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For a Workers Republic

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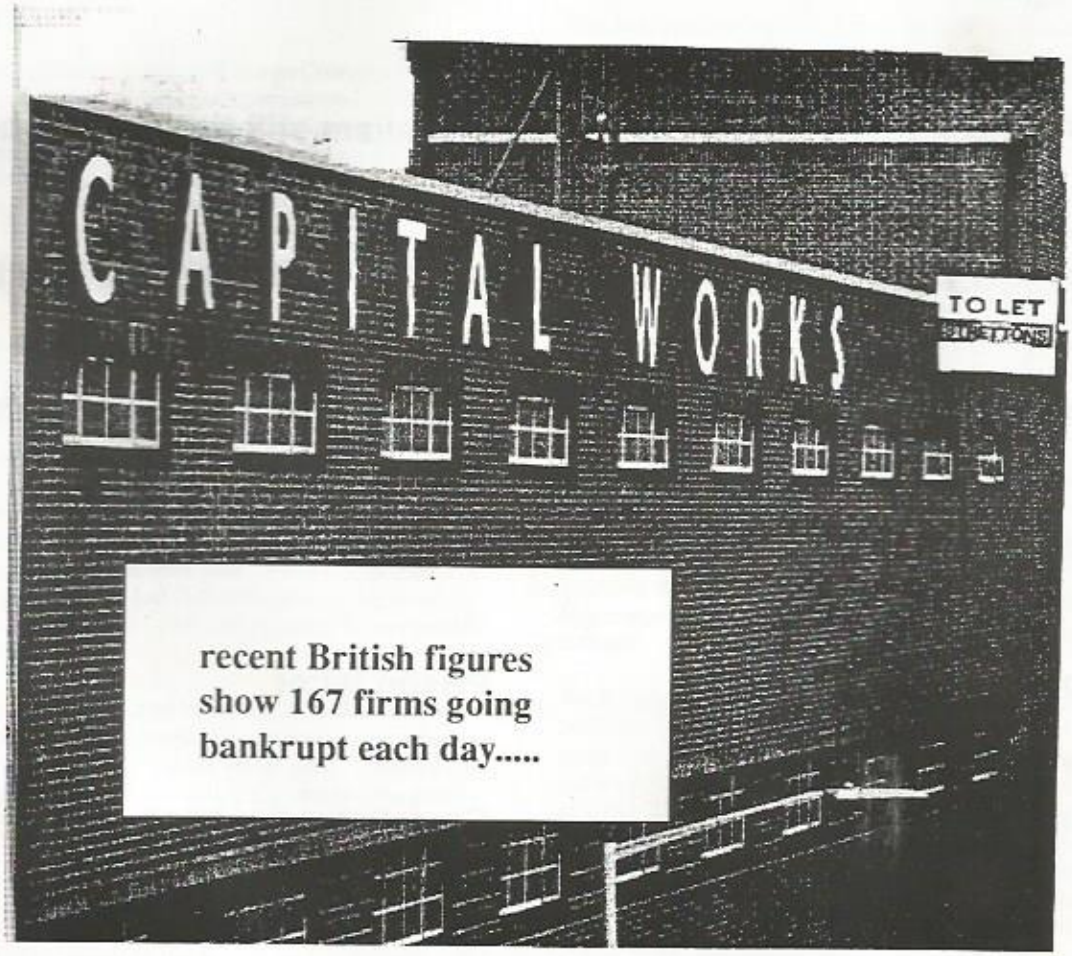
SOCIALISM



STILL THE ONLY POSSIBLE FUTURE

CONTENTS

FOR A WORKERS REPUBLIC!

In many ways the outlook for socialists doesn't look bright. No matter how many times we reflect that Stalinism is not socialism the collapse of the stalinist states has fuelled a rightwing offensive which has already in the 80's scored a number of significant victories. No one can doubt that across the world the working class has been in retreat. In the richest countries we are seeing the growing squalor of cardboard cities while in Africa the "triumph of capitalism" and the "end of history" is horrifically celebrated by the starvation of literally millions of human beings.

In Ireland the language of George Orwell's 1984 has for along time been cynically employed to turn victims into villains and exploitation into freedom. In the North loyalist terrorism is only "reactive", while the British army who defend the sectarian state by turning whole areas into occupied zones have become "peacekeepers". Apparently the only problem with that idyllic paradise known to some as the six counties is a few "psychopaths" known as the IRA.

In the South the only state in western Europe to suffer from declining population for over most of its history apparently suffers record unemployment and emigration because it has too many people! No wonder working people are so cynical and that in the North they continue to vote in large numbers for Sinn Fein despite the alliance against them which stretches from the British and Loyalists to the Catholic church. No wonder that in the South a recent opinion poll recorded 76% recognising the recent financial scandals as " part and parcel of the economic system".

This cynicism can and has already turned to anger. A mass strike threatened the governments refusal to stick to its already rotten PESP deal. Thousands rocked the hypocritical Catholic crusade of the southern establishment with demands for abortion rights. Old men in funny clothes and wearing white wigs have been wheeled out to try and dampen the anger. Other attempts will follow. The leadership of the trades unions succeeded in holding back workers anger. The anger of the young and of women will face similar obstacles.

ORGANISATION

Only organisation and leadership will overcome these obstacles and this is the challenge facing the left. Unfortunately the present left-wing parties are nowhere near facing up to it. The Labour party is gearing up for another coalition with a right wing party (it doesn't care which). The Workers party has split. The old guard clings to a discredited stalinism while the mohair suits head for the "Democratic left". Both groups remain totally pro-imperialist and reformist. In the North the Republican movement leads the struggle against imperialism with an increasingly sterile military campaign accompanied by an increasingly reformist politics which now seeks to call the EEC and the UN to the aid of the Irish people. The same UN that through carpet bombing helped the Iraqi people back to the stone age!

The leaderships and politics required to defend the Irish working class North and South will not come from left reformism or republicanism. Only Marxism offers a programme which can both explain and provide answers.

CLARIFICATION

This task of explanation and programme is one which faces Peoples Democracy and calls for a total transformation of our journal. You will see major changes in the appearance and content of the journal and we have tried to signal the new direction by amending the name to "An Reabhloid - For a Workers Republic".

In our new journal we will be concentrating on the programmatic clarification of basic political questions which face Irish socialists and in this issue we will show what this will mean. To help in this task we will be opening the pages to others on the left to take up the arguments we present. We look forward to a lively debate!

Such programmatic clarification is sorely needed, for without it the small organisations of the Marxist left even if they become large will not give the necessary leadership. Already organisations claiming Marxism such as "Militant" continually refuse to confront imperialism and actually oppose the demand for the withdrawal of British troops from the North. Sectarianism is blamed on "Orange and Green bigots", but the real source - imperialism- is let off scot free. This so-called Marxism has nothing to offer.

Fighting for a genuine Marxism in Ireland will be no easy task but already steps can be taken along the path. The main obstacle facing our Journal has not been an unresponsiveness to our ideas but our limited channels for distribution and the tendency in the Irish left to avoid debate outside their own organisation. You can help by helping to sell the journal and by contributing your ideas to the pages.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

' We Only Want The Earth"

Peoples Democracy is a group of socialists who recognise the need for working people to organise for a future free of exploitation and oppression.

We Fight For;

*** A 32 - Countries Worker's Republic**

*** Worker's Control and Full Employment**

*** A Woman's Right To Choose and Independent Organisation of Women**

*** Immediate Withdrawal of British Troops from the Six Countries and and End to the Loyalist Veto**

We stand for International Socialism and the strengthening of the World Party of Socialist Revolution, the Fourth International.

Working class people throughout the world were right to rejoice at the death of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Stalinism represented a betrayal of the working class, not a programme for the future and freedom. He was a cancer within the international working class which the real followers of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky have consistently fought to expel from the world movement of the working class.

Peoples Democracy and the Fourth International continue the fight for socialism, the complete emancipation of humanity.

We reject those who would compromise with the brutality and poverty of capitalism.

We affirm that the triumph of the working class is the future of humanity.

"For our demands most modest are, we only want the earth" James Connolly.

If you would like to join this fight or simply want to know more contact :

JOIN P.D. NOW!

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EDITORIAL

A WOMEN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE!

When the right wing parties agreed to support the 'pro-life' amendment to the constitution in the 1983 they did as a way to reinforce capitalist rule in a society wreaked by instability and a perceived threat from the left. In their reactionary way they recognised the axiom that a society can be judged by the position of women inside it by ensuring that women were repressed. In order to ensure this repression pregnancy advisory clinics in Dublin were closed ;magazines such as 'Cosmopolitan' and 'Company' have been censored and basic women's health books such as 'Our Bodies Ourselves' have been removed from public libraries. SPUC has been quite open about it

"we are against the previous new thinking that asserts that our bodies are our own"

The cost of this has been horrific as a few of the worst publicised cases show. One women in Wexford pregnant outside marriage was hounded from their job while another in Co Longford died giving birth in a grotto after having concealed her pregnancy. Finally, the state decided that interment was to be introduced for a 14 year old rape victim. But finally, women and young people decided that this was enough. The massive pressure of public anger expressed in militant protests forced the release of the girl and the belated suggestions from some establishment politicians that perhaps abortion was permissible in some circumstances. After all if it was possible to allow women to go to England to have abortions why should they not be available here ? And if it is alright in cases of rape then why is it not possible for all women who decide to terminate their pregnancy ?'

WOMEN SHOULD DECIDE THEIR FATE

The case is clear. The only person who should decide is the women herself. It is a women's right to choose. Women can't have equality with men while they are denied the most basic freedom to control their own bodies. For if they do not have control, who does? The state has, even in the middle of the crisis tried to recover from the defeat inflicted on it and reassert control. It has tried to defuse the crisis by getting five old men, collectively known as the Supreme Court, to release the girl while not guaranteeing that women will not be stopped again. Their judgment in based on the argument that there must be a substantial risk to the women's life. But who will decide this?- doctors, committees and the courts of course! Anyone but the women.

