

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

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Unemployment & Repression



North and
South

**Mass action
the solution!**



COMMUNISM AND THE U.S.S.R.

The recent Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the 25th, was given widespread coverage in the western news media. Their attention was naturally focussed on the speech of Enrico Berlinguer, the Italian Communist Party leader who, when speaking at the 25th Congress, asserted the "inalienable right of equality . . . and autonomy of each party". Berlinguer was however not alone in his stance. The leader of the French C.P. George Marchais accused the Soviet leadership of "unjust and unjustifiable" acts of repression against Soviet citizens. The growing autonomy of the Italian and French Communist Parties, the two largest in the capitalist world, and the increasing distance being placed between many C.P.s and the Soviet leadership overshadowed the crisis of internal perspectives that was a marked feature of the 25th Congress.

Economic Stagnation

Indeed the 25th Congress marks a new stage in the crisis of Stalinism, both in the Soviet Union and on an international scale. In the Soviet Union the economy experiences one crisis after another. The ninth five year plan which ended in 1975 was a partial failure. For the first time it planned to give Sector B (consumer goods) priority over Sector A (capital goods). While the Sector A target was reached, 46% increase, the target for Sector B 49% increase, was not reached, instead the result was 12% short i.e. 37%. In the agriculture sector the result fell short by 9% and as a result the objective for agriculture in the tenth five year plan (1976-1980) has been tailored to go little beyond the objective of the plan before it. The extreme centralisation that the Soviet bureaucracy has imposed on the economy inhibits the growth of the consumer goods sector. For Sector B to grow implies a loosening of the bureaucratic control over production. However the minimum decentralisation of decision-making can produce forces at a local level which form a challenge to the bureaucracy. On the other hand the growth of the consumer goods sector is important to the livelihood of the working class. The latest five year plan has reverted to the old formula of subordinating consumer to capital goods production. At the level of wages the new plan has even lower targets set than the ninth five year plan. The permanent crisis of Soviet agriculture will greatly affect the food industry and consequently the living standards of the working class e.g. meat production will remain at its 1975 level all the way through to 1980, that is, about 15 million tons. In other words the virtual stagnation of both the economy and more so, the living standards of the working class will be the main content of the new five year plan announced by the 25th Party Congress.

International Stalinism in Crisis

On an international level the perspective is even bleaker for Stalinism. With the rise of the European working class and the growth of the national communist parties, the pressure on these large reformist parties leads to a growing estrangement from Moscow. After the cold war these parties set themselves the task of breaking their isolation by seeking alliances with social

democracy and the trade-union bureaucracy. For the past twenty years the C.P.s in Europe have followed this course. This period has had a profound effect on the composition of the party memberships. Now many are in a position of taking part in coalition governments. This new situation is putting grave strains on their relationship with the USSR. If they are to be acceptable to the European bourgeoisie they must show that their allegiances lie with their nation states and not with a foreign power i.e. the Soviet Union. Also in terms of winning broad electoral support the present state of affairs with regard to democracy and civil liberties in the Soviet Union is very damaging.

On this issue they also fear losing many of their working class militants to the growing anti-Stalinist left in Europe. Thus those parties with a real mass base, the French, Italian and Spanish Communist Parties have become more and more outspoken in their criticism of the Soviet Union. Even the British C.P., which while insignificant electorally, has a strong position in



the combative sections of the Trade Union movement, has found that it is being squeezed between left-social democracy on the one hand and the predominantly Trotskyist left on the other. Thus it has recently attempted to distance itself from the more obnoxious aspects of the Soviet regime. Articles have appeared in the "Morning Star" and a motion was passed at their last Congress criticising political repression in the USSR. In the January issue of "Marxism Today", the party's theoretical organ, John Gollan, general secretary of the party for 19 years, not only criticised the lack of democracy in the USSR but also attacked the whole basis by which the Soviet Party runs the country. Gollan upbraided the Soviet leadership for infrequent Congresses, and pointed out that decisions taken by the Soviet leadership were accompanied by "little or no public explanation" let alone discussion.

The Communist Party of Ireland does not have the strength to chance any such daring criticisms but tensions exist here too as was shown by the "Irish Marxist Society" split (the significance of this was analysed in the last issue of Socialist Republic).

Old Men in Moscow

What was significant about the 25th Congress was its total inability to deal with either the internal or external problems of the Stalinist leadership. The Soviet Party leadership now rivals the Catholic Church as an ageing gerontocracy. The average age of the Politburo is now 66 years, but the average age of the "inner" group is 71, with the old stalwarts Pels and Suslov, 78 and 75 years old respectively. The ageing of the Soviet leadership is not only symbolic of the ossification of the party hierarchy but also of the obvious predicaments raised by succession problems. Such is the fear of the repercussions of even personnel mobility that such changes pose themselves as minor crises in themselves, especially at a time of the build-up of social and national tensions within the Soviet Union. Such is the dissension in the world Stalinist movement that Soviet leadership has almost given up its attempts to convene a conference of national communist parties. It now fears the advent of left governments with C.P. participation, unstable by their very nature, subject to all kinds of pressure and liable to be outflanked on the left. The Soviet leadership prefers to maintain the present status quo in Europe without any critical convulsions just as it did in the 1930s. This will in the future be a very severe source of conflict as Santiago Carrillo leader of the Spanish C.P. put it: "We must not nourish excessive illusions, either about the United States . . . or about the way in which the USSR will react to the formation of a bloc of socialist countries — or ones in the process of becoming such — not dependent on the USSR itself, and which have political structures different from those of the peoples democracies . . . We cannot ignore the fact that in Moscow this will be viewed with concern". The political project of the CP's is thus in conflict with the foreign policy of the USSR.

Opening of a new period?

Within the USSR perhaps the central problem is the inability of the bureaucracy to provide an incentive for the working class to produce. The complete lack of any control or democracy by the workers within industry and agriculture is the chief reason for this. To really remedy this the bureaucracy would have to commit suicide i.e. to abolish itself. Instead it tries to make economies by leaning on the working class. For example in the new five year plan productivity is expected to increase by 30-34% but wages by only 16-17% — over 5% down on the last plan. But they aren't lean too hard, because although the Soviet working class is both atomised and apathetic the events of Poland in 1970 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 are never far from the minds of the Soviet leadership. While Brezhnev absolved the party from all responsibility for the current economic failures by placing the blame on the "managers" who had allegedly misapplied the correct line of the party the next five years might give the Soviet working class the chance to voice its own, perhaps less subtle, criticisms. It is however improbable that such criticisms will be voiced from the platform of the Party Congress. Of the 4,900 delegates present at the 25th party Congress a maximum of 60 were workers in factories or collective farms — an astonishing figure by any reckoning. While the 25th Congress was not a landmark in the history of Stalinism, like the 20th Congress in 1956, it does indicate that the years of stability, of social and economic peace may be coming to a close.

political status

Speaking in the British House of Commons on March 25th this year, Merlyn Rees declared that one of the main reasons for the British Government's decision to end political status in the North was to make it easier for the RUC to operate throughout the 6 Counties. Given the central importance that Imperialism therefore gives to this latest attack on the Republican resistance, one could have expected that the defence of political status would be raised as a key issue amongst the anti-unionist population by the various anti-imperialist organisations. But such expectations have certainly not been fulfilled since the ending of political status in March. The Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) has said not a word on the issue, their silence being matched only by the Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) and the Official Republican Movement.

