



# SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

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Paper of PEOPLES' DEMOCRACY

## THE DEAL THREE MONTHS ON!



The Loyalist protests against the deal have had their farcical side. We have the RUC, ready at an instant's notice to use plastic and lead bullets against Nationalists, hold up their hands and going 'Now' 'Now' as they try to restrain Loyalist protests. We also have the same sort of process in courts, where Loyalists continually ignore 'their' law and are given new deadlines

and asked to think again. But the darker side is more evident - sectarian killings, the mobilisation of the paramilitaries, the use by Thatcher and Fitzgerald of the Loyalists as justification for increasing repression and the continuing threat of full-scale violence against nationalists - the strike weapon especially targets trade unionists and the Catholic workers who, according to

Dublin and the SDLP, are supposed to be benefiting from the deal.

Why are the Unionists protesting? They held their mass base through Stormont as a 'Protestant parliament for a protestant people' - open state support for discrimination and the use of the state forces as a protestant militia. The minor changes of direct rule led to massive protest, and now they believe that Dublin has the influence and the will to attack their raw bigotry.

The Strike and the 'Ulster says No' banner on workplaces shows the reality of Unionist control over jobs. At the same time statements by RUC Federation representative Alan Wright express the reluctance of RUC members to move from their traditional role of Loyalist militia.

In fact Thatcher and Fitzgerald propose only cosmetic changes. They want to prop up Loyalism but the Loyalists are too bigoted to see this!

Yet they have no real target. For all their threats they are too much creatures of imperialism to seriously fight it. There is a danger that they will lash out at the Nationalist community, but the main thrust of events is for imperialism to use the protests to step up attacks on democratic rights.

Loyalist protest doesn't mean that the Anglo-Irish pact is progressive nor does it mean that Loyalists fulfil a progressive role in opposing imperialism. The dogfight between imperialists, collaborators and Loyalists is not one that can lead to any victory for the Irish people. The task for socialists and republicans is to organise the mass intervention that will bring them all to heel!

# P.D. CONFERENCE



The Febuary conference of Peoples Democracy saw the organisation facing up to whole series of major issues - issues involving the Irish revolutionary movement as a whole and also a reassessment of the role of Peoples Democracy as an independent marxist organisation within that revolutionary movement.

The external crises were clear enough - the new united offensive by British imperialism and Irish capitalism around the Anglo-