FIGHTBACK

This is all part of the establishment's hope that those who have come onto the streets will be placated by lots of noise about committees, talks, amendments to protocols and legislation. The movement supporting womens right must not be dragged into this process whereby it proposes its own formulas for extending abortion rights which in effect will only set on record our agreement to new restrictions on womens rights. We want to break the chains not fashion looser ones.

At the moment the task is clear. All the attacks over the last decade have resulted from the eighth amendment. That was the reason for the interment of the girl and the object of protest by the thousands of women and young people. Opinion polls show large majorities for its amendment or scrapping. This is now the moment to demand its removal.

The demand for removing the amendment is not an alternative to seeking complete freedom for women expressed in the demand for a women's right to choose. It is the concrete way forward to achieving it at this moment.

The campaign to remove the amendment must be lead by women who suffer its effect. Socialists must explain not just how the amendment is part of a world wide attack on womens rights, but why we face such powerful reactionary forces in Ireland.

The 'carnival of reaction' which is partition has strengthened forces such as the Catholic Church. The fight for women to take control of their own bodies must become part of the struggle of the working class to take control of their lives. The complete freedom for both will only be possible when the present state is smashed and the partition settlement it rests on is replaced by a socialist society free of all discrimination and oppression.

EDITORIAL

Time for a change?

There's no doubt that the results of the British general election represent a significant setback for the working class. The size of the Tory vote indicates a real demoralisation of a section of the British workforce - a point hammered home a few days after the election when car workers voted to accept the imposition of Japanese work practices in the assembly plants.

The elements of this demoralisation aren't hard to find. A history of capitalist victories against the unions. A long and deep recession at a time when much of the safety net of the welfare state has been removed. Frightened people aren't ready to take chances or to experiment - especially when the glitz of the Labour campaign doesn't add up to a real political and economic alternative.

There remain many problems for the capitalists and many opportunities for a fightback. Major must now drink his own poisoned chalice of a bankrupt economy. This election marks a finis to the reformist strategy of waiting for a labour government to be elected. The very large forces willing to defend themselves must take the road of self-organisation and direct mass action if they are to succeed. In Scotland especially workers are already drawing a line in the sand and indicating their unwillingness to accept the diktat of a government that they did not elect and raising the national question as a major issue in British politics.

In the North the loss of the Sinn Fein seat in West Belfast is a disappointment. There are however still almost 17000 republican voters in West Belfast and overall, with the exception of mid-Ulster and Fermanagh/South Tyrone, the republican vote held. This bedrock of republican resistance remains an important constraint on the British and their allies.

It's true that tactical voting by loyalists gave Hendron the seat. That isn't the major issue. The fact is that if Sinn Fein merely hold their vote that means that new voters are passing them by and the SDLP/Dublin government/Catholic church offensive is slowly but surely succeeding. That's no surprise when we consider that in the nine years in which Gerry Adams held the seat Sinn Fein consistently pursued a strategy of urging unity with bourgeois nationalism. This strategy has failed utterly and left them with lunatic proposals of UN and EEC intervention.

The danger now is of a reliance on military action to substitute for the political failures of Sinn Fein. In the absence of mass political action or any strategy for building it we would see more and more reckless adventurism of the character of the London bombings and an even greater isolation of the struggle.

Socialist republicans have one clear task - to join in the political struggles to build independent class action. Without this bedrock we will have no counter to the further offensives planned by the imperialists and their allies.

SOCIALISM - STILL THE ONLY WAY FORWARD

There is one burning question that emerges from the collapse of the USSR and that overshadows all the important strategic and tactical issues, the twists and turns of the bureaucrats and the human needs of their victims. Is Socialism possible? Is it even desirable?

The question underpins the debates of working people in every sector of the world. In the non-capitalist economies can workers resist the currents for capitalist restoration? Can they organise in their own interests or will they merely serve as cannon fodder for various sectors of the bureaucracy? Is there a revolutionary solution to the human agony of the Third world? Is the "moderation" of the ANC in South Africa and the PLO leadership in the Middle East the only possible option in a bad situation? To what extent can workers in the advanced capitalist societies fight privatisation and recession? Can one even imagine an anti-imperialist victory in Ireland if the world domination of imperialism is determined for all time?

NEW WORLD ORDER?

The voices of imperialism have no doubts about the answers to these questions.

On the political front George Bush talks of a "New World order" and of the 21st century as "an American century". With its military might the one world superpower will serve as the gendarme of the new order and ensure capitalist rule in every corner of the globe.

Philosophical underpinning for this vision comes from the right-wing guru of the hour, Francis Fukuyama. A revised version of an essay entitled "The end of History?" has just been republished in book form - the main change in its contents being that the question mark has now been removed. Fukuyama's basic argument is that liberal democracy has seen off socialism as its last competitor and that this was an inexorable outcome of historical development. It's impossible to talk any longer of historical development because history has reached its fulfilment in the consumer society of the U.S.A.

The kindest thing that can be said about these arguments is that they are deeply unconvincing. George Bush is struggling to be nominated for a second term as President of the world's biggest debtor nation while overseeing the middle of a world recession. As one pro-capitalist economic observer put it;

"How thoughtless of capitalism to celebrate the demise of communism with a crisis of its own".

Fukuyama's assertion that third world countries are on the same tram-line as the advanced capitalist countries and will eventually catch up is contradicted in the real world, where a proportion of the capitalist world's wealth is made up of interest payments that have effectively halved the average income of people in many third world countries. His assertion that we are entering a timeless era of capitalist stability is badly out of tune with sharply increasing rivalry between the imperialist powers, the failure of the leading Group of Seven powers to come up with a coherent plan, or significant resources, for a successful capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe and the endemic failure of the GATT trade talks to produce a unified strategy for managing the world market and avoiding trade wars.

In practice the capitalist bombast does not impress workers. The hungry in the Third World are kept hungry by rapacious IMF [International Monetary Fund] "reforms. Eastern European workers have dreams of affluence but very little experience of the market reforms is enough to provoke a powerful response. Redundancies, privatisation and a continuing degradation of the social fabric are the lot of many workers in the advanced capitalist countries.

market socialists

There are voices in the debate much more dangerous than the triumphalism of the capitalists. The Stalinists remain a powerful current within the workers movement. For decades they have supported despotism and called it socialism. Their practice of continually accommodating to the right means that they are no barrier to capitalist attacks, rather, ably supported by Social Democracy, they are powerful voices within the worker's movement, echoing the capitalist attacks and urging the ditching of all the main tenets of socialism.

These voices of "New realism", "new consensus" and "new agenda" haven't even the saving grace of anything original to say. Mostly they repeat classical attacks on Marxism, hoary with age. We need to look

at these again to refute them effectively.

One of the Key concepts of Marxism is that of "abundance". Marx saw the various forms of class society in human history as arising from a generalised inability of the means of production to meet the needs of the whole population. In these conditions of scarcity society divided into ruling classes which expropriated the means of production to meet their own needs and exploited classes driven into penury as the fruits of their labour were taken from them.

Capitalism marked a new stage in human society. By constantly revolutionising the means of production it provided the possibility of abundance - a level of production that would need the needs of the whole population. It also created a new class - the proletariat or working class - that had no real stake in existing property relations because they had been stripped of everything but their labour power. Workers had an historical role as the gravediggers of capitalism. The revolutionary overthrow of this society would see a transitional society in which workers ruled - Socialism - and then the withering away of the state and of classes themselves to create a classless society - Communism.

Abundance

Marx himself stressed that this whole process depended on an abundance of goods to meet people's needs. In a pungent phrase he warned that failure to achieve this would lead to a return of "the same old shit".

Today's critics argue that abundance is impossible and that therefore Socialism is impossible. Abundance is impossible because of population pressure. The world's population is growing so rapidly that resources could never catch up. In any case it would be impossible because people's needs are limitless - e.g. if you satisfy a need for clothing people then become fashion conscious and need new and more elaborate clothes.

These sorts of criticisms - along with another old chestnut - that human nature is simply too individualist, greedy and aggressive for any socialist society to work can be seen as "classical" criticisms. They go back to the beginnings of Marxism and even before. As will be seen, they are easily disposed off.

PLANNING

More serious are the criticisms of planning. They claim the authority of reality - of the practice of "actually existing socialism" as it was in the USSR and Eastern Europe and its collapse. The failures of Stalinism are depicted as the failures of the whole Socialist project.

The basic argument is as follows: Planning can't be democratic because of the sheer complexity of a modern industrial society. Not only are there numberless products, but each unit of production depends on other units for its inputs and as customers for its outputs. Workers control at an area or factory level would mean anarchy as each makes decisions which

suit it alone.

So a planned society must be a dictatorial society, with all the details of economic life decided at the centre. Yet this is also an impossibility. Needs can't be determined in advance. Attempting to do so lead to immense waste. Goods that nobody wants rot in warehouses. A sprawling bureaucracy grows. The problems are especially acute in consumer goods because of the difficulty in setting planning goals linked to quality and personal taste. Shoddy, uniform consumer goods and overall scarcity lead to a gradual decay. This is accentuated by the comparison with market economies where "the invisible hand" of the market decides after the fact which goods meet people's needs and forces adjustment to production. Producers of goods which are in demand will thrive while those who produce goods that are not wanted will go bust.

This sort of analysis leads directly to the proposals of "Market Socialism". The proponents of these schemes admit that unrestrained capitalism leads to much human misery. The solution is a combination of two systems. The major industries should be under state control and run by a bureaucracy. Smaller firms would be privately owned and complete in the market place. Democracy would be a standard parliamentary democracy. Would such a system be socialist? The market socialists shrug their shoulders. "Is the glass half empty or half full?" they reply.