The Provisional Sinn Fein have taken up the question, but a review of their response shows it to be limited to press statements, articles in *An Phoblacht* and *Republican News* and ineffective protests limited to members of their Cummain. The Provisional IRA have of course taken action against prison officials, but the futility of this action clearly asserted itself when the only consequence was to subject Provisional prisoners to even further hardship behind the wires.

Of course, it can be argued that the time is not yet ripe for a campaign in opposition to the removal of political status. The measure does not affect the prisoners that are present held, only those sentenced for offences committed after March 1st this year, and so it won't start operating until July or August. But such a view ignores the fact that Imperialism has approached the question in this way precisely to facilitate the sowing of confusion amongst the Nationalist minority and place obstacles in the way of uniting the opposition.

Instead of falling into line with Britain's scheme, anti-imperialist organisations should have from the beginning prepared the basis for a mass campaign capable of frustrating these plans.

Another argument that has been put forward and finds favour particularly with Official Republicans, is that Republicans should not demand special treatment over and above that dished out to other prisoners. After all, everyone in the North's jails is a prisoner of the capitalist system in the North's jails.

Despite the apparent principled character of this position, it completely fails to take account of the grave threat posed to the anti-imperialist struggle posed by the removal of political status.

Not only does this measure, by introducing individual cells for political prisoners as against the compound of Long Kesh and Magilligan, make it much easier for the authorities to isolate and demoralise the militants of the anti-imperialist organisations; much more importantly, it aims to isolate the anti-imperialist movement as a whole from the anti-unionist population.

Imperialism is fully aware of the political character of the struggle being waged in the North. 15,000 British troops aren't in the North to fight Belfast's Al Capone or Derry's Ronald Biggs. The UDR and the RUC are not equipped with armoured cars and SLR rifles to catch the likes of Billy the Kid. The Special Inquest Courts, the admission of evidence obtained by torture don't exist to stop the Reginald Maudlings and John Stonehouses of the 6 Counties from escaping the wrath of 'Justice'. All of these exist for one purpose alone — to force the nationalist minority back onto its knees. The ending of political status is aimed not at the members of the republican organisations alone but at the entire population of the nationalist ghettos.



It goes hand in hand with the British Government's policy of "restoring the primacy of the police" and using the UDR in street confrontations. Imperialism knows that if it can convince the anti-unionist population that the Republican prisoners are 'gangsters and thugs' then it will be well on the way to stabilising the situation and establishing the RUC and UDR in control of the catholic ghettos.

The general character of this attack ensures that it will only be defeated by the mobilisation of the mass of the anti-unionist working class in defence of the political prisoners. Only in this context will action in the prisons be effective.

For this reason the *Movement for a Socialist Republic (MSR)* gives its full support to the petition demanding the retention of political status which has been launched by Peoples Democracy (PD). The petition is being taken into the ghettos, signatures collected, and discussions organised to decide on action around the issue. In this way it is hoped to lay the basis for a campaign which will draw in much wider forces and begin to mobilise the mass opposition which is so desperately needed.

JOHN MAGEE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION WRITE TO PLOUGH BOOK SERVICE, 2 Mary Street, Dublin 2, or PLOUGH BOOK SERVICE, 72 Castle Street, Belfast.

petition
launched
in
belfast



Irish prisoner after army beating

Dublin Explosion (cont. from p.10)

a) because it denies the role of conscious democratic mass action.

b) because each act of individual terror merely provides an excuse for intensifying state repression.

Both these conclusions have been amply borne out since the explosion last month. New laws are being drafted to impose heavier sentences on those who organise against the state and the Coalition government h

as talked of making wide use of conspiracy charges. The Irish Times has talked in terms of the banning of organisations both republican and socialist.

In our view actions such as this assassination must be met with irreconcilable opposition within the anti-imperialist camp. There is no substitute for the mass mobilisation of the working class as any resistance to the government's measures will show. We are reminded of Trotsky's words on this subject;

"But the smoke from the explosion clears away, the panic disappears, the successor of the murdered minister makes his appearance, life again settles into the old rut, the wheel of capitalist exploitation turns as before; only police repression grows more savage and brazen. And as a result, in place of the kindled hopes and artificially aroused excitement come disillusion and apathy."

National Committee,
MSR.

women & gays

RUC attack GAYS

Northern Ireland is a haven for religious and moral fanatics.

The 'born-again Christians' who populate the Loyalist parties are not only entrenched against any move towards the unification of this country - they are also utterly opposed to children having a swing in the park on Sundays and to workers having a swim in the council baths or going to the cinema. And in most parts of this statelet they have the power to ram such reactionary nonsense down the throats of the whole population.

More importantly, the views of these fanatics also reign supreme on matters of social legislation. This column has already reported on the plight in which Irish women find themselves.

On these matters, however, at least some movement is underway to gain improvements.

But one oppressed section of society in the North remains in total isolation - the estimated 72,000 homosexuals and lesbians, who make up approximately 5 per cent of the North's population.

The overwhelming majority of people in both the Loyalist and anti-Unionist communities regard homosexuality as a case for psychiatric and penal treatment. It is regarded not merely as offensive but as a sickness and an unnatural vice. Aversion therapy, self-denial, and even prayer are prescribed; and if that fails, then there is always prison - because, of course, homosexuality is a crime in the North.

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act in Britain, which legalised homosexual relations between consenting adults (over 21) in private, does not apply in the North of Ireland. As a result, the Royal Ulster Constabulary have total freedom to carry out a campaign of harassment against Northern Irish gays.

One such campaign is in full swing at the moment. Diaries, letters, address books, gay liberation literature, and correspondence between the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA) over reforms which NIGRA is seeking - all these have been seized by the police. Seven men have been subjected to lengthy interrogation by the RUC: this was conducted in a very hostile fashion, and by all accounts went into the most degrading detail about their sexual behaviour and acquaintances.

