liberation. It serves to isolate the republican vanguard from the mass of Irish workers whose involvement, not to mention leadership, is vital. The armed struggle in the north addresses neither the concerns of southern workers nor provides an example of the methods of struggle they should follow. Republicans are fond of pointing out that the armed struggle is not an issue when they canvass in elections in the south. They fail to notice that this is precisely the sign of their irrelevancy.

The military campaign in the north does of course indicate that the 6 counties is not a normal society. It continually shows that a problem exists. The ability of the IRA to continue against overwhelming odds is a boost to Republican morale and the ingenuity of the IRA's volunteers does act as a headache to Britain's apparatus of repression. None of these factors however are any way near being decisive for the struggle.

The military campaign does not help define or demonstrate what the problem is but has been turned around to represent the problem itself. The ever widening extension of legitimate targets does nothing to bring victory nearer but serves only to give ammunition to British propagandists and confuse the sympathetic. More and more often tragic mistakes demoralise republicans instead of boosting them. These tragedies are a result of the tremendous pressure Britain can now put on the military campaign. The mistakes are inevitable while the conception of an offensive military campaign continues. They will continue to hide imperialism's weaknesses and that of its native collaborators.

The whole idea of an offensive military campaign based on the nationalist population of the six counties against an overwhelmingly superior enemy is a nonsense. The ever widening list of legitimate targets and the extension of the campaign to Britain and the continent are attempts to evade and cover this reality. Only the mass mobilisation of the Irish working class not just in the 6 but in the 26 counties is capable of putting the struggle on the offensive, putting the question of British withdrawal and workers power on the agenda. But as we have said this is not the aim of the IRA's military campaign.

### POLITICAL

Of course more sophisticated republicans will claim that the IRA's campaign is a political one with a political objective. By such definitions they might try to wash criticism away but it is a claim which is empty of any context. No political strategies behind the campaign save that of demoralising Britain. Unfortunately the IRA does not have the resources to demoralise a still powerful imperialism. No intermediate political objectives are put by the campaign by which to gauge its success - save that 'normality' has not been achieved. If the classic conception of 'armed propaganda' is used then the results of the campaign are more often bad propaganda.





Mass action by women broke the British curfew of the Falls Road.

In reality much of the military campaign is justified not on political grounds but on purely military or at best economic ones. The latter has been used to explain the commercial bombing campaign. The bombing of the cross-border rail link is justified in military terms.....'These attacks are part of a military strategy aimed at forcing the British army out of its fixed position and border bunkers'. It 'is one of a number of occasional tactics which we have employed and will continue to employ for military advantage'.

The extension of the concept of legitimate targets to include workers whose job brings them into contact with the British army or RUC is justified on military grounds but is a political disaster. It is the very opposite of a campaign to identify the British 'security' apparatus as an enemy of the working class and gives powerful ammunition to the pro-imperialist leadership of the trade union movements who wish to maintain their cosy collaboration with the British and Free States.

Breaking the potential power of the trade union movement from its bureaucratic leaders is an absolutely central task of revolutionaries in Ireland today. Yet how does the military campaign even address this question never mind begin to give an answer to it. This is but one example of many where

the problems facing those who seek revolutionary change will find in the IRA's armed struggle only barriers and obstacles.

### CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis we reject those who would denounce the IRA as terrorist and will politically defend them against every such charge. But we must also conclude that no political confidence can be placed in the republican leadership. It cannot successfully lead the struggle for national independence and workers power and we believe that it will not turn itself into an organisation which can. For most republicans the present armed campaign is an article of faith and we all know that faith is impervious to reason. We are convinced however that now as never before there are more and more republican militants who will read our arguments and will at least be prepared to engage in debate with them. They hold the key to the present struggle breaking out of the impasse it has reached. This responsibility entails a duty to address the debate openly and honestly.

Joe Carter



# EAST EQUALS WEST?

Since the 1917 revolution a debate has raged in the left over what sort of society could be and eventually was, created in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The sight of corrupt and universally unpopular regimes crumbling has been a fatal blow to those who have seen these regimes as socialist.

However for some these events have been viewed as striking confirmation of their analysis. One such group of people are those who regard Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as some sort of capitalism - state capitalism. In Ireland this view is

represented by the Socialist Workers Movement and in the January issue of its paper 'Socialist Worker' it proudly boasted that 'the state capitalist analysis is the only position from which anti-Stalinist revolutionary socialism can be coherently defended'.