THE DEFENCE OF MARXISM

The task of refuting these attack is made easier by the public defence of Marxism that Ernest Mandel, leader of the Fourth International, has undertaken. One

Did Trotsky help the rise of Stalinism?

In 1990 Joe Slovo, until recently General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP),published his well known pamphlet 'Has Socialism Failed?' which heavily criticised the Stalinist legacy of the official communist movement. Left wing critics of Slovo pointed out that he failed in his pamphlet to situate the rise of Stalinism in the victory of the bureaucratic caste which usurped power in the 1920s.

In his subsequent article,'Socialist aspirations and realities',Slovo rejoined the debate. He insisted that the roots of Stalinism lies deep in Leninism, especially the notion of the vanguard party and the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Slovo claims that

'the foundation for the institutionalised separation of socialism and democracy, both in the party and in society ,was laid in ideological practices which preceded the emergence of an economically privileged stratum'. The foremost guilty party of these 'ideological practices is singled out as Leon Trotsky.

'Among the oppositionists who poured a great deal of concrete into the foundations of Stalinism was Leon Trotsky.'

Finally he traces the roots of Stalinism back to the concept expounded by Marx of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.

It is questionable whether the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat ever had validity in the concept of long term socialist aspirations.

In an article written in the SAC journal 'African Communist',veteran South African Trotskyist Charlie Van Geldren replied to Slovo

,'Put briefly Joe Slovo sees the privileged bureaucracy as important to the reproduction of Stalinism, not its main source. I would argue that on the contrary,the rise of Stalinism went hand in hand with the rise of the bureaucracy and that theoretically,Stalinism is nothing other than the ideology of the privileged bureaucracy.

Charlie explained the rise of the bureaucracy as resulting from the revolution having succeeded first in a backward country which was subsequently isolated by the defeat of other revolutions in the west,notably Germany.

The terrible civil war in which the "whites" were supported by 14 capitalist powers killed the working class vanguard which was the social basis for the soviet democracy. In its place a new layer of administrative party bureaucrats, many former Mensheviks or old Czarist officials, took over the exercise of power without any democratic check.

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target has been a recent book by a member of the market socialist camp called Alex Nove - The economics of feasible sòcialism revisited. We won't follow the ins and outs of this debate directly, but we will draw on Mandel's argument and on his authority.

Firstly we must stress that Marxists have a completely different method from out opponents. Marxism is a science. It bases itself on events in the real world and attempts to identify the developments of society through the ebb ari flow of the class struggle.

If we base ourselves on the real world and set aside capitalist triumphalism over the decay of the stalinist bureaucracies there is one immediately evident fact. Capitalism doesn't work and isn't working. It has never met the human needs of the mass of the Earth's people. The market has succeeded in raising the living standards of a tiny minority of the world's population only in two historically brief periods - before the first world war and after the second. Even then the cost was the pauperisation of the majority of humanity.

The defenders of the market, when they claim that socialism can't meet the individual needs of people, don't go on to claim that the market can. As Ernest Mandel points out, by rejecting the concept of abundance they deny any possibility of a society that satisfies individual human need. Their argument boils down to one that says that in a situation of generalised scarcity a chequebook is the best ration card.

The gurus of the market point to the bureaucratic waste in Eastern Europe. What about mass unemployment? The emigration boat? The cardboard cities of the homeless? What are we to make of the billions of speculative profit that appear and disappear on the world's stock exchanges and create black Mondays, grey Fridays and so on? American workers today face more than a hundred - billion dollar debt from the huge Savings and Loan scandal - their children and grandchildren are expected to pay for the speculative bubble built by their capitalist masters.

The idea that the market gives us choice is not borne out by reality. There is plenty of evidence to prove the Marxist contention that capitalist markets evolve towards monopoly. For example, as the many old hardware stores are replaces by a few D.I.Y superstores, the multiplicity of goods is replaced by one or two standard styles and sizes. This lack of choice even extends to living produce. In supermarkets the endless variety of plant and animal produce is converted to the standard orange, apple, chicken and so on. This is not to say that choice does not exist, but it exists only for those able to pay for it in a limited luxury sector.

In certain areas the market fails utterly. The U.S. Medicare market is set to soak up 15% of GNP in the next period, while many Americans receive no real health care - Cuba's infant mortality rate is far lower than that of the U.S.

Against the standpoint of reality many of the classical arguments against socialism simply fade into the mist. Human nature? There has been an endless number of human societies in history with many different ideas of human behaviour - the capitalist ideal of the ruthless individual is far from the norm. The population explosion? Uncontrolled population growth isn't an argument against socialism - its an argument against any

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The decisive factor however was the political battle Inside the Bolshevik party between the Left Opposition led by Trotsky and the bureaucracy led by Stalin.The victory of Stalin was the victory of bureaucracy over democracy and 'socialism in one country' over world revolution.

So what about Trotsky mistakes? Trotskyists like myself have the answers to Joe Slovo on this. Firstly, Trotsky was wrong - dead wrong- on these issues, notwithstanding the difficult c onditions of the time. Second, Trotsky's errors at the time in no way invalidate the struggle began by Trotsky and the oppositionists in 1923, against the rule of the bureaucracy and for social democracy.

Charlie Van Geldren defends Lenin's party: It is important to stress that the Bolshevik party itself.even during clandestinity, never had a monolithic internal life, or an all-powerful general secretary, but was full of free discussion,temporary factional grouping and internal political debate. He also defends the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat. It is not that scrapping the term itself is the problem but rather that what Slovo is proposing is scrapping the content. That is a state and society ruled by the working class where the poor and exploited have power. Behind the whole debate lies the necessity to retain this as the objective of political activity

form of society and even against our survival as a species. What we can say is that some population pressure is economic - in poor societies plenty of children mean that some will survive and parents will themselves have some support in old age. Capitalism adds to this by sucking wealth from the Third world while at the same time linking with religious fanatics to oppose rational family planning.

The assertion that abundance is impossible because human needs are limitless is clearly false. Humans live for a limited time and can't have "limitless" needs. The majority of their needs concern food, clothing and shelter and under capitalism the majority of workers are trapped in a struggle for existence to achieve these basic needs. It should be clear also that there is a hierarchy of needs. Not all needs are felt with the same intensity. A shortage of food would lead to intense social struggle, but when food is abundant a shortage of caviar causes only mild upset among gourmets. This is of crucial importance. If we are all overburdened by a mountain of wants and needs then Socialism is an impossibility or a utopian dream of the far future. If we all have the basic human needs of food, shelter, and a decent life for ourselves and our children then Socialism could be instituted to**morrow.**

LIBERATION FROM WANT

The potential productive forces even now under capitalism are sufficient to eradicate hunger from the world and provide a secure standard of living for all its people. For the super-rich of course this will mean a levelling down, but for the vast majority of humanity it will be the beginning of liberation from want and insecurity.

It's worth reflecting here that even under capitalism certain things are freely available. Water is free [ignoring local taxes] because the cost of charging for it is greater than the income generated. Education and health care in most European countries is free because the market could not deliver and would add immense costs in collection and administration. Given the cost of European wine lakes and butter mountains the only thing that prevents basic foodstuffs, housing and transport from joining the list is the class rule of capitalism.

But at the core of the market socialist's argument is the practice of "actually existing socialism", the prison camp of the former USSR. Here Marxists have to tread warily, because we ourselves have much to learn. Where are we to look?

STARTING FROM REALITY

Marxists would look first at the actual historical conditions of this society: A revolution in what at the time was one of the most backward societies in the world. A civil war in which imperialist and White armies ravaged the land and effectively wiped out the working class activists who were effectively the backbone of the revolution. Isolation, a counter-revolution from within that wiped out the old Bolsheviks and left Stalin's bureaucrats in control. Repudiation of internationalism by the theory of "Socialism in one country". Another war with 20 million dead. Unremitting pressure from imperialism, culminating in the "Star wars" project which effectively bled the Soviet bureaucracy dry, Surely these had some bearing?

The market socialist ignore details - planning was at fault.

Marxists draw completely different lessons from the Soviet experience. We assert that socialism must be internationalist and it must be democratic.

The internationalist argument speaks for itself. Stalin repudiated internationalism and betrayed many revolutions that would have provided a real and secure basis for the defence of the Soviet Union. Yet the USSR could not withdraw from the world or win the toleration of capital. Economic, political and military pressure continued to the day of its fall and beyond.

Democracy lay at the centre of the internal decay of stalinism. The working of the bureaucratic plan involved a conflict of interest between worker and bureaucrat. The worker was also a consumer and had a direct interest in quality. Attempting to establish this could lead to the Gulag camps - so workers were demoralised and apathetic and their organisation atomised. The bureaucrat's interest, his/her chances of promotion, rested on meeting the plan by whatever means, including widespread falsifying of results. He/she could produce junk and yet meet planning targets. In fact the less concerned the apparatchik was with quality or use the easier meeting the plan became. The bureaucratic nomenclatura were insulated from the contradictions of this process by their own party shops and internal party economy.

In any case the bureaucrats had no choice. The totalitarian nature of their rule did not flow from planning, but from the need of a relatively small parasitic caste to stay in control of a massive working class which, given any opportunity to organise, would have swept them aside.

SEEDS OF REVOLUTION

The seeds of a real planned economy are already present within the chaos of capitalism. A major trend of capitalist development has been a growing socialisation of labour. Workers are more highly educated, possess more skills, work in larger teams with a greater pool of skills and are more dependent on interconnections with other sectors of the workforce. At the same time the tendency to monopoly has led to a few companies dominating entire sectors of the world economy and co-ordination production over many countries. All of this involves a greater and greater level of capitalist planning [which fails at a global level because of the fundamentally anarchic nature of capitalist production and the final allocation of resources according to the market]. It is common now for car engines to be manufactured in one plant and installed in another. Whatever form of bookeep-

New Agenda?