All seven were also threatened with exposure to family and employers - but as none have made any secret of their homosexuality, these threats

backfired in the face of the police. However, the names and addresses of people who are intensely afraid of exposure have been taken by the RUC in a series of raids since 20 January.

The intimidation of gays, and the removal of files and membership lists, is clearly designed to disorganise and stifle the young gay liberation movement in the North; and it has to an extent succeeded. There are few in the Six Counties to whom the gay movement can turn for solidarity and support. That is why revolutionary socialists must be outspoken in defence of the right of gays to define their own sexual orientation and organise in defence of this right.

Socialists and gays in Britain can also help by sending telegrams/letters of protest against the RUC's harassment to Meryn Rees, and telegrams/letters of solidarity to the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association, c/o Students Union, Queens University, Belfast BT7.



contraception

The setting up of a National Campaign for legal contraception (the Contraception Action Programme or C.A.P.) is a significant step forward in the struggle for the availability of contraception for those wishing to use it.

The campaign is being sponsored by the following organisations: the Family Planning Services, the Irish Family Planning Association, Irishwomen United, Labour Women's National Council, North Dublin Social Workers Association, Womens Aid, the Womens Political Association and the Womens Liberation movement. It calls for the provision of legal contraception through the health services as well as sex education in schools and contraceptive advice and counselling in all maternity and child welfare clinics. This is the first time a genuinely broad campaign against this aspect of the governments oppression of womens civil rights has been launched. We totally support the initiative of Irishwomen United in calling together these organisations on this issue, and call on all socialist and progressive people to throw their weight into making this campaign a real success.

unemployment

WHO'S LOSING THE JOBS?

Close examination of figures on unemployment, back up the unacceptable fact that working women have been harder hit than men during the present recession. In the 3 year period 1974-76, there was an increase of 81% of registered unemployed women, as against an increase of 65% for men. Unemployment assistance applications current for women increased by 125% for women, as against 70% for men. These figures exclude ALL unemployed female school-leavers, and all married women seeking for the first time, but unable to get work. There are many thousands of women not counted.

AnCO is continuing to train women for the stereotype jobs in the failing industries, i.e. women in the clothing industry lost 1,671 jobs and women in the distributive trades lost 1,299 jobs.

Jobs for women are not only being lost but a womans right to work, married or not, is under attack.



FREE STATE REPRESSION

Since its establishment as a formally independent state in 1920 through the Westminster Government of Ireland Act the Free State has consistently resorted to "special" or "exceptional" legislation in order to deal with the various social, economic and political problems facing it. That it has had to do this is a reflection of the way it was designed to perform two mutually irreconcilable tasks — to preserve partition and at the same time provide a stable framework for its bourgeoisie to build itself a secure economic base. To effectively perform the second task would mean the preventing of British imperialism from plundering the country but this can only be done if the partition settlement is destroyed. The Free State then is incapable of being anything other than a pathetic reactionary off-shoot of British imperialism and this is why it has suffered from unstable stability for the whole of its existence. Using this as our framework we can analyse what lies behind the growing crisis of the Free State, examine why it is now being forced to launch a new attack on civil liberties and to what extent this is a reaction to events in the Six Counties, see how various forces can be mobilised against this attack and establish how far the Free State will have to go before reaching its breaking point.

The Republican Threat

Though it is true to say that repression in the Free State has many aspects (discrimination against women, clerical domination, high emigration and unemployment etc.), we must understand that it has always been the republican movement which has presented the most immediate threat to the Free State even though it has mostly never even mentioned (let alone understood) or fought against the broader aspects of Free State repression. Republicanism has always been the strongest political ideology among the southern working class at the level of a general political sympathy but republicans have never had a clear-cut perspective of using that sympathy to organise a mass movement against the State. The Free State has taken advantage of this in the past eight years to selectively use repression against republicans. Nevertheless it has failed to defeat the current republican campaign while at the same time it has found itself being forced to use repression in an increasingly wider scale against other social groups, and some of its initiatives have been very badly defeated or stalled (e.g. the attempted deferral of equal pay). All of this flows from the combined effect of the international recession and the structural crisis in the Irish economy and it means that the government is being forced to adopt an intensified strategy of repression.

The Government Offensive

There is no lack of evidence to back this analysis up. This new phase began with the hijacking of Frank Stagg's funeral. Members of a registered political party, the Irish Republican Socialist Party have produced detailed evidence that they were systematically tortured and beaten up by Special Branch officers in various Garda stations. The organisation dealing with these cases, the Association for Legal Justice, has begun a systematic inquiry into Garda brutality and has revealed that the IRSP case is just the tip of an iceberg. Also of course there is the banning of the 1916 commemoration to be added to this list. Allied to these attacks the government has launched a crude propaganda offensive: women are being blamed for causing the economic crisis; the Union of Students' in Ireland are being accused of trying to build a "Sino-Hibernian" (!) Marxist society; and many warnings have been given that "traditional" civil liberties will have to be abandoned to "defend democracy" (!)

The Northern Background

We must realise however that these moves are not solely a reaction to the crisis of the Free State. A marked feature of the recent government moves has been the amount of opposition they have encountered and the creation of a situation where splits and visions must inevitably occur within all the major bourgeois parties. Judged solely in terms of what is happening in the south the hijacking of Frank Stagg's funeral and the banning of the 1916 commemoration could be seen as hysterical and stupid moves which have brought extra forces into opposition to the government. When we examine what is happening in the North however the reasons become very clear. The 'Sunday Times', the 'Irish Times', and numerous other irrefutable sources have produced evidence that the conflict in the Six Counties is being deliberately "Ulsterised" or more accurately "Loyalist". "Republican News" has reported that army recruiting is being intensified. Not only that but once Loyalists are recruited into Irish regiments in the Six Counties they are trained in Britain, transferred to another regiment and then sent back to the North. Thus even the reduction in the role of, and numbers in, the Army, hides the true significance of what is taking place. This should also clarify that the different Loyalist factions are not disagreeing with each other over whether to defy or give in to non-existent British government pressure for "power-sharing" or the continuance of direct rule. In reality they are so confident of being able to take power in a relatively short space of time that they feel able to argue over who will get the spoils.