Peoples Democracy is a Trotskyist organisation. We believe that these societies are deformed and degenerated workers' states. The debate between these two positions is an old one and has often got bogged down in definitions. Now however the events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have given the debate a new relevance. As far as we are concerned the boasts of the SWM are not only hollow but dangerous as well. Contrary to their claims, the state capitalist analysis is far from being 'a key weapon in the fight for a new world'. (S.W. Jan.1990).

## EAST EQUALS WEST?

First of all the comrades are completely incapable of explaining the nature of the crisis affecting the east. Why if there is such a crisis in the 'capitalist' east is there no such crisis in the capitalist west? If state capitalism is, as they say, 'the most concentrated form of capitalism' why is it not stronger than the most concentrated form of capitalism in the west - the giant monopolies of the USA, Western Europe and Japan? If the east is capitalist why does it not exhibit all the features of crisis which are distinctly exhibited by capitalism in the west when it is in crisis? Where and when was the stock market crash similar to the one in October 1987 in London, New York and Tokyo? Fundamentally why is the crisis in the east one of an inadequate supply of goods and the crisis in the west one of overproduction of commodities which people cannot afford to buy and an overaccumulation of capital which cannot earn the

necessary profit. This is not a minor difference. To describe both as the same, both as capitalism, is completely confusing. This is particularly so as the comrades claim that both sorts of society are driven by the same dynamic. In the west it is market competition of individual capitals. In the east the comrades describe it this way:

"The economic and military pressure of world capitalism and the world market forces the ruling bureaucracies to engage in competitive capital accumulation through the exploitation of their respective working class" (SW Jan 1990).

If the way these societies work are so similar why such completely different results?

## REAL GAINS

The problem is that the decay of Stalinism has been followed by a capitalist offensive which argues that only full conversion to capitalist ownership and market economies offers a solution. Our comrades in the Fourth International argue for a move to democratic control and planning by the working class. It will be difficult to win this debate if we begin by saying that they have already been living under the market, under capitalism, for the last 40 to 70 years!

But this is not the least difficulty with the state capitalist analysis. The fundamental point is well put by the comrades themselves - 'We do not fear a restoration of capitalism since capitalism already exists'. (SW Jan 1990). The comrades should think about this because it is absolutely disastrous. A primary duty of socialists both east and west is to shout from the highest rooftop to Russian, Polish or Hungarian workers that they should be absolutely terrified of the restoration of capitalism. It would mean a massive increase in poverty - in unemployment, rising prices, inequalities, attacks on basic social welfare provision and on the unity of the working class. Very quickly it will also mean attacks on hard won democratic rights. Already workers in the east have protested at these results. They show themselves more intelligent than the 'Marxists' of the SWM.

## OUR ANALYSIS

To be fair to the comrades they do oppose these attacks (despite  
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rather than because of their analysis). But if they are going to be consistent how can they explain that a society exists called 'capitalism' which has all the real gains, a part of its very structure, which have to be defended. They poke fun at us who call these societies workers' states (degenerated and deformed) but they too find themselves (or should) defending the very characteristics that show these states to be workers' states no matter how degenerated. They ask how a state can be called a workers one when the workers are without basic political rights. They forget that they too define pro-capitalist parties like the British Labour party as 'workers' parties. For Trotskyists there is no such problem. Our understanding of these societies has been of states which have eliminated private property in basic industry, destroyed the capitalist class and instigated centralised bureaucratic planning. There are real gains to be defended and the state capitalists must defend this also if they are to be on the side of the workers. For us these gains have been constantly undermined, threatened and distorted by the ruling bureaucracies who have usurped political power and who can only be overthrown by a political revolution (not reform) which smashes their repressive state apparatus. Our alternative is real socialist democracy. If Trotskyism can be defined as having

stood for anything over the last 50 years then this is it.

## OBJECTIONS

The objections of the state capitalists to our analysis now takes on a more short sighted character. For example they do not fear the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union but do they not realise that this would mean a massive strengthening of world capitalism? Does their dogmatic view really blind them to this massively obvious global reality?