Nothing could give a more classical illustration of "market socialists" building bridges towards capitalism than the split in the Workers Party. The Northern party would like to present themselves as the dogged revolutionaries keeping the faith as opposed to the careerists of the Democratic Left/New Agenda group. In fact a look at the programmes of the two groups reveals very little difference and very little political justification for the split. It was a long time ago that the Workers Party applied the stalinist "stages" theory to the Irish situation and followed it's bitter logic to the end - urging a return to Stormont, supporting the imperialist forces, calling for working class restraint and "social partnership" in order to allow multinational development.

In fact the division is not political but between two sets of careerists. It's between those who see their future as parliamentarians based on a right-wing social democracy and those who prefer the old Stalinist ideology as the best cover for a career as apologists for the British and guard dogs against republicanism.

By a short nose the "Democratic left" win the prize for hypocrisy. The cries of astonishment following revelations about the continuing activities of the official IRA required acting ability of a high level.

Peoples Democracy plans a full analysis of the decay of the Workers Party in future issues.

ing takes place it is nonsense to talk of the engine plant "selling" to the body plant - output is planned. It doesn't lead to the economic collapse of the car market or the collapse of parliamentary democracy.

All this takes place within a market economy. What it demonstrates is that planning has become more and more important for the continued functioning of capitalism, but it is also clear that its logical extension throughout the whole economy could only be achieved with capitalism's overthrow.

Of course planning in capitalist firms is extremely hierarchical, but we can see how planning might be democratised. At national and international level all that is needed is democratic decisions about allocation of resources - so much for education, health, industry. agriculture, the length of the working day and so on. This resource allocation can be refined at regional level and at the level of community and plant organisation of labour can be decided within this framework.

Internationalism is essential. One can't plan in a sea of anarchy, faced with threats and sabotage. We have seen the consequences of retreating behind the fantasy of socialism in one country. Democracy is essential because it is only then that a planned economy can become dynamic and allow the endless changes and shifts need to meet the shifting patterns of human need and development.

This sort of society will only be possible when the mass of working people swing into action. The task of Marxists is to learn the lessons of the past and prepare a secure foundation for further advance.

BRIDGE TO CAPITALISM

Applying Marxist methods to the present debate about socialism we can see that the question "Is Socialism possible?" is not some sort of idle or academic query. The position taken by the market socialists has a particular purpose. The biggest "market socialist of them all was Gorbachev, and his project is in the dustbin of history. Market socialism is useful, not because it is possible, but because it serves as a bridge for those within the workers movement who want to cross over to capitalism. This bridge must be blown up and its architects exposed. That's a central task in the reconstruction of the socialist movement.

The capitalist trumpeting of the market is itself a victory of ideology over reality. In the era of the death agony of capitalism the picture of swashbuckling buccaneering entrepreneurs is the purest fantasy. The modern capitalist resembles an entrepreneur as much as a geriatric an Olympic athlete. IDB in the North of Ireland produces a book weighing several pounds detailing all the grants, sweeteners and kickbacks needed to set the modern entrepreneur up in business. Stock exchange speculators suck millions from the economy but have the nerve to look for their money back when things go wrong. In the 26 counties the total taken in in PAYE tax just matches the interest rate payments on the national debt - incurred largely as part of an industrial policy offering tax havens to multinational firms.

PUTTING THE ALTERNATIVE

These fake notions of the risk-taking capitalist entrepreneur and the free market serve a particular purpose. They present as strong and eternal a system in terminal decline while justifying increasingly desperate and savage attacks on the working class and cuts in the :"social wage" of health, education and so on. For socialists defending the possibility and desirability of socialism has precisely the opposite objective. The point is not just to defend the idea of socialism but to justify workers resisting attacks on their living standards and democratic rights. From such defensive struggles we seek to demonstrate the necessity of workers taking control themselves and creating a new society. This will only occur if they have confidence that an alternative to capitalism exists.

This problem is quite clearly in evidence in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Having identified socialism with stalinism and understandably therefore rejected it, workers think that capitalism and the market the only "natural" way organising society and expect it to deliver the standard of living of the well-off in the West. However whenever they suffer the concrete effects of the market such as rising prices and unemployment they have resisted. Harnessing and organising this resistance for socialism will only be possible if workers have an alternative global view to that of the market.

Similar problems exist in the industrialised capitalist countries. Defending workers living standards can only be achieved by breaking with the logic of capitalist profitability but generalising any challenge to the logic of capitalism can only be achieved if there is seen to be an alternative.

Unfortunately workers will not believe us if our socialism is simply a promise about the future. Theoretical defences of socialism, no matter how convincing, will not be enough. In all the struggles of workers and the oppressed, no matter how small or partial, socialists must be the most consistent fighters and advocates of their rights. Above all we must show ourselves to be the most consistent defenders of democracy. The Stalinists, Social Democrats and many National Liberation movements have abandoned socialism and are happy to advocate the sham democracy of bourgeois parliaments and elections.

In many places only the revolutionary left remains to advocate socialism and democracy. Turning this small force into the leadership of the working class will mean many of its organisations must break from the dogmas and undemocratic functioning of their own organisations and their political practice. Only absolute openness and absence of political sectarianism in debate and action will demonstrate to workers that Marxism is not what existed in Eastern Europe and that it is still relevant. Are the militants and organisations defending Marxism capable of rising to the challenge?

JOHN NORTH.

part 1 of a two-part article

WILL THE FORMER SOVIET UNION BECOME CAPITALIST?

The changes taking place in Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union, now referred to as the Commonwealth if Independent States (CIS), have a particular significance for Peoples Democracy and the Fourth International to which we belong. Our political origins are in the struggle lead by Leon Trotsky in the Soviet Communist Party against the degeneration of the Russian Revolution which was symbolised by the rule of Stalin. From as early as 1923 Trotsky began to argue inside the CPSU that the gains of the Revolution were in danger from the bureaucracy which was taking control of the Soviet state. When he was expelled from the Communist Party and then from the Soviet Union he organised his co-thinkers in t he International Left Opposition which became the Fourth International.

As Marxists our starting point for trying to understand what is happening today in the CIS is the theoretical work done by Trotsky which finds its most finished expression in his classic book The Revolution Betrayed which was first published in 1937. Before we can go to describe the events of today and their possible outcomes it is necessary to explain something of the ideas of Trotsky and the anti-stalinist Marxist tradition represented by the Fourth International which has been distorted and caricatured by both Stalinists such as the Workers Party and the Communist Party of Ireland and those who say that all Marxism is only a variety of Stalinism.

THE BOLSHEVIKS

'The Russian working class, led by the Bolsheviks, seized power in 1917. The Bolshevik leadership knew that theircountry was the most backward in Europe but expected that successful revolutions would take place in more industrially advanced states within a short period. Between 1918 and 1923 there were revolutions in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland and other parts of Europe but all were defeated. This left the Soviet Union isolated and bankrupted by the civil war and the military intervention by every imperialist state. Combined with this extreme poverty was a severe restriction of democracy both within the Soviets (the elected institutions responsible for decision making in the country) when opposition parties were tendencies and factions within the Bolshevik Party political as well. This was intended as a short term emergency measure forced on the Bolsheviks as a means of defending the revolution during and just after the civil war but it played a part in assisting political control to become more narrowly concentrated in the hands of sections of the Communist Part's bureaucracy.

Socialist theory have always predicted that successful revolutions would take place in developed, industrialised countries first of all. The new Soviet Union was unable to provide all its citizens with adequate clothes, housing. food to say nothing of luxury items taken for granted in some western countries. All this has a familiar ring. However, the great gain that the revolution gave the new state was a planned economy which permitted a rapid growth of productive capacity. But the working class was no longer able to participate in the economic or political decision making processes because its role had been usurped by the bureaucracy. As Trotsky put it:

"The Soviet bureaucracy has risen above a class which is hardly emerging from destitution and darkness, and has no tradition of dominion or command" (The Revolution Betrayed, P 248)

NEW BUREAUCRACY

Although this new bureaucracy had wrested political control from the working class this did not mean that the Soviet Union had ceased to be a worker's state. For Trotsky and revolutionary Marxists it was a contradictory society between capitalism and socialism. It is worth quoting at some length Trotsky's criteria for determining the class nature of the state. We will use these as a rough guide in examining today's situation:

"The nationalisation of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade, constitute the basis of the Soviet social structure. Through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined"(op. cit. p.249).

Through these relations the new economy and society

was not ruled by the profit motive but by the priorities of the new ruling bureaucracy. This meant for example that resources were allocated according to the bureaucrat's plan which often, as the western media is so often pointing out, led to massive investment in totally bankrupt enterprises throughout the whole economy. The bureaucrats were assured of their income and privileges simply by producing or even pretending to produce the goods demanded by the plan. It did not matter to them whether they actually worked and could be "sold".

This is completely different to capitalism where the capitalists only gain their income after the sale of goods they produce.

CONCESSIONS

In addition to these distinguishing features the Soviet Union and the other states of Eastern Europe did provide extremely cheap transport and housing, huge subsides on the price of all basic foodstuffs, guaranteed employment. Soviet workers did not have to worry whether or not their work was profitable. Of course it is true that there was an enormous chasm between the hospitals used by top CPSU officials and these used by a working class family but the Soviet citizen did not have to spend a lifetime dreading the hospital bills that would financially cripple his American counterpart. Because it claimed to rule in the name of the working class the Soviet bureaucracy had made these concessions at the same time that it prevented any attempt by the working class to independently organise. These are the gains that the IMF and the Bundesbank wish to eliminate as a necessary prelude to the reintroduction of capitalism. As we shall see it is around the defence of these gains that the working class of the CIS and Eastern Europe will mobilise and the outcome of this struggle will determine the shape of political developments in these states for the foreseeable future.