It would be very dangerous to pose this as a victory for the Republican Movement on the grounds that Britain is pulling out. What it shows is that Britain believes its loyalist lackeys can control the situation without overt military assistance, just as they did before 1968. That is not to say that there are no dangers involved from Britain in pursuing this strategy or that the situation in the Free State is controllable in the short term. In some ways it is not and that is why it is necessary to try and build a civil rights campaign in the south capable of undertaking mass mobilisations and preventing the government from successfully carrying out its attack on civil liberties.

resist
government
offensive

A Programme for Action

Already a number of people such as John Mulcahy (editor of Hibernia) have been involved in discussions around building such a campaign. We strongly support the moves he and others have made to establish a permanent civil rights campaign and believe it could successfully adopt the following demands:

- * Abolition of repressive legislation (e.g. Offences Against the State Act, Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Bill etc.)
- * Opposition to discrimination against women — for the right to contraception, divorce, equal pay etc.
- * Support the right to work — oppose victimisation and blacklisting

Obviously issues such as that should be open to the broadest possible discussion but what is particularly important is that there must be a willingness to take up every case that comes to the campaign's notice irrespective of what political allegiances any victim or victims of state repression may have. It is only through adopting such a position that the campaign could credibly claim to oppose all state repression and not just act either as a sort of social welfare agency or a front for particular organisations. Also it is necessary that there should be open membership to anyone agreeing with the campaign, that it not be simply a group of public personalities making representations to the government. This is not to say that defiance of the government by people like Michael Mullen and David Thornley should be ignored — instead it should be stressed that the actions they have taken against the government are very welcome and support should be offered to them as long as they continue to take such stands.

Finally, with regard to the Republican movement, it must be stressed that this is the only possible perspective for successfully opposing the Free State at the present time. Even if we get to the stage when if, as appears likely, the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Bill becomes law, Gardai simply hand people over to the RUC armed resistance alone will not stop them. Every possible legal means must be used to highlight cases of government brutality, just as the IRSP has done. Indeed one of the reasons the government has behaved so provocatively in the past while it may have been its desire to provoke a rash reaction from those it is attempting to destroy. We cannot allow Cooney, O'Brien and Cosgrave to get away with these kinds of manoeuvres and they must be effectively opposed. The time for talk and futile action is rapidly fading away — the government will not delay much longer.

**DEFEAT GOVERNMENT
REPRESSION!**

**BUILD A MASS CIVIL LIBERTIES
CAMPAIGN!**

JAMES GALLAGHER

UNEMPLOYMENT & THE LINK WITH BRITAIN



At the May Day rally organised by the ICTU (Northern Committee) in Belfast last month, there was a lot of back-slapping among the trade union leadership over the "success" of the 'Better Life For All' campaign, which was launched last January. Only a few days earlier the worst unemployment figures for 36 years were published.

What was the response of the trade union leadership? No programme of working class action was put forward. Faced with lengthening dole queues, spiralling food prices, wholesale cuts in social services, the only proposal put by these workers' 'leaders' was to invite the British Prime Minister, Callaghan, to come over to the North to *discuss* the situation!

Unemployment in the North is nothing new. Throughout the history of this statelet unemployment has been a way of life for thousands of workers, particularly Catholic workers. While during the so-called 'boom' period after the war unemployment in Britain was around 1.5%, in the North it was never below 6%; and in the nationalist ghettos the figures were around the 25% mark. In the large catholic housing estate of Ballymurphy, the situation has long been that 50% of male workers have been on the bureau.

British government policy of redundancies and cutbacks

But even against such a background, the present situation can only be described as desperate. The official figure of 9.7% unemployed masks the terrible reality. Thousands of unemployed workers are not included in the official statistics, such as married women who haven't got the full quota of insurance stamps, can't collect benefit and therefore see no point in joining the humiliating queues outside the labour exchanges.

Each week brings more depressing news of factory closures, redundancies and short-time working. The British Labour Government, despite its promises of "fair" rule and its fighting declarations against unemployment, is itself directly adding to the misery of Northern workers. British government action has been directly responsible for the closure of International Engineering Ltd. with a loss of 2,200 jobs; Standard Telephones and Cables, with a projected loss of 2,300 jobs; Rolls Royce, Dundonald (800 jobs), Regna International. In addition the £45 million cutback in public expenditure in the North already threatens 2,000 jobs in the British defence establishments as well as placing 10,000 jobs in the Belfast shipyards in jeopardy. It also means the widespread slashing of the social services.

Major hospitals such as the Royal Victoria in Belfast have declared that there will be no vacancies for student nurses for at least another two years. According to a spokesman for the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) the situation is nothing short of chronic in some hospitals. He spoke of "patients falling out of bed because there are not enough nurses in the wards."

Health, Social Services, Housing, Education: All Hit

At the Laganvalley Hospital in Lisburn there are only three nurses in the geriatric ward to look after 48 patients. Albert Smyth, COHSE Branch Secretary at the hospital, has warned that "The way things are going, there will be no staff for the new geriatric unit which is to open in April 1977. And in addition there is talk of closing casualty at night because of lack of staff."

It is not just in the hospitals, though, that jobs are being lost and services getting worse. Throughout the health service in the North the cutbacks are wrecking havoc. The Area Health and Social Services are talking in terms of a large reduction in the number of doctors in general practice, the phasing out of house-calls to patients and the complete disappearance of many rural practices. The Home-Help service, an essential life-line for many old and handicapped people, is being severely pruned, the number of houses having already been chopped by a third are facing a further similar cut. The building of new health centres, necessary to end the



anarchic provision of health care, has been halted; and despite the acute shortage of social workers there is a ban on appointing permanent staff to fill vacancies. Particularly hard hit by these cutbacks will be women and children. There are no state-run nurseries in the North and now no plans to open any. And in those areas which need playgroups the most, there are waiting-lists up to three years old.

The same picture emerges in the housing and education sectors. The number of houses built last year was down by more than 1,000 compared with 1974. Hundreds of qualified teachers are already unemployed, with no prospect of a job. And a 17% cut in the number of teacher-training places in the 6 Counties along with a 50% cut in the number of grants for Northern students wishing to take their training in Britain means the dole queue for hundreds of students, and overcrowded, understaffed schools.

Results of dependence

While the economic crisis hits the nationalist working class particularly hard, adding to the misery of 50 years of organised discrimination, loyalist workers have hardly been spared. The closure of the defence establishments, the run-down of the shipyards and the loss of thousands of jobs at Rolls Royce, STC and other plants primarily means that loyalists have for the first time suffered the full force of the economic instability which has gone along with the existence of this artificial statelet, dependent and therefore subservient to British Imperialism. The scale of these attacks is such that loyalist workers are unable to resolve their problems simply by offloading them onto the nationalist minority. And that means they have looked for other explanations!