We argue with those in these movements who seek a return to capitalism because of the attacks on the working class it would mean. We base our hopes and confidence on the working class fightback which has already begun to bureaucrats introduction of the market and its effects on workers' living standards. We thus support these movements and our comrades in Eastern Europe are involved in trying to give a lead to those who see the alternative to Stalinism not as capitalism but as socialist democracy. To the comrades of the SWM we say that Trotskyism is the 'only position from which anti-stalinist revolutionary socialism can be coherently defended'.

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# THE IRISH IN BRITAIN - AN UNTAPPED RESERVOIR

An article by our British correspondent,  
Navigator

The Irish community in Britain is the largest and, second to probably only the Jews, the longest established of the immigrant populations. Britain's racist immigration laws ensure that, at the moment, only the Irish have free access and the present sharpening of the permanent economic crisis in all 32 counties guarantees an unbroken and increasing flow of new immigrants.

The Free State government dare not keep accurate statistics on how many people are forced to leave each year for economic reasons. Northerners who go to Britain are moving from one part of the British state to another as far as both government and voluntary agencies are concerned and do not show up on the statistics. Present estimates are that something like 50,000 Irish people a year are going to Britain. That would be roughly equivalent to 600,000 people a year leaving Britain. These 50,000 individuals are evidence of the absolute failure of the Irish capitalist economy and evidence of the destructiveness of a strategy of reliance on multi national companies to create jobs. In short they are 50,000 examples proving that the Irish Free State is a neo-colony. The bitterest twist to the joke of Irish capitalism is that the imperialist power to which it is most heavily subordinated and which bears the most overwhelming responsibility for the strangulation of the capitalist economy in Ireland is also the one which every year accepts 50,000 of the people to whom Ireland has nothing to offer.

This new wave of immigrants is potentially the foundation for a mass movement for British withdrawal. It is overwhelmingly composed of young working class women and men with no affection for either of the major Irish bourgeois parties and possessing the half-hidden Republicanism of the Irish working class. They are the ones who buy thousands of copies of 'An Phoblacht' every week in English pubs. When they vote in Britain the majority vote for the Labour Party. The 'Irish Post', the paper with the largest circulation among the Irish in Britain supported the challenge by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer for the leadership of the party and at the last general election called on its readers to vote Labour.

The organisations in Britain which are campaigning for withdrawal are all very small, particularly when measured against the task they have set themselves. Politically the most important is the Labour Committee on Ireland which organises inside the Labour Party but which has stagnated over the past

year or so because of its leadership's desire to dissolve it into the Time To Go! campaign.

The worst of them, like the Irish Freedom Movement, are nothing but fronts for ultra left sects which attract and burn out comparatively large numbers of individuals through noisy support for the armed struggle and are characterised by the most appalling political sectarianism.

The much healthier Troops Out Movement comprises a number of independent activists and representatives of some small left groups and is the historical continuity of the British withdrawal movement. It has a fundamentally correct understanding of the need to work with forces with whom it does not completely agree and over the past eighteen months has participated in a number of broadly organised initiatives.

The Irish in Britain have an abundance of organisations ranging from the GAA and cultural groups to 'county associations'. Although the GAA sponsored the 1989 Time To Go! demonstration it has steered clear of politics and the umbrella organisation, the Federation of Irish Societies, has consistently put obstacles in the way of campaigners for the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six and is strongly influenced by the Irish embassy. The more radical Irish in Britain Representation Group is paralysed by its lack of political clarity but nevertheless it has taken up such questions as anti-Irish racism in the media, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the discrimination faced by the Irish in housing in a way that no other group has done. It is a weak organisation but denotes a tremendous gain in self confidence for Irish people.

For the whole period for the Birmingham bombings until the Hunger Strike the Irish in Britain virtually abstained from political activity connected with withdrawal. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, the frame-ups of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four served their purpose. People were too terrified to become involved. A very obvious lesson from this period is how much of an obstacle to building a mass withdrawal movement the tactic of armed struggle in Britain was. It is no exaggeration to say that the basic work being done now could have been done in 1973 and '74. What are the concrete results of the armed actions in Britain in the 1970's? The only real one is the lack of a movement such as that which greatly helped the defeat of the United States in Vietnam or one with the popularity and influence of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain.



As an historical footnote it is worth recalling the 100,000 strong demonstrations in support of an amnesty for Fenian prisoners supported by Marx in the last century; the Anti-Partition League in the early 1920's which could simultaneously organise demonstrations several thousand strong in a dozen English and Welsh towns; and more recently the large anti internment demonstration in Britain at the beginning of the 1970's. What linked all these movements was the massive involvement of first and second generation emigrants, something which has been absent since.