Thus, although a bureaucratic degeneration has taken place it still remains a worker's state. The task facing the Soviet working class was not to overthrow the capitalists and the Tsar again but to topple the parasitic bureaucracy and take control of the economy and the state. Trotsky's analysis of the negative effect of the bureaucracy on the Soviet economy and the part it would play in the re-establishment of capitalism is breathtaking on its accuracy.

"The USSR thus embodies terrific contradictions. But it still remains a degenerated worker's state. Such is the social diagnosis. The political has an alternative character: either the bureaucracy becomes ever more the organ of the imperialists in the worker's state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism. (The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International)

Due to its planned economy the Soviet Union was able to industrialise at an unprecedented speed in the 1920s and 30s, a time of economic depression in the capitalist world. Western style factories borrowing the most modern capitalist techniques were constructed by the central bureaucratic commend. But Soviet industry was notoriously inefficient and its products were of inferior quality even then. For Trotsky the problem lay in the fact that the working class had been denied political power by the bureaucracy.

"Under a nationalised economy, *quality* (Trotsky's emphasis) **demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative - conditions incompatible with a totalitarian regime of fear, lies and flattery"**(op. cit. p.276).

NAVIGATOR

PART 2 IN NEXT ISSUE

FORUM

THIS SECTION OF THE JOURNAL IS OPEN TO SOCIALIST MILITANTS OF ALL ORGANISATIONS AND NONE TO DISCUSS SOME OF THE BASIC POLITICAL QUESTIONS OF THE IRISH REVOLUTION. OUR FIRST CONTRIBUTOR IS PD MEMBER JOE CARTER .

THE LIMITS OF REPUBLICANISM

Next year will see the tenth anniversary of the accession to the leadership of Sinn Fein of the "left" around Gerry Adams. Propelled into this position by a mass struggle around H-Block, it promised a strategy to develop a new mass struggle that would drive out British imperialism;

"There is an urgent need to build an all-Ireland movement which would be open to everyone committed to the principle and objective of Irish national self-determination. Such a movement must be open....a mass movement which will mobilise all progressive forces in this country and whose demands.... must therefore be social, economic and cultural as well as political just as the effects of partition are social, economic, cultural and political... The building of such a movement must be put on the agenda now"
[Gerry Adams. "A Pathway to Peace" p77-78]

This isn't the first time the Republican movement openly acknowledged the need to build a mass movement. The signalling of the turn to the left in the organisation is often dated from the 1977 Bodenstown speech of Jimmy Drumm which called for;

"The forging of the strong links between the Republican movement and the workers of Ireland and radical trade unionists will create an irrepressible mass movement..."

Thirteen years after this speech such a movement is as dead as a fossil. Instead the struggle in the North against British rule is more and more a slugging match between the IRA and the British and Loyalists. Elections allow nationalist workers to record a vote for Sinn Fein against imperialism but electoralism is just the highest form of "spectator politics", not a break from it as the republican movement likes to believe.

A standard explanation of this situation beloved of the bourgeois press is that an increasingly unpolitical and brutal IRA military campaign has squeezed out any perspective of a strategy based on politics.

QUESTION

No-one could have any doubt that the killing of eight workers at Teebane makes it very difficult to work in the trade union movement, North or South, to win it to a mass movement that would oppose British rule. The question that must be put is - does the Republican movement mean what it says when it calls for building a mass movement? This is a legitimate question when one thinks of everything its armed wing does to make such a task more difficult.

Equally however it is also clear that such a strategy is part of the republican movements perspective. It has been repeated too often for anyone to have any doubts. The contradiction between the military campaign and a sincere desire for a mass movement is therefore a real one. This contradiction between the IRA's military campaign and the republicans stated political strategy [which cannot at all be reduced to a desire for a mass movement] is the subject of never-ending propaganda by imperialism and its allies. The hypocrites whinge that you cannot be involved in "politics" and also in "violence". Gerry Adams now claims in response that Sinn Fein does not support violence or the IRA but simply understands why the IRA exists in the circumstances of the North. In effect he is saying that the IRA has its strategy and the IRA has its own, they simply agree about the objective. Thus Sinn Fein can seek talks with the British or to build a mass movement and the IRA can engage in whatever form of military activity it thinks appropriate. Do we accept this, and does it explain how the objective of of building a mass movement has not been achieved?

DISHONEST

It is purely and simply dishonest to pretend that the strategies of the IRA and Sinn Fein are different. If Sinn Fein does not support the military activity of the IRA then how does it think the British can be driven out? Does it think that electoralism and constituency activity will? Republican strategy can be summarised as follows: The IRA will wear down the British who will be forced to the negotiating table where they will negotiate their way out of Ireland. Britain is " fast

running out of options". Sinn Fein will lead the political movement which will help push the British out and will be involved in the negotiations which will see them go. In this strategy any mass movement plays a subordinate role to the military campaign of the IRA, the so-called cutting edge, and to the negotiators of Sinn Fein.

Whatever the schemes of Sinn Fein any mass movement created would have an objective tendency to go beyond any subordinate role assigned to it by the Republicans. More importantly, even if in practice assigned a subservient role in the Republican movements strategy and activity, and even if its creation is made more difficult by the IRA's military campaign, what is not explained is the failure to achieve the beginnings of a mass movement. Mass movements can not be created just by wanting them, or by passing resolutions, but at the same time there has been absolutely no progress or even a beginning to the creation of such a movement.

NO MILITARY SOLUTION

We believe this failure is crucial. Crucial because only a mass movement of all the oppressed led by the working class of all 32 counties and supported internationally by other such movements can defeat British rule. The IRA cannot. We are absolutely certain of that. There is no" military solution" for those fighting imperialism. The IRA, Sinn Fein and the nationalist workers from whom they derive their support do not have the strength or resources to wear down British imperialism and kick it out. Ireland, not least because of its geographical position, is much too important to the British and western imperialism to be given independence without a strong state and a political settlement which could secure the country for imperialist exploitation in the future. There are no indigenous classes or forces strong enough to guarantee a settlement and provide the strong state. Britain has to stay. The task of kicking it out is therefore an enormous one and this is reflected in the difficulties of creating a mass movement which is capable of doing it.

The Republican movement has underestimated this reality. Ireland may be a small and unimportant country in world terms, but its position off the coast of western Europe, its relatively advanced society and working class and its population spread over some of the most important imperialist countries makes it important to western imperialism. To Britain Ireland is vital. Political instability arising from any political radicalisation in Ireland could not fail to have an impact in many British cities such as London, Liverpool, Glasgow etc., with their large Irish-linked populations. However conservative Republicans might want their "revolution" to be, one capable of kicking

out the British in an overwhelming urban and working-class society could not fail to be radical and infectious. These are the stakes involved in the struggle to defeat British rule in the North.

POLITICAL RISKS

The present Republican activity is a military campaign capable of continuing for an extended period at higher or lower levels but without having any clear aim beyond that of its own survival. At the same time Sinn Fein asks to be involved in negotiations with the British and promises to take "political risks" at the negotiating table. Inflexibility in tactics but promising flexibility in principles (which is what must be meant by the phrase 'political risks" - or else the phrase is meaningless) is the same flawed combination Irish Republicanism has always been guilty of. Even if Sinn Fein were to get into negotiations with the British they are in no position to negotiate Britain out, but only in a position to help negotiate their own defeat. Just as the nature of their "political risks" is unexplained so such negotiations would, like previous ones, be conducted behind the backs of the people who had suffered and fought British rule.

For those in the Republican movement who describe themselves as socialists and who may have joined in the last ten years this analysis may be rejected. "We may have failed to build a mass movement but we are still the only people capable of doing it" may be their reply.

Indeed we have already agreed that neither the activity of the IRA nor the subordinate role Sinn Fein attaches to the mass struggle is completely responsible for a mass movement not having been built. This may be exacerbated by the Republican Movement's failure to realise the real need for such a movement, a need created by the nature of the task of removing British rule, but this again as we have said does not explain why even the beginnings of any real progress has not been achieved. As Marxists we argue that the reason for the failure is the political basis Republicans have for such a movement. The failure of their project has its root in the political project and principles they seek it to represent. The failure of republican politics lies in these politics themselves. These politics in the last analysis also explain the priority given to the IRA and the marginal role assigned to the working class.

POLITICAL FAILURE

This means that even if, in the very unlikely event of such a movement erupting "spontaneously", like the H-Block struggle for example, or in a new form arising from Southern society, Republican politics would fail that movement. Socialists in the Republican movement should realise this and commit themselves to fighting for a socialist programme as the only one capable of giving the necessary political leadership to a mass movement capable of ending British rule.

REPUBLICANISM

So what are the republican politics which while at one moment recognises the need for mass struggle are incapable of creating it and giving it leadership? Connolly described republicanism as a party;

"whose members are united on no single point, and agree upon no single principle, except upon the use of

International meeting of F.I.