The most popular is that the economic ills are a result of a devious British plan to withdraw from the 6 Counties. This nonsense is peddled by such diverse characters as Sandy Scott and the B & ICO right across the board to Ian Paisley and Gerry Fitt. But nonsense it is! Far from the closures and redundancies resulting from deliberate British scheming, they are the inevitable outcome of the present economic crisis which afflicts the entire capitalist system. Northern Ireland is marginal to and utterly dependent upon the Imperialist economy. Public expenditure in the North amounts to some £1,300 million a year, representing at least 60% of the total domestic product, 85% of industry in the North is under foreign control, mainly British and American. Only one-seventh of the manufacturing sector is locally owned. In this situation the North has virtually no capacity to resist these developments.

Most of the trade union leaders are fully aware of this dilemma. But their answer is to call for the strengthening of the British link, for more foreign investment. And just like Stan Orme, the former British Minister of State, in the North, most of these so-called 'leaders' are not shy at pointing out how desperate Northern workers are for jobs and thus how "reliable" they are as a workforce, how they are quite prepared to accept lower wages. In other words, the trade union leadership just heaps added burdens on to the backs of the working class.

'Better Life for All' .. or 'Some' or 'NONE'!

This approach is present throughout the 'Better Life for All' campaign. The goodwill of the British Government is offered as a panacea for all the ills which confront the working class, loyalist and republican alike. So the trade union leadership has even refused to withdraw its representatives from the Economic Council, Housing Executive and other state bodies in protest at the British Government's anti-working class policies.

The stance taken by the ICTU can only guarantee the 100,000 unemployment level which is being predicted by 1980. It is an absolute betrayal of the workers interests, and places responsibility for the economic crisis not on the capitalist system but on those who oppose the British link.

Thus the practical consequences of the ICTU's 'Better Life For All' campaign, far from countering sectarianism, actually legitimises the loyalist view that 'disloyal' workers have no right to jobs while loyalists are unemployed.

Of course, the trade unions try to avoid this reality by talking of the unity of the working class. Now everyone in the North is in favour of uniting the working class - with the exception of imperialism, its local capitalist allies, and the loyalist section of the working class! That the latter stand in the camp of reaction is a hard fact that the trade unions, the Communist Party of Ireland and increasingly the Official Republicans, all brush under the carpet. Yet until the left as a whole recognises that since partition the majority of the Protestant workers have played an active role in maintaining this undemocratic and sectarian state then the trade unions will remain ineffective, will remain incapable of organising independent working class action.

Revolutionary Perspective

Every time the Communist Party and the Official Republicans present Britain as a force that can end sectarianism in the North they put back the day when working class unity in the North will be a reality. There is only one situation in which the possibility of the Protestant workers putting class before sectarian interests can be realised and that is when British Imperialism is kicked out of Ireland. Then the Protestant workers will be free to choose another road: the road of building the workers republic in a united Ireland.

None of this means that revolutionaries abstain on the economic struggles that are taking place in the North at the present time. But while putting forward a programme of independent working class action against unemployment, in opposition to the cutbacks in the social service, we situate these demands within the context of fighting for the right of the Irish people as a whole to self-determination. The demand for the immediate withdrawal of the British Army, the defence of political prisoners, and the struggle to prevent any loyalist restoration, far from being 'diversions' from the 'class' issues of jobs and houses, are the meat of the fight for working class unity, the fight for socialism in Ireland.

the meaning of the by-election results



Significance of votes

This win will certainly strengthen the Haughey wing of Fianna Fail and if Jack Lynch does not get the message Blaney will probably carry out his threat of running candidates in other border areas in the next General Election. He may get more support along these lines if Kevin Boland goes ahead with his apparent intention of winding up Aontacht Eireann. This build up of the Haugheyites is extremely dangerous because although they call themselves "republicans" their policy of "a British intent to withdraw" could provide an ideal cover for a Loyalist takeover, especially the "independent Ulster" variety favoured by Paddy Devlin of the SDLP. The same criticism applies to the Provisionals, who of course boycotted the elections.

Labour Party Decline

Brendan Halligan, the general secretary of the Labour Party, scraped to a win in Dublin S.W. on the sixth and final count, more because of the weakness of Fianna Fail than his own strength. In the process the Labour vote dropped from 35.7% in 1973 to 27.5% this time. Relations between John O'Connell (after the result was announced he suggested that Halligan ought to move to another constituency in the next general election) and the Labour Party leadership will remain bad because the government will be driven to greater use of repression while O'Connell will keep his critical stance as long as he wishes to retain his enormous following in the constituency. The result is ominous for Labour T.D.'s (particularly Dublin ones) who retain their loyalty to the coalition and will encourage those already expelled from the parliamentary party (Senator Michael Mullen and David Thornley T.D.) to make more criticisms. Indeed on the day the election results were announced the national executive of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union rejected the proposed new wage agreement and Mullen denounced the government.

The MSR and the Elections

Members of the Movement for a Socialist Republic (MSR) participated in the campaign of Ite Ni Chionnaith, candidate of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), and issued a leaflet calling for a No. 1 vote for the IRSP, and a No. 2 vote for the Official Sinn Fein candidate, Tomas Mac Giolla, under the slogan "Against Repression — Vote Republican!" This was because the IRSP has taken a consistent stand against government repression while the Officials have more often than not condemned the victims of repression and in this campaign completely ignored the national question only running a 'More Jobs' campaign like that of Fianna Fail. Neither they nor the IRSP put forward demands which could help mobilise workers against the government attacks and failed to take up issues which could highlight these attacks (e.g. the prosecution of over 70 people for participation in the Provisional Sinn Fein 1916 Commemoration).

In many cases the IRSP put forward the same abstract demands as Official Sinn Fein (e.g. Nationalise the mines) thus making the same basic error — putting forward governmental demands when the forces to implement such demands do not yet exist. At this level the only difference between the IRSP and Official Sinn Fein was that the IRSP declared itself against British imperialism — an equally abstract slogan which, since it was the main theme of the Maoist candidate, created more confusion.

Given such confused policies coming from the republican/left candidates it is not surprising that there was a low poll because of abstention by Labour supporters, and that these candidates obtained insignificant support. The task for the future is not to ignore elections, but, particularly in the IRSP's case, to apply the correct tactics when participating in them. It remains to be seen whether this will be done.

DUBLIN MSR

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ley Road, Dublin 5.

The results of the Dublin South-West and Donegal North-East by-elections are important not just because they show that Fianna Fail has been unable to present itself as a credible alternative to a Fine-Gael-Labour Coalition which is becoming more and more unable to deal with the crisis racking the Free State, but also because they show that many people are so disillusioned that they do not consider that any party offers a solution to their problems. An Irish Press (June 12) editorial was almost alone among bourgeois commentators in making this point: "too many people . . . consider politics to be a vacuum insofar as being a means of redressing their difficulties is concerned. Nature abhors a vacuum as we have seen in the North. The bell did not just toll for one party here, it tolled for all of them — and for us".