The unfortunate reality is that the British working class will not provide the support for such a movement, at least in its first stages. Although there exists a majority in Britain for withdrawal it is primarily driven by war weariness and indifference. It has little to do with support for self determination and these moods

to an uncomprehending world, its self appointed leadership, which in reality only consists of less than a dozen people, is a mirror image of the ultra left sectarians in the way it adamantly refuses any discussion of the campaign's direction among the rank and file and excludes those with whom it disagrees from having any meaningful participation. This partly explains why the campaign has failed to really take off.

The most important reason though is the lack of significant mass mobilisations in Ireland itself. This more than any other factor explains the smallness of the demonstrations in Britain over the last few years. Nevertheless lack of mass activity in Ireland gives time to construct the basis of a withdrawal movement, allowing the political battles to be fought with the ultra lefts and those with bureaucratic tendencies. This is what is happening at the moment with the creation of the Free Ireland



will not easily be converted into conscious activity. Moreover the role of most of the leaderships of British working class organisations is, in an historical sense, criminal. As a whole they accept the assorted varieties of social imperialism expounded by Kinnock, Militant and the Workers Party. They are united by a hatred of the armed struggle conducted by the largest revolutionary organisation in Europe and support for the impossibility called 'unity by consent'. There are exceptions. The entire executive council of the National Union of Railwaymen sponsored a conference in London on the McBride principles.

In 1989 the Time To Go! campaign registered some successes in the unions. It won the affiliation of NALGO, a local government union with 500,000 members and had fringe meetings on Ireland at virtually every union conference. However while it has understood that it is necessary to persuade people in Britain that there is a need for a debate around British involvement in Ireland, as opposed to preaching timeless truths

Network, which involves groups and activists who participated in both Time To Go! and the Year of Action groups. It is the duty of these people to learn from the history of the women's movement and the lesbian and gay movement the simple fact that it will be those with the most direct sense of their oppression who will lead the struggle for their own liberation. Those in Ireland with influence on the withdrawal movement should remind our British comrades of the necessity to begin to organise among the Irish in Britain.

Navigator - Our British Correspondent



## REVIEW

### The Dynamics of Irish Politics

# Socialist Theory or Science Fiction?

D.R. O'Connor Lysaght reviews *The Dynamics of Irish Politics* by Paul Bew, Ellen Hazelkorn, Henry Patterson; Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1989, £8.50 Sterling.

It should be stated that this book is not a complete fiasco. Its third and fourth chapters contain a lot of useful material; their footnotes include even more useful references. Its second chapter includes valuable demolition work on Senator Manning's whitewash of the Blueshirts.

For all that the work under review does not describe the Dynamics of Irish Politics, the title being as untrue as the claim on its back cover that it "is the first overview of politics in the Irish Republic from the 1916 Easter Rising to the present based on an examination of the state's social foundations"

This failure is rooted in its authors' politics. Hazelkorn and Patterson are members of the Workers Party: Bew is known to sympathise. The organisation they support has developed in a trajectory from revolutionary nationalism to reformist neo-Stalinism and is likely to continue further to more honest reformism. A major ideological aid in this process was a pamphlet combining inaccurate history, capitalist economics and much bandying of the word 'dialectic', *The Irish Industrial Revolution*. This attacked the traditional Republican analysis of Irish economic under-development simply by inverting it. Responsibility for it is placed not with British imperialism but with the Irish national bourgeoisie. At the same time, the Stalin strategy, of capitalist stages leading to a socialist society in a single country, is maintained. Redemption is seen as coming not from the expropriation of the Irish bourgeoisie but from investment, mainly from the U.S.A. Such are the loopholes in this work that it may be suspected that the Workers Party members are all lobotomised in order to believe it. Not only are its statistics rigged quite crudely, but it has no idea of causation; it gives no explanation for the alleged lack of enterprise of Irish capitalists outside the north-east; Protestant Ulster was left for another study that never appeared). This opens the way to explain this to traditional British racist slurs. Even from its publication in

1977, the time was overdue for real intelligence to supplement it.