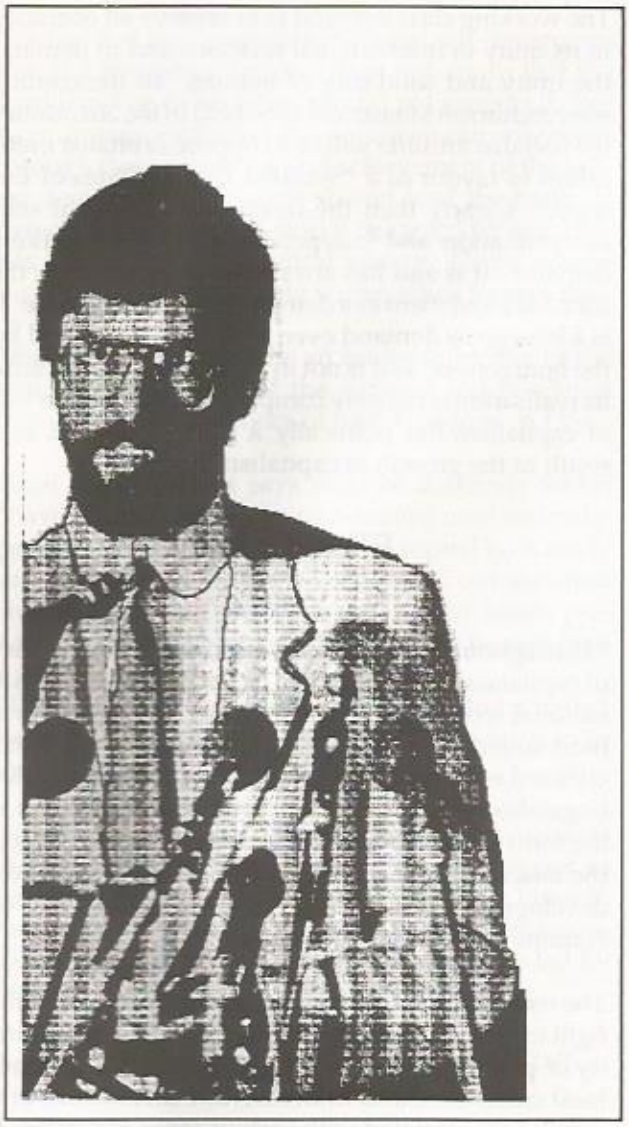
The International Executive Committee (IEC) of the Fourth International met in Europe earlier this year. The IEC is the ruling body of the international between conferences and is composed of the leaderships of all the sympathising sections. John McAnulty of Peoples Democracy attended the meetings.

Discussions and reports included the Algerian coup, the defence of Cuba against a renewed imperialist onslaught and growing support for our policies among other section of the PRT of Brazil. Plans were made for a co-ordinated drive against racism and fascism in Europe. A major left organisation in Sri Lanka applied to join the international.

The keynote discussion centred around developments in the former USSR. An international fund has been open to develop our work there and the second edition of a Russian language version of the magazine Imprekor had just been printed.

Much time was given to plans for building the organisation in the coming period and helping to build a broader reconsolidation of socialists as part of an international response to capitalist triumphalism.

Peoples Democracy has agreed with the international leadership that a discussion on Ireland should be held this year, with representatives of the leadership coming to Ireland to see the repression here first-hand



physical force as the sole means of settling the dispute between the people of this country and the governing power of Britain!"

The republican movement of Connolly's time is the same as that of today, as the present generation of republicans are determined to reaffirm;

"The IRA which came into being in the bullet swept streets of Dublin in 1916 is the same IRA, fighting in the same cause, as that which confronts British rule in arms today." (Republican News 29-3-91)

In their new year message in 1991 the IRA spelt out the reason for their existence;

"The IRA is in existence in response to a part of Ireland, and its people, being held by military force against the will of the vast majority of the Irish nation. Our aim is Irish unity and democracy...."

Gerry Adams has stated the aim of Sinn Fein in exactly the same terms;

"Sinn Fein remains convinced that the basis for peace in Ireland must be national self-determination and an Irish national democracy." (Republican News 17-1-91)

"Our primary objective is for national liberation ... the type of social order which is required in Ireland is one which is politically a democracy and economically a democracy also."

SOCIALISM?

And Socialism?

Irish republicanism is not a term which defines a system of society in the way that socialism does. In our case it refers to the aim of securing national independence in its broadest sense." (Gerry Adams; "The Politics of Irish Freedom" p.131) "Socialism includes and is a stage in advance of republicanism". This means that; "In Ireland until partition is got rid of and a united Ireland established, being genuinely left wing is to be an out - and - out republican".

In other words national self-determination first and then socialism. This is because;

"Connolly held that national revolution (was) the prerequisite of the socialist revolution." (The politics of Irish Freedom p. 136)

These quotes from the republican movement itself adequately and succinctly sum up the republican movement's programme. How does the socialist programme advocated by Irish Marxists stand in relation to it?

MARXIST PROGRAMME

we are obviously for democracy - democracy not just within society but between societies, between nations, The demand for equality and democracy means that we support the demand of oppressed nations to self-determination. We demand this because we recognise that just as black and white, men and women,

cannot unite except on the basis of equality and democracy so to must this be the case with the workers of different nations. They cannot unite on the basis of ignoring or minimising the privileges or oppression which exist between sections of the working class. Of course there are many so-called Marxists who call for "workers unity" or "a socialist federation of Britain and Ireland" but completely step over the hard fact that workers unity nationally and internationally can only come about from a previous fight for complete equality. Catholic and Protestant workers in the North cannot unite unless there is joint agreement to confront head-on the discrimination and sectarianism which overwhelmingly hits Catholic workers and the marginal privileges that Protestant workers have derived from this sectarianism. Workers unity on any other basis is a sham.

So it is with any "socialist federation of Britain and Ireland". To raise this demand now is to cover existing inequalities and oppression in the present relationship between the two countries. National self-determination is the remedy for this unequal relationship. In fighting for this we will also seek the maximum unity of the workers of Ireland and Britain and of the whole of Europe - but then the unity will clearly be one of equals.

Marxists therefore support the right of Ireland to self-determination but it is already clear that we do so not because it is an end in itself but because it is a means to a greater end - the unity of Irish and British workers. Gerry Adams has said that;

"The correct socialist attitude to Ireland must be an internationalist one".

True, but his is not a socialist attitude since he talks only of socialists being separatists. We are separatists only to establish unity on a more lasting basis. The socialist attitude is internationalist but Gerry Adams approach shows that the republican attitude is not. For him national independence is the objective where for us it is merely the means to one.

MARXISM

Marxists recognise another limit to democracy which republicans do not. There is no such thing as a party or programme which stands above classes and does not have a class character. There is no such thing as "democracy" in the abstract. In every struggle between the capitalist class and the working class socialists support the interests of the workers even at the expense of the "democratic rights" of the capitalists.

Is the demand for national self-determination a demand of the workers or of the capitalists? As far as the programme of socialism is concerned, i.e. the programme of the working class, the demand that expresses the interests of the working class is the slogan; "Workers of the world Unite!"

The working class demand is to remove all obstacles to its unity in international relations and to demand the unity and solidarity of nations. In the coming referendum on Maastricht to be held in the 26 counties the socialist attitude will be to oppose capitalist unification in favour of a "Socialist United States of Europe!" Clearly then the demand for national self-determination and independence is not a workers demand - it is and has always been regarded by the socialist movement as a demand of the bourgeoisie. It is a bourgeois demand even if it is not supported by the bourgeoisie, as it is not in Ireland. This is because its realisation is not only compatible with the survival of capitalism but politically it has only arisen as a result of the growth of capitalism;

FREEDOM

"Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements The national state is the form most suited to present-day conditions. (i.e. capitalist, civilised,economically progressive conditions, as distinguished from mediaeval, pre-capitalist etc.), it is the form in which the state can best fulfil its tasks (i.e. the task of securing the freest, widest and speediest development of capitalism". (Lenin, The right of Nations to self-determination).

The rise of national movements is associated with the fight to get rid of the feudal system with its multiplicity of principalities, customs barriers, legal systems, local currencies, and undemocratic distinctions and privileges associated with various ranks of society. It it place are unified states where each individual is regarded as equal before the law and which sees the subordination of religion to the state instead of the state to religion.

This is why Irish nationalism and republicanism was born out the would-be capitalists of Belfast who sought separation from Britain, the removal of sectarian, discriminatory laws and the complete separation of a minority church from the state system. The united Irishmen and Irish nationalism conforms completely to the Marxist understanding of national movements and their role. Of course the United Irishmen were defeated and Ireland's bourgeoisie became either Unionist or "Home Rule". Nationalism in its most radical variant, republicanism, became the property of Ireland's middle classes who continued to combine

the search for an independent capitalist state with the winning of the other bourgeois freedoms which lack of independence helped to deny e.g. an end to religious discrimination.

The fact that the demand for national self-determination is a bourgeois demand does not mean that the working class or socialists should not support it. We have already explained that socialism can only come through the struggle for and achievement of the fullest democracy. Socialists should lead the battle of democracy precisely to stop it being led by nationalists even of the most radical variety. Gerry Adams therefore gets it absolutely wrong when he says that;

"the true socialist will be an active supporter of the republican character of the national independence movement". (The Politics of Irish Freedom, p.135)

Since Gerry Adams says socialist demands which "have no possibility of being achieved until real independence is won" should not be adopted he is really saying that until the British are kicked out socialists should not be socialists (except in their heads perhaps) but should be republicans. In fact he says that;

"In Ireland, until partition is got rid of and a united Ireland established, being genuinely left wing is to be an out-and -out republican"'

What is most wrong with this is not that socialists should stop being socialists, something that put so baldly no doubt Gerry Adams would reject himself, but the idea that the struggle for national self-determination and democracy should "naturally" be led by republicans, indeed is a "republican" struggle.

"WIN THE BATTLE FOR DEMOCRACY"

Marxists reject this. As we have said national self-determination is a question of democracy. The socialist programme is not less democratic than the republican one, it is more democratic. Marx instructed socialists to "win the battle for democracy", not surrender it to radical nationalists. It should hardly need said that socialists do not lead the battle for democracy and that republicans do, but in no sense do we accept this as natural and we openly say to republicans that we would rather it was the other way round because socialism is more democratic than republicanism.

Let's give some concrete Irish example to show this. Republicans as well as socialists demand an end to sectarian privilege on the part of Protestant workers and for equality. Unless you are a socialist however you are offering Protestant workers nothing more than equality of misery. This leads some socialists to try and dodge the question. But they cannot and should not because Protestant workers cannot be won to a socialism that shifts around awkward questions of democracy. But republicans have a problem as well. What is the point of asking Protestant workers to remove sectarian privilege if you cannot also place immediately on the agenda the fight for the only economic system that will destroy poverty, unemployment etc. - i.e. socialism? For us the point of getting Protestant workers to renounce sectarian privileges is precisely in order to unite them with Catholic workers in a fight for socialism.