A comparison of the campaigns run by the major parties in both constituencies bears this point out. Fianna Fail ran their campaign on the issues of unemployment and rising prices in Dublin and Donegal. Though these issues were undoubtedly important in Dublin S.W. Fianna Fail offered no practical means of solving these problems and did not campaign at all on related issues such as the denial of contraceptives or the lack of creche facilities, for fear of exposing divisions in the party. They totally ignored the National Question which had disastrous results in Donegal for, as one Balyneite put it, prices aren't such an issue there because people can do their shopping in the Six Counties.

Donegal rejects "Blueshirtism"

Fine Gael on the other hand ran a Blueshirt style "law and order" campaign in Donegal in a frantic chase after Protestant votes, while sticking to youth clubs and football pitches in Dublin S.W. — a deprived working class area not known for its respect for the Gardai. Between 1969 and 1973 the Fine Gael vote in Donegal N.E. dropped from 41.9% to 33.4% — reflecting their loss of the Protestant vote. They undoubtedly won most of it back this time but their vote still dropped to 31.8%. In fact then their loss was worse than the figures initially indicate which means that their campaign significantly alienated many of their former supporters. Given the situation in border areas (increasing SAS/Loyalist incursions and kidnappings, discontent among local people and Gardai at the level of collaboration) this, and the victory of Neil Blaney's candidate, is hardly surprising.

NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENT

COLLAPSE OF NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENT: UNIONS MUST CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT

The collapse of the National Wage Agreement was inevitable. On the one hand it did not suit the interests of the employers, the Federated Union of Employers thought that the terms of the agreement were too favourable to the workers and the Confederation of Irish Industry went further and demanded a complete wage freeze instead of a national agreement. On the other hand the con-trick of the June 1975 "mini-budget" in which workers dropped phase two and three of the 4th NNA in return for so-called price cuts has made them much less agreeable to making concessions in "the national interest".

WHAT NEXT

The question now is: what will happen next. It is extremely unlikely that the employers will offer much more than they already have. So even if the Employer-Labour Conference resumes it is unlikely to yield an acceptable settlement. In the past of course the Unions have rejected draft agreements and have sent the leaders back to get more. Returning with a few extra crumbs which they portrayed as major gains, these leaders have eventually been push-through wage agreements. But this is unlikely to happen in this particular instance. Not only is the rank and file against the current agreement but also a sizable section of the middle and upper layers trade union officials and representatives who see their negotiating powers being whittled away. If there are no genuine gains produced by a new sitting of the Employer-Labour Conference this group will have a powerful voice in getting the whole thing rejected.

One avenue open to the Employers and government is to allow a "free for all" and to use harsh budgetary measures to soak up the gains made by the workers. This however could only be a stopgap measure. The real problem is not just wage increases but also falling profits. The budget is an inefficient and costly way of redistributing wealth from wages to profits. The only effective way of carrying out this restriction is in reality through a wage freeze.

Up 'til now the Government and some sectors of the employers have vassilated on the question of a wage freeze. Given the resistance of the workers any wage freeze will have to be statutory. The Labour Ministers have been hesitant about this. However Cruisers statements at the end of June show that a new formula has been worked out which satisfies Labour — a wage freeze coupled with State intervention.

Increasingly the strategy for the salvation of Irish capitalism is becoming centralised around the demand for a wage freeze and state intervention. But this is not a very strong slogan. The Government has already overstretched itself in terms of public expenditure and is burdened with an enormous problem of deficit and borrowing. So there can be no hope of any significant state involvement in economics. Even the half-hearted "planning" of the '60's is out of reach.

A TRADE UNION PLAN

The weakness is the Achilles heel of Irish capitalism against which the blows of the Unions should be aimed. Coupled with a major offensive on the wages front the Unions must formulate and push forward their own Economic & Social Plan. This plan must be detailed and comprehensive, (a) eliminating private control of the key sectors of the economy so that real planning can be introduced; and (b) devolving control to the shop floor so that bureaucratic impediments to efficient management can be removed.

Such a plan would be a significant part of the workers reply to the employers and Government's strategy. Above all it would cut the ground from under the feet of the Labour Ministers, depriving them of any arguments for a wage freeze. This in turn would provide the basis for a Union offensive against the Labour Party leadership for the control of the Labour Party. Already this year, at the IT & GWU's Annual Conference, there has been a strong call for greater control by the Unions over the LP. This call must be amplified and followed up at all levels.

Finally, it should be noted that a "free for all" is more in the interests of the employers than the workers. (A "free for all" should not be confused with "free collective bargaining". A "Free for all" is only one form, and a particularly weak and effective one at that, of collective bargaining). What trade unionists should demand is that Congress takes up the claims being made by the building workers; busmen, bank officials, etc., and fight for them for all workers. The centralised strength of the working class is an important asset which must be used with vigour.



Next issue of Socialist Republic
will be in September-articles
include;

LEFT WING MILITARISM IN IRELAND

U.S.S.R.- capitalist or workers state

The Womens Movement in the North.

Socialist Republic costs 10p
from this month. We regret this
increase in price but hope it
will allow regular production
of the paper each month.

statements unemployment

british

"diplomat"

The death of the British ambassador in Dublin last month has not surprisingly been seized on by politicians, the press and churchmen to launch yet another offensive against the forces involved in the struggle for national self-determination.

The sycophantic rantings of these people have been designed to obscure the fact that Ewart Biggs, far from being "a friend of the Irish people" was a veteran in the service of Imperialism and the foremost representative of that class which today forcibly occupies the 6 north eastern counties of this island.

Irish workers therefore have no reason to weep over the death of this man who having at one time been attached to NATO was by no means squirmish about violence provided it was being dished out by the capitalist class of which he was a member. Ewart Biggs job in Ireland was not to play the role of the harbinger of peace but to further suffocate the legitimate aspirations of the Irish people for self-determination.

The Movement for a Socialist Republic (Irish Section of the Fourth International) rejects absolutely the moral indignation of those who remain silent in the face of numerous atrocities committed by British Imperialism and its native collaborators in all parts of Ireland.

For the past year unemployment has been hovering between the 15 to 20,000 mark. In addition to those who are officially registered there are tens of thousands of school leavers who are without jobs. Even if there is an economic upturn by the end of the year the Government still predicts that there will be no real improvement in the employment situation for at least a year and a half to two years.

Even if we accept Government assurances, it is clear that the unemployment problem is a long term one. But already severe hardship is being caused. The short duration of pay related benefits combined with the effects of inflation are making it increasingly difficult for the unemployed worker to make ends meet.