In the twelve years that passed before this book tried to supply the need, two countervailing pressures appeared to complicate the analysis. In 1982, the Telesis Report, whose findings gain extra credibility by being themselves the fruit of private enterprise, destroyed the illusion that foreign capital could build the Irish economy qualitatively beyond its present level. Seven years later, months before this book's publication, the Workers Party leader responded to his organisation's slow growth and to the pace of change in Eastern Europe by abandoning its commitment to the maximum programme of Socialism. It is not yet clear how far this affects a traditional minimum Republican-Socialist demand such as the nationalisation of Irish finance capital. It does leave a massive hole in Workers Party policy, that the leaders are unable to fill with the demand for workers' control (too Socialist). Their only alternative is to abandon their party's umbilical link with the cause of separation from Britain.

The authors of this book are about as academically qualified as anyone to provide the analysis to fill the hole without using the calls for Socialism rejected by them and their party. All have doctorates and writings to justify them. More importantly, each has stooped to a level of intellectual shysterism far more sophisticated than could be imagined by the authors of *The Irish Industrial Revolution*. Patterson's 1980 book on the Belfast Labour movement, *Class Conflict and Sectarianism*, insists that in Belfast 'no form of class politics could have been developed which would have threatened the integration of the Protestant bloc, which did not attempt to come to terms with Protestant working-class resistance to nationalist demands', implying an unsubstantiated faith in the possibility of a genuinely democratic form of partition. Hazelkorn is an authority on the 26 county political client system, but also on Marx and Engels' writings on Ireland. On these latter, she claims (Saothar 9) that, in the end, Marx 'believed that a solution (to Ireland's problems) could be found within the Union'. This alleged near death-bed conversion to Unionism is not given any reference



in an otherwise well documented article. Bew is an authority on the land question. He emphasises the objective (as distinct from the subjective, political) inevitability of the larger farmers' control of the countryside before 1914 and the resulting inevitability of the workers' failure to ally effectively with subsequent land agitations.

These positions provide justification for Socialist Unionism. None of them contains more than half a truth, so that any synthetic theory drawn from them is nonsense. Nonetheless, a consistent theory would be coherent nonsense: not scientific Socialism, but, at least science fiction.

Even such literary distinction is denied this book. Whether they sense that opinion is not yet ready for such radicalism or whether they have had to recognise that Telesis has destroyed a major part of its objective base, the authors drew back from taking this step, though they hint at it in their earlier chapters, particularly the first, in which the Irish farmers move from 'Home Rule' to the Republic is ascribed to their fear of a possible (but never implemented) United Kingdom Land Tax. They insist too that 'the break with economic autarchy' has restructured the 26 county economy. Then, in the face of the current economic crisis, with unemployment above the figures of 30 years ago, and emigration at similar levels, their confidence collapses.

They limit their optimism to a purely political perspective: the fact that at the last general election, the allegedly Socialist left in the 26 counties gained two more seats than its previous best. They mention only briefly that this represents less electoral support than that won by Labour alone in 1969; nor do they emphasise the fact that their triumphs still left the left with less than one seventh of all T.D.'s.

Even this perspective is achieved by dubious paths. The theoreticians of *The Irish Industrial Revolution* are dismissed as 'rigidly determinist', but the new work is little better. Indeed, since determinism implies a first cause, it is more inclined to that weakness in that it blames 26-county underdevelopment on a 'rural bourgeoisie' who benefited from the land wars. (the role of Finance capital is ignored). The issue of national unity is ignored on the specific ground that it has little active support among the people, but is suppressed even when that support is demonstrated in a series of mass mobilisations over the past 20 years

This suppression effects the books title, giving its inaccuracy an extra dimension. A book that limits itself to 26 counties cannot hope to explain Irish politics.

This is but one of the book's evasions of matters not  
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directly economic. Hazelkorn's study of clientism has had little part in her contribution to this. The conditions created for it by the centralised state bureaucracy inherited from the colonial regime is not considered at all, partly, no doubt because it might seem 'anti-British', partly because the Workers Party has many supporters in that bureaucracy. Even more interesting is the way the political dynamic produced by the Catholic Church is pigeonholed and dumped among the 'Conclusions', barely in time to be stitched on to a complete analysis.