Two more topical examples. A recent report on the North's education system showed that Catholic schools were underfunded by the British government compared to state/Protestant schools. Sinn Fein has demanded greater funding of Catholic schools. Socialists do not support the biased allocation of educational resources, but we also do not support the state, even the imperialist state, handing citizen's money out to religious schools. Consistent democrats call for the separation of church and state, in schools, hospitals and all state agencies. We demand this North and South. In the debate over funding for Catholic schools republicans have refused to raise this basic democratic demand.

The last example is no small one either. It affects over half the population. It has recently been highlighted by the opening of a Brook centre in Belfast whose aim among others is to give confidential sex advice and counselling to young people. After months of silence Sinn Fein eventually expressed "support with reservations" but announced again its policy of opposition to a women's right to choose an abortion of an unwanted pregnancy. No-one should be in any doubt that the "right to choose" is a fundamental democratic right all the more important in a majority Catholic country. The witchunt of a 14 year old rape victim shows that this is an issue that will continue to confront republicans and that their policy of opposition to a women's right to choose while supporting the right of Irish women to go to Britain for abortion is just part of the same hypocrisy characteristic of the rest of Catholic Ireland. The fight for consistent democracy is in many ways no less difficult among Catholic workers than among Protestant workers.

Republicans believe that national democracy is the key to other freedoms, but as these examples show the links are not automatic and republicans themselves have failed fully to make them. They also believe that because Ireland suffers from national oppression nationalists should lead the fight against that oppression. Contrary to first appearances there is nothing automatic or logical about this at all. As we have shown the programme of socialism is more democratic than the most radical nationalism.

JOE CARTER.

BOOK REVIEW BOOK REVIEW

A NEW PERSPECTIVE, OR NO PERSPECTIVE?

Book Review; Labour and Partition: The Belfast Working Class. 1905-1923
Austen Morgan, Pluto Press, London, 1991.

This work is useful for the immense amount of information put into it. It is, if anything even more valuable as a lesson as to how all such work can be neutralised by being used in a project that contradicts the actual sum of the facts.

It is not that the subject of this work is mistaken. It is a worthwhile task to examine the oldest mass local political movement of the Irish working-class and to reassert Belfast's mainly Protestant Labour tradition, particularly now that it seems to have been obliterated by Orangeism and what Morgan terms 'Sloanism' (after Paisley's successful precursor, Tom Sloan, M.P.). It is also to Morgan's credit that he does not chart as coming from Ulster Liberal Unionist (like B.I.C.O) nor in the said Sloanism (like Henry Patterson). His problem is to regard Belfast Labour as the Irish working class's highest (rather than just its earliest) achievement which set norms that could not be surpassed in the period of which he writes.

So he insists, for both now and then, on separating the struggles of the Irish working class and of Irish nationalism. He sees the latter simply as a force dividing the first between the Ulster Protestants and the rest, and postponing thereby its own success as part of a democratic movement of which 'Belfast labourism.... was part' (Page xix). From this ultimatistic (and sketchy) position, despite the inadequacy of his chosen tool, he is able to dismiss the idea that, in Ireland, Socialism might be advanced through the actual struggle for the democratic aim of Irish self-determination: 'The concept of permanent revolution associated with Trotsky has led the Irish left to support republicans in the mistaken belief that separation is tantamount to socialism' (Page xxi). (He does not pinpoint the fools whom he alleges confuse democratic and national and socialist international demands.) At the end of his book, he provides three alternative scenarios to that of the actual course of Irish history between 1913 and 1921... they all involve initiatives by nationalists or their foreign allies: none give the working-class movement or any part of it even the role that Connolly tried to play.

This is justified by the narrative that contains basic mistakes made the more necessary by Morgan's need to do down the national struggle as well as giving Belfast Labour its due. This group does deserve to be honoured for raising the Red Flag in a working class divided against itself and its majority hegemonised by the most predatory section of British capital. This last part (the imperial connection) is downplayed, with Morgan asserting that it has tended to be overstated by nationalists and other anti-imperialists compared to Ulster's internal divisions. He bends the stick the other way and breaks it. In his chosen period, Unionism is a coalition of three groups: those, initially Northerners, concerned to defend Ulster against the threat of Irish nationalism; others mainly the Anglo-Irish, seeking to use Ulster to maintain the Protestant ascendancy throughout Ireland, and, finally, those in Britain, who sought to use Ulster and Ireland as a

whole to maintain the empire, and see off the liberal government.(P.124) The relative strengths of these groups are not quantified.
Accordingly, Morgan can assert that,' today, Britain has lost the will to dominate' (Page xviii) and that, were it to withdraw its troops, it would have to send them back to avert further chaos'(P317).

This leaves Ulster Unionism, in particular, as a defensive reaction to the threatened imposition of Irish Home Rule on its province: a demand purely and simply for the same self-determination rights offered the Irish majority and allied only conjuncturally with United Kingdom reaction, just as the Home Rulers are allied conjuncturally with liberal democracy. He does not explain how, after an unsuccessful attempt, before this period, to justify Unionism by winning decisive support from among the Irish majority, the Ulster Unionists set the pace for that majority's suppression and as defender of the claims of every isolated Irish Protestant to dominate his Catholic neighbour. The partition compromise was not an Ulster initiative: it was moved by a British Liberal, adopted by his party and more reluctantly by the Irish Home Rulers, only to be rejected by Ulster Unionists until the British Unionists accepted. 'The Protestant working class of Belfast.....the most important social force in Ireland' (P.3) did not just try to defend its own patch; it mandated individuals as aggressively anti-democratic as could be found. This conscious symbiotic relationship with consistent imperialism was caused economically, probably by Belfast industry's greater dependence on the British empire than was the United Kingdom; socially, there was the Orange tradition of Protestant ascendancy. What was certain is the fact of this consciousness, that it limited Belfast Labour's ability to expand and made its actual achievement all the more impressive.

Morgan is casual about all workers that are not Belfast Protestants. Even the Belfast Catholics are denied class-consciousness and portrayed as dominated by the Home Rulers save the brief moment during the 1920 pogroms, when the Republicans got a foothold. Yet, between 1911 and 1920, it was the Falls that returned one Labour councillor. His Labourism was probably inadequate; he does not seem to be sponsored by the trades council. Nonetheless,in 1911 and 1914, he contested his seat against Home Rule candidates. He is worth a paragraph,Morgan does not even give him a line.

His errors are equally glaring outside Belfast, particularly after 1914. He repeats the error of his Connolly biography as to the members of the Irish Citizen Army (P184-185), a crucial point since the mistake exaggerates the importance of that body in Connolly's strategic thinking and makes him more republican than he is. He claims the Republicans fought the 1916 West Cork by-election unsuccessfully (P192);they did not fight at all. He claims that Redmond was prepared to 'surrender customs duties' to win the Unionists at the 1917 convention (P.194); in fact, it was years since the Home Rulers had advocated tariffs; what Redmond opposed was his colleague's attempt to regain Republican votes.

These errors are relatively minor ones but they are significant in springing from an overall need to exaggerate Protestant working class consciousness. He sees its political organisation in Belfast as representing a mass vanguard for its Irish comrades (and it was so until after 1907). Accordingly, he sees it as having a duty to set Irish Labour's agenda according to the Protestant workers in its city. This opposes Connolly on two points. Firstly, Labour had to be constitutional; revolution had a particular national identity in Ireland, this being the major political restraint on Protestant working class behaviour. A serious challenge to legitimate authority in Belfast merely played into the hands of the I.R.A (P.229). The second point is the union; the farthest he will go to allow support for Irish self-determination is the purely formal support for it given by Belfast Labour candidates. His alternative perspective is purely electoral and essentially economistic.

Accordingly, he criticises Irish Labour abstention from the 1918 election. The Limerick Soviet he considers represents 'its willingness 'at times' to do the bidding of the republican command' (P.247). The May day holiday of 1919, called by the Social Democrats at the Berne Congress, he calls 'in no sense' a proletarian manifestation against the national and imperialist bourgeoisie' (P.248). Two events that contributed to the growth of Irish working class consciousness are denounced because it is assumed against all the evidence of the past century, that even the nationalism of the oppressed debases such consciousness utterly.

As then, so now Morgan's perspective for the future of Northern Ireland sees the Catholic minority reconciled to British rule, 'especially with devolution' (P.xvii) and with their position 'levelled upward by considerable economic growth '(P.11). Since any devolved government is likely to be dominated by the heirs of those who subordinated economic growth consistently to Protestant sectarianism, this common sense approach seems less likely than the 'utopianism' of Irish unity under Socialist leadership.

The project was a worthwhile one, its execution is the more to be deplored.

D.R.O'Connor Lysaght

Letters letters letters Letters

Caral Ní Chúilin
C2 Maighgcabraí Príosu´n Na Mba´n

The build up to International Women's Day saw women all over the world organising the many events to celebrate the day set aside for women. The women in Maghaberry are no different, at this time of the year we are busy contributing articles, statements and poetry to these events we obviously can't attend and organising visits with the various women's delegations that arrive to learn of life for Irish women inside and outside gaol.

The N.I.O. too decided that their contribution to International Women's day must be spectacular. After much thought the male hierarchy decided that the best way to contribute to IWD was to exert their control over one of the most vulnerable groups of women within society. Abusing the power invested in them and armed with a wealth of mysterious "facts" originating from anonymous "sources" the plan was hatched. On Monday 2nd March Women POW's were told that a search of the gaol was to take place and that we would not be unlocked. A short time later we were informed that we would each be subjected to a strip search. The screws were informed that POW's objected very strongly to this unprecedented outrage. POW's were threatened with loss of remission, solitary confinement if they did not comply with the order to strip naked. This threat was intended to coerce women into subjecting themselves to the indignity of a humiliating strip search. However, we decided to resist and defend ourselves as best we could under the circumstances.