Prompt action is needed. But the Government, dependent as it is on foreign speculative investment, is incapable of formulating clear and decisive policies of its own. The Coalition just stumbles along from one blunder to the next. There is no point in hoping that a deal to save or increase jobs can be worked out with a Government which is not even its own master. The Trade Union movement will simply be shirking its responsibility to its own members and to the unemployed if it does not formulate firm policies of its own and if it does not wage a fight to force the Government to accept these policies.

A NATIONAL PLAN

Even as things stand there is plenty of scope to expand production and increase employment. For example, there is a severe housing shortage yet the building and construction industry is one of the hardest hit industries; many of our agricultural products are exported in unprocessed form in order to make huge profits for the big farmers, whereas a national agricultural processing industry could provide many new jobs; the pupil/teacher ratio in our primary and secondary schools is one of the worst in Europe, yet there is a 60% unemployment rate among those qualified to teach. And so on.

If the economy was really geared to the needs of the people, and not towards the needs of profit, there would be very little unemployment indeed.

The Trade Unions must use their skills and resources to formulate an Economic Plan which bases itself on social needs, in order to get the economy going again. Such a plan could include such items as a crash housing programme, a scheme of public works, development of our agricultural and natural resources. It would also include a thorough investigation (carried out by workers at plant level where necessary) of the private enterprise system with a view to workers taking over control of those enterprises which are run inefficiently or which impede overall economic growth. (An example of how certain branches of the private sector become major obstacles to economic growth is the fact that over 16% of our yearly national income is used by the Government to pay back loans received from the banks. If the banks were nationalised this money, in addition to the other resources of the banks, could be used to create jobs.

The existence of such a plan in the hands of the Unions would not only expose the lies and ineptness of the present Government, it would also alert people to the hypocrisy of Fianna Fail. It would also put pressure on the Labour Party and all other socialist groups to come together and fight for genuine working class policies.

AN ACTION PROGRAMME

But the thousands of unemployed who are already suffering severe hardship cannot afford to wait for such a plan to be presented and fought for. The Unions must adopt an Action Programme for immediate improvements.

The European Trade Union Confederation (which represents 31 million workers in 19 countries, including Ireland) at a special conference on the 24th and 25th April last, has shown the way in this respect. By demanding the introduction of a 35 hour week with five weeks holidays for all workers, the ETUC has in effect demanded that all work be shared without loss of pay. The ETUC has also called for the banning of overtime; the lowering of the retirement age and an extension of the period of formal education. Irish trade unionists should see to it that the ICTU takes up these demands and launches a well publicised and determined fight for them.

In addition, trade unionists must demand the right to scrutinise company records so that they can veto the investment and production decisions of management, in order to safeguard their jobs. In each individual case rank and file trade unionists must demand backing from their unions to secure such rights as well as calling the ICTU to force the Government to introduce legislation which would give workers these rights in law.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE MSR.

We reject abso-utely the hypocrisy of these people who on the one hand issue floods of statements condemning the violence of anti imperialist groups while at the same time giving total subservience to a state apparatus which in its entirety, its laws, police and army is nothing less than an elaborate

machine for systematic capitalist terror.

Nevertheless, the Movement for a Socialist Republic places on record its opposition to the assassination of the ambassador. We oppose this action for specific political reasons

(cont. on p.3)

ANGOLA

By the time this edition of *Socialist Republic* is published, the trial of "Colonel" Callan and his merry mercenaries will be over: their fates (immediate and for several, at least, ultimate) generally known. Whatever it may be, the way it will have been reached will have justified itself.

For the 'EVENING HERALD' however, Angola has "been too cold-blooded about the affair". The mercenaries "should have been shot when captured. What is taking place . . . might . . . create the sort of legend and myth about bounty hunters that we could do without."

This is contradicted by the facts. Mercenaries have been going to Africa, and even been killed there since colonisation, although they wore then the uniform of the occupying powers. With independence, particularly that of the Congo, they remained, officially to protect the whites from the warring armies: unofficially to bend the stick for such pro-imperialists as Moise Tshombe. In imperialist countries, the mercenary was portrayed as defending, somehow, an objective white racial superiority that spineless metropolitan governments had been over-hasty in renouncing. Even the breed's defeat in Angola could have been explained away by reference to Russian arms.



Revolutionary Justice

By putting its captives on trial, the Angolan government is acting to demystify the situation. Despite being held only months after the end of a civil war, the trial appears to be one of scrupulous fairness as the white legal observers have had to admit. From it there is revealed what was never published before: the psychology of the average mercenary. With Georgiou-Callan in the dock appear twelve other figures of equal squalidity. All are individuals who have tried to make up for their failures in life, not by working to change the system or, even, by robbing those who profit by it, but by acting as that system's agents in despoiling what they imagined to be inferior races. Callan himself, given pre-trial charisma by interviews with his ex-mistresses, is now denounced by his old British Army comrades. The myth of the mercenary as defender of

civilisation will now be less easily reasserted.

There are two other points of particular relevance to Ireland. Firstly, Angolan justice is clearly superior to what can be expected from the judicial system in either part of Ireland. There is no evidence that the accused have suffered anything like the irregularities that occurred in the trial of Noel and Marie Murray.

Secondly, and, perhaps, more generally important, it is no accident that Callan-Georgiou himself learnt his trade in the British Army in Northern Ireland nor that the far more sinister recruiter of mercenaries, John Banks, appears to have played the role of agent-provocateur, if not worse, over the recent arrests of Sinn Fein leaders in Luton. A mercenary is one who kills for money. He can still be a mercenary in the service of the State governing his nation. Mercenaries are needed by capitalism: the freelancers are merely logical developments of the answer to the need.

MIDDLE EAST

against
fascism in
lebanon

The resemblance between the basic situation in Lebanon and that in Northern Ireland is immediately obvious. The former state was created because the Arab revolutionaries were too weak to achieve an Arab nation-state after the first World War just as partition was established because of a similar failure by the Irish. Lebanon is divided between two communities that are self-defined by religion — Christians and Muslims. The first is relatively privileged and identifies with imperialism; the other — despite incompetent leadership and sabotage by Arab capitalism opposes it objectively.

Furthermore, the Lebanese situation resembles the Irish Republican interpretation of the Irish national problem far more closely than that interpretation reflects the facts it claims to explain. Although the Lebanon is a semi (or neo) colony rather than a colony such as Northern Ireland, the division there inbetween Christians and Muslims is more directly the result of imperialist intervention than that of the six counties where the situation was maintained by the needs of the local manufacturers — a class less developed in Beirut than in Belfast. The Muslims have been able to do what the six county Catholics can only hope to do: outbreed their oppressors. In addition, the Christians are spearheaded today by a mass party far more openly Fascist than any of the major Loyalist political groups: the Phalange of Hitler's old fan, Pierre Gemayel.