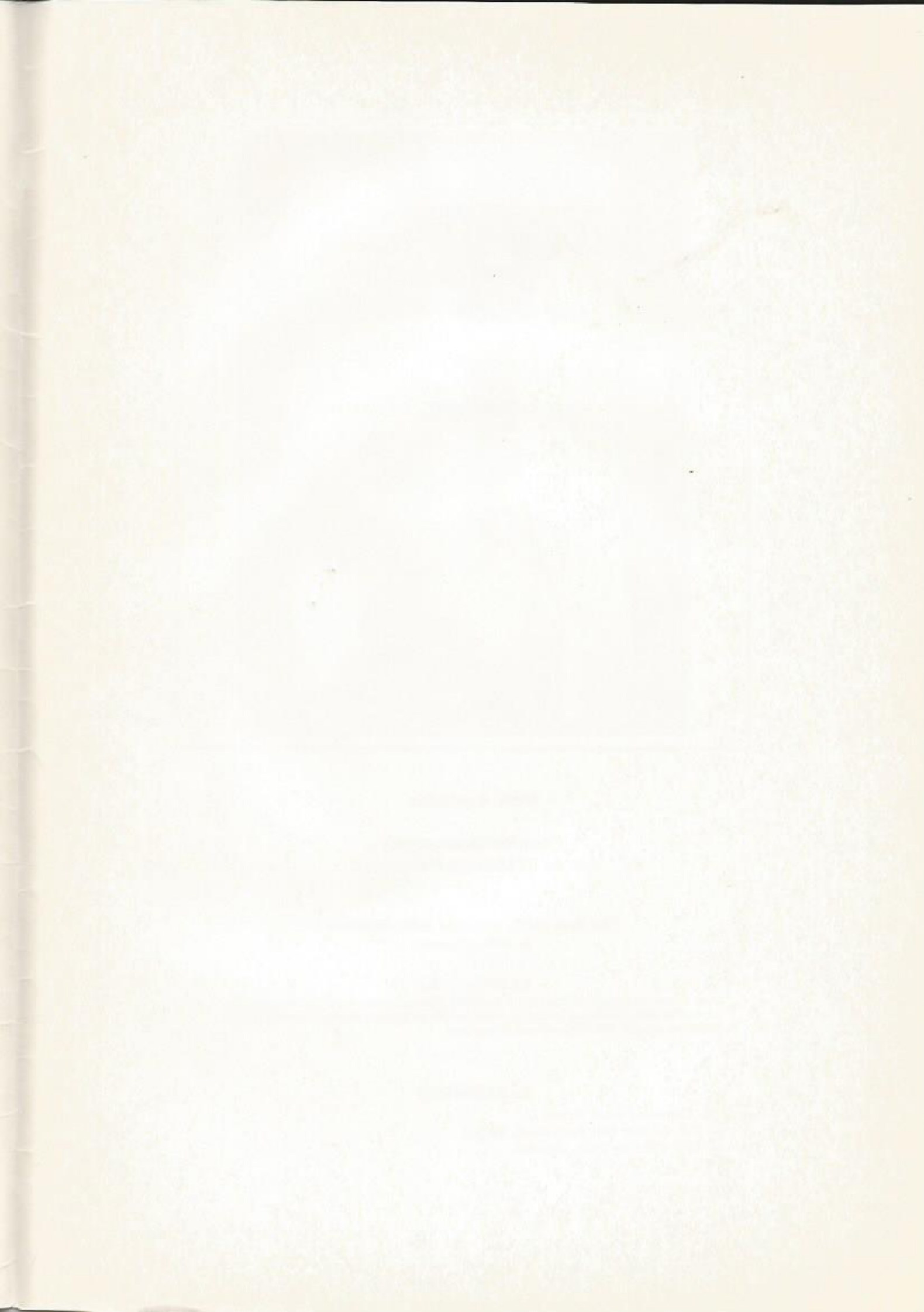
To these excisions are added the fact that the work's economic analysis is limited to the 26 counties. The end of autarchy is praised and then, with one eye on the Telesis report, is criticised. Mention is made of oil crises. These are seen almost as different acts of God, about which nothing can be done. The dominance of the cattle trade with Britain is considered in the same way. Failure to examine the role of Irish banking and its part in the export of Irish capital reinforces the result: the illusion of the inevitability of Irish economic policy and discussion of it within terms set by the bourgeoisie

The lack of working class power is explained by their numerical weakness and by defining small farmers not as a natural ally but as part of the capitalist class. This can be held for the period before the '60s, but cannot explain the period since the '60s, when the working class has formed a majority of the population. One obvious reason, the betrayals of the Labour party in Coalition, are blurred by the present perspectives of the Workers party. So Labour is criticised for class collaboration in the early days of the 26 county state, when the working class was weak. The criticism is much less hostile when they seek coalitions at a time when the working class is in the majority!