What happened over the next 10 hours can only be described as sexual, physical and psychological torture. Gangs of screws dressed in riot gear and armed with batons and shields entered the wings. A gang of screws entered a cell and set upon the defenceless women inside, in each case up to 16 screws. The POW's were seized and dragged to the floor their faces pushed tightly into the floor so that they couldn't see their assailants and their mouths covered to stifle the screams. Once inside the screws began to remove the woman's clothes until she was totally naked. Every other woman in the gaol could hear each attack as it took place so in actual fact each woman spent the entire day listening to comrades being sexually abused before and after her own turn came.

The use of strip searching has been well researched and it has been concluded time and time again that this practice has no security value. Society rejects such barbaric behaviour as sexual abuse.

It is no accident that men made the decision to pursue this line on 2nd March (and only in the women's gaol are prisoners expected to strip totally naked when being searched)

When one women refused to be strip searched and a doctor objected to her being forcibly strip searched she was left locked in her cell until a decision was made about her. It was decided that she could be searched by MO s using metal detectors and then she was unlocked with security clearance. Obviously this form of search (which none of us would have objected to) was enough to satisfy security requirements. Why then was the forcible strip search of women pursued?. One can only conclude that degradation, control and submission rather than security were on the agenda. Through the actions of the N.I.O and prison administration right down to the screws who participated in the assaults the clock has been turned back to November 1982 when strip searching was introduced for the first time (but never, ever carried out en masse on the wings). The feeling of tension and anger within the gaol is impossible to describe. The Board of Visitors were in the gaol on that day.
One member of this supposedly impartial watchdog body stood and watched women being strip naked. We regard their presence as participation and their silence as consent. They are no longer welcome in this gaol.

We have given individual statements to solicitors while the N.I.O embark on a game of pass the parcel of blame. Statements about the events of 2nd March emanating from that very much undermined department range from the bizarre to the downright insulting. Phrases such as Women over reacting , unnecessary violent reaction , "routine search" have been employed to describe 10 hours of systematic abuse of women prisoners. All 21 women who resisted the sexual assault on that day sustained injuries of some description. One woman received bruising to her face and was temporarily transferred to an outside hospital, others are awaiting the result of tests to determine the extent of their physical injuries. Women acted in self defence in trying to ward of attackers in riot gear, that there isn't more hospital cases is no thanks to the screws.

What is incalculable is the psychological scars that women now have to bear. Women who must now spend years in the very cells in which we were violated with such vigorous enthusiasm. The N.I.O want to terrorise women prisoners, to beat us into submission because we continue to defy their attempts to impose their will on us. This they call the battle for hearts and minds!.

It is only one part, a disgusting and deplorable part, of an overall policy to try and control women prisoners pursued by the latest Governor to arrive in Maghaberry. It is no surprise that this has happened as he has done his utmost to cut women off from each other by denying association to cut women off from their families by ensuring that originally bad visiting conditions are now deplorable to cut women off from their communities through the worsening censorship of literature and letters. The latest step in this process is the attempt to dehumanise women by forcing their way into cells, stripping away our personal clothing, invading the most intimate and private parts of our bodies and all the while inflicting physical and mental pain.

To add insult to injury the women POW's are now being charged with assault. What will happen to the male and female screws who took part in the attack on 2nd March-Medals?

Is Sinne

Marie Wright	Paula Burns
Mary Ellen Campbell	Ailish Carroll
Donna Mc Menamy	Frances Symington
Shauneen Baker	Rosaleen Mc Corley
Teresa Malocco	Bernie Reilly
Carol Cullen	Maureen Delaney
Patricia Deane	Mary Mc Ardle
Lousie Nash	Theresa Browne
Karen Quinn	Bronwyn Mc Gahan
Pat Moore	Geraldine Ferrity
Annmarie Mc Kee	Ann Cavangh

EXPLAINING MARXISM

What is a Programme?

What exactly is Marxism? If you asked this question You might get as many answers as the number of people you asked. That's because it's many things. A philosophical method - dialectics. An economic theory centred on the labour theory of value. An approach to understanding history - historical materialism. It is consistently materialist - in other words Marxists are atheists.

However if you wanted to join PD we wouldn't ask you - "Do you agree with dialectics, the labour theory of value?" etc. In fact you could regard dialectics as nonsense and the labour theory of value as rubbish. You could believe in God - or a hundred Gods. You could still join PD. Of course we would try to show you that you were wrong to take these views but any disagreement we had would be between comrades in the same organisation.

PROGRAMME

There is something that we would insist that you agree with. That is the Marxist programme - the political demands and policies which Marxists put forward to organise and direct the working class and its allies in the struggle against capitalism and for a socialist revolution. This is the most important thing about Marxism. As Marx himself said; "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point is to change it. The programme is our perspective for changing the world.

If we want to learn what this Marxist programme is we can have no better starting point than the most famous statement of Marxist politics - The Communist Manifesto written By Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in 1848. The first line of the Manifesto is;

"A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of Communism"

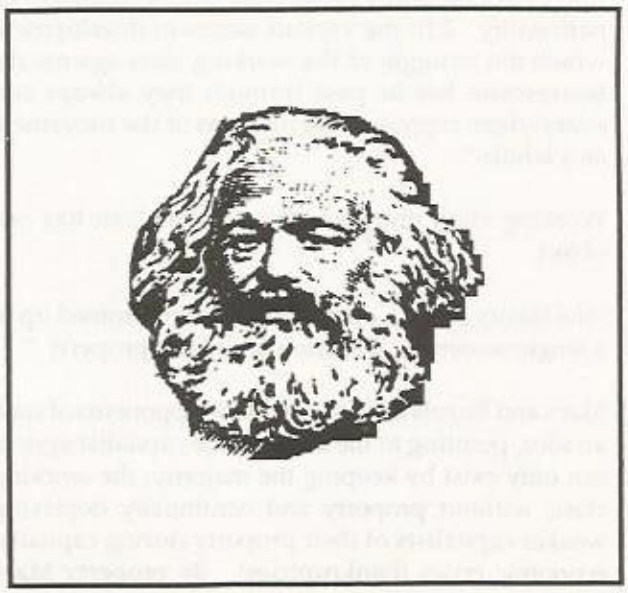
Today that might seem ridiculous. The collapse of the Berlin wall and of "Communism" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe might seem to invalidate this declaration and undermine everything in the manifesto. Surely Communism is dead?

We would disagree. It is not Communism which has just suffered a mortal blow but Stalinism - a corruption of Communism, the result of the strangulation of the socialist revolution in Russia, rather than its full development. There is nothing in the Communist Manifesto which gives the least support to Stalinist politics.

CLASS STRUGGLE

There is another more important reason why we haven't seen the death of Communism and this is explained by Marx and Engels in the Manifesto.

"The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been



invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer, They merely express,in general terms, actual relations arising from an existing class struggle, from an historical movement going on under our very eyes."

In other words the real inventor of Communism is not Karl Marx but the class struggle and the working class. The struggle for Communism, or whatever it might be called to distinguish it from Stalinism, will disappear only after the working class and class struggle disappears. Neither has happened or will happen until the class struggle is resolved in favour of the working class.

An old approach to dismissing the Manifesto is to claim that capitalism has changed and that the ideas of the Manifesto are no longer relevant. No one however was more aware of the changing nature of capitalism than Marx and Engels. Again from the Manifesto;

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production and, with them, the whole relations of society."

But no matter how much capitalism changes it will always need a working class; as capitalism has developed so also has the working class.

"What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, is its own gravediggers."

So what really is the Marxist programme? What does it stand for?

The communists are distinguished from the other working class parties by this only. 1.In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the fore the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2.In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole."

Working class unity and internationalism has one object.

"the theory of the Communists can be summed up in a single sentence. Abolition of private property."

Marx and Engels heap scorn on the opponents of such an idea, pointing to the fact that the capitalist system can only exist by keeping the majority, the working class, without property and continually depriving weaker capitalists of their property during capitalist economic crises (bankruptcies). By property Marx doesn't mean personal possessions but factories, offices and machines,

"We by no means intervene to abolish the personal appropriation of the products of labour, an appropriation that is made for the maintainance and reproduction of human life, and that have no surplus wherewith to command the labour of others.

Marx also pokes fun at those who say that abolition of private property will destroy all incentive to work. As he points out, in today's society those who work hardest often get least [hardly an incentive to work] while those that work the least - the stock and share owners - get the most [an incentive to do nothing]. As Marx says; "according to this, bourgeois society should have passed away itself through sheer idleness..."

REVOLUTION

To achieve this abolition of private property along with the greed, inequality, oppression, exploitation and poverty that go with it, it is necessary to have a revolution;

"Communists openly declare that their ends can only be achieved only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."

The purpose of this revolution is to put the working class in power. "The proletariat organised as the ruling class."

This short summery of what Marxists stand for raises many issues such as nationalism and internationalism, the united front and many more. We shall look at these in future articles. The main point to understand is that for Marxists; "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."

In capitalist society this struggle is one between the capitalist class and working class. Victory for the working class means death to capitalism and private property. It does not mean a "mixed economy" or other euphemisms for a continuation of capitalism. Only one class can rule and there is no such society that stands outside or above this class struggle, That's why the fundamental question Marxists ask about a society or state is - what is its class character? Which class rules the state?

What for example is the class content of the demand for a United Ireland? What is the class nature of Irish republicanism? In future articles of our journal we will answer these questions. But first we must understand that the Marxist programme is not just about what we want to achieve but about how we get from todays capitalism to tomorrows socialism.