Nations and self-determination

But two inter-connected facts that are not paralleled in Ireland affect the struggle in the Lebanon. Firstly it is just one aspect of the overall struggle for Arab national self-determination, for which the major problem is posed by the colon state of Israel. Further to this, the existence of that state, the struggle by the treacherous King Hussein of Jordan has made Lebanon the chief base for the Palestinian guerrillas. This fact has occasioned the present struggle of the Lebanese Muslims, and raised it to a new level.

The Muslims had attempted before 1975 to modify, if not overthrow, the Christian political hegemony (which included a guaranteed majority of parliamentary seats). In 1958, the Christian President's attempt to prolong illegally his term of office provoked a rising that could be suppressed only by the US marines. The presence of the nationalist Palestinians in the state after 1970 was a threat to the security of the Christian bourgeoisie which tried to crush them several times and armed, eventually, Gemayel's Phalange the better to do so. It failed, the Muslim community supported the Palestinians and renewed its demand to reduce Christian political privileges. The Lebanese Army split on communal lines. American imperialism, weakened as an after effect of Vietnam, cannot intervene directly.

The new colonial regime in Syria came to the aid of its overlord: like all the Arab governments, it fears the revolutionary effects of a victory for the Palestinians and their allies. However, the struggle has not been ended finally. The anti-imperialist forces, which includes the Lebanese section of the Fourth International, remain unbeaten. ||

RISE AND FALL

of the

REPUBLICAN CONGRESS

The Republican Congress has proved a political force more potent in death than in life. This is partly because of the heroic end of many of its members in the Spanish Civil War. More effective have been the legends put about by the Stalinites of the C.P.I. who have portrayed it as a classic example of their ideal strategy, the "Popular Front", ruined only by the antics of the "Ultra Left".

In fact the Congress represented merely the most conscious attempt before the 1960s to overcome the political weakness of Republicanism without actually breaking with it. Fianna Fail had been an attempt to do this simply by adopting populist constitutional politics. In 1931, the IRA started the Socialist Republican front, Saor Eire (another evocative name). It was smashed by the Cumann na nGael government with little effective opposition from its own supporters. The Republican Congress was neither subverted nor crushed by its opponents, yet its most positive achievement was to send Irish men to fight against Franco's reactionaries in Spain. Its failure requires more detailed examination than it has been given in Stalinite accounts.

Ireland, what became, in 1933, the second Communist Party was never as much influenced by the ultra-left policies of the Comintern's "Third Period" strategy as were its opposite numbers in other lands. Sean Murray, who became the Secretary of the revived party advised in the drafting of the Saor Eire programme. However, he and his comrades did little to help build it beyond this and tended to act as if they saw themselves as rivals, as distinct from, even short term, allies of, the much larger IRA. His policy caused a large section of the latter to succumb to two complimentary pressures. Many therein had close contact with the membership of Fianna Fail, whose leaders had fought alongside them in the Irish Civil War; with the latter party in government after 1932, they tended to hope for a victorious conclusion to the national struggle with only a minimum of pressure from themselves. At the same time, the Catholic hierarchy, of which the majority disliked the new government, maintained an anti-Communist witch hunt which the IRAS was ill-equipped politically to withstand. Its associated weekly paper, An Phoblacht began to move away from the Socialism of its previous

years and the editor, Frank Ryan, was removed. Many left wingers began to leave the army. Meanwhile, opposition to Fianna Fail's very limited anti imperialist measures began to take on an openly fascist form. From August, 1933, Cumann na nGael was amalgamated with other parties, becoming Fine Gael, under the Fascist leader, Eoin O'Duffy.

In April 1934, Ryan and other left-wing members and ex-members of the IRA, issued a manifesto in Athlone. It called for a Republican Congress to review the political anti-imperialist struggle that the IRA itself was unable to continue. It left open the question of what that Congress would meet to do; would it call for a new, Republican Socialist, political party or for a "United Front" against Fascism, as the C.P.I. urged in giving the manifesto critical support? This ambulance was to prove its undoing.

This Stalinite line had a certain objective justification. Not only did the C.P.I. have a vested interest in stopping a "Socialist Republican" rival to it, but such a rival would probably have been merely an extra source of confusion to the Irish workers' consciousness. However, the circumstances were not ripe for the Stalinites' alternative: a "United Front" of Republicans and Socialists, for the achievement of state power. Such fronts are only possible as between such mass working class parties as did exist in Ireland of the 1930s any more than they do, there, today. (Now, however, the C.P.I. has overcome its own problems, if not those of the working class, by building a "United Front" that includes the "Socialist Republican" Official Sinn Fein). Even to lay the foundations for such a front would require co-operation from the Labour Parties (who had, until recently, been shunned by the C.P.I. as "Social Fascist") and from the I.R.A. (which expelled those of the signatories of the Athlone manifesto that were still within it).

The Republican Congress was, then, under conflicting pressures from the facts of a situation that did not justify a "United Front" and from the C.P.I. which had a clear perspective of such a body. By the end of September 1934, when its founding conference was held in Rathmines, these pressures had intensified. No further Republican grouping affiliated to the Congress. The Fascist threat was weakened, as the majority of Fine Gael's leadership found that it wasn't helping them electorally and expelled O'Duffy and his followers. On the other hand the C.P.I. entered the Congress and intensified the pressure against the original majority that wanted to make it into a party. Between the two blocs was a group headed by Roddy and Norah Connolly who were in the Irish Labour Party and were thus against creating another one, but who supported such a perspective as against the Stalinite emphasis on the slogan of the Republic rather than the Workers' Republic, which

threatened any possibility of Labour affiliation.

At Rathmines the Stalinite line prevailed. It was an empty victory. Those who advocated a Socialist Republican Party left the Congress altogether. The Connollys remained therein but failed to win the Labour Parties to affiliate to the front. For two years the Republican Congress existed as a somewhat expensive periphery of the C.P.I. (including its own paper). In 1935, it tried to expand (in line with contemporary "Popular Front" illusions) by organising joint meetings with members of the rank and file of Fianna Fail, but this was stopped by that party's leadership.

The Spanish Civil War provided a decent way to end the farce. By going to Spain to fight Fascism, Congress members negated the international effect of O'Duffy's recruitment on the other side and did so courageously. In political terms, however, their heroism saved their front's face and helped confuse its actual significance.

Read

inprecor

Information journal of Fourth International

Contributors include, Ernest Mandel, Livio Maitan, Alain Krivine

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