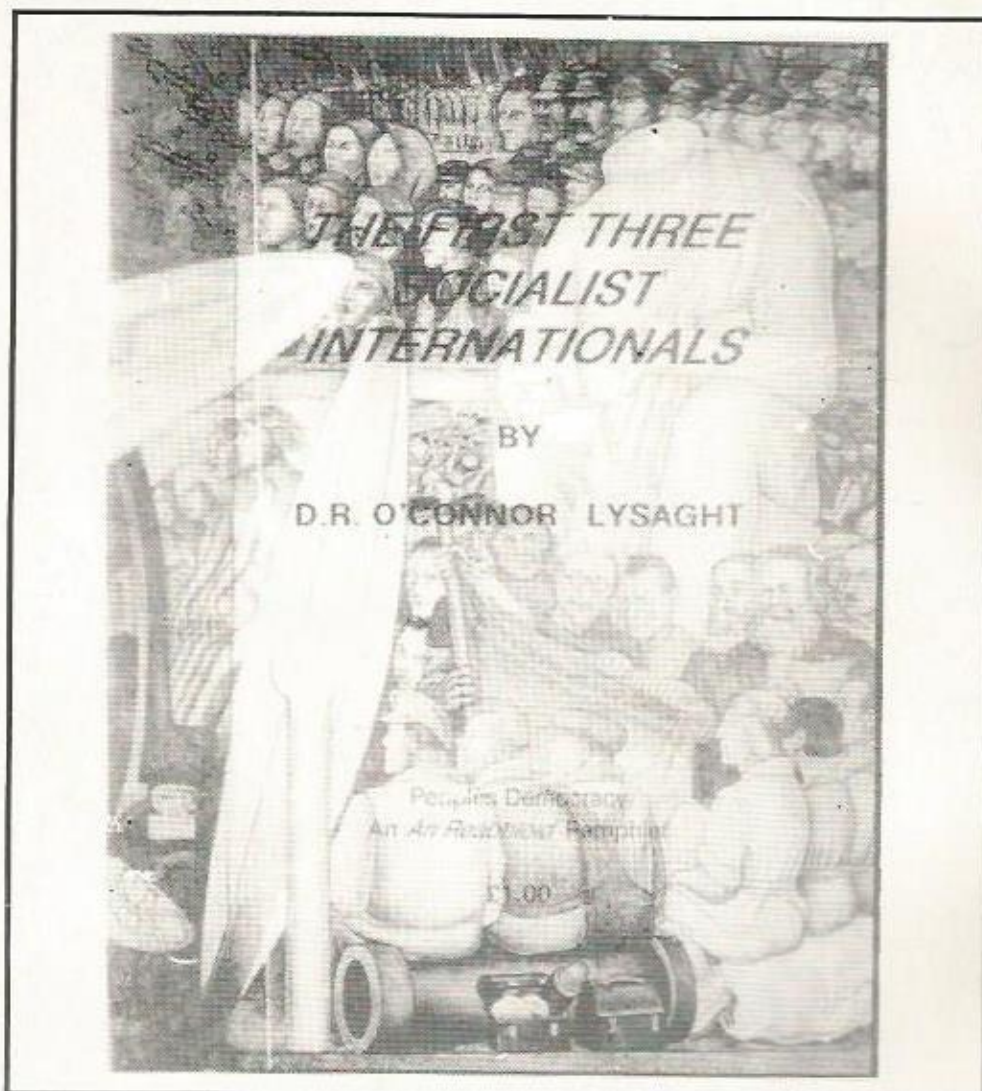
This then is at heart a book that dismisses the possibility of Workers power or even an agenda for the working class. They sketch a worst case scenario - Fianna Fail in power, relying on religion and nationalism to compensate for the deficiency in its economic policy. But the best case that they hint at fails to inspire - coalition, with more compromises thanks to Workers party participation.

At a time when the working classes of the USSR and Eastern Europe are reemerging on the world stage and where yet again after 20 years yet another imperialist plan for Ireland seems doomed to failure this sort of new realism seems even more tawdry and intellectually threadbare than usual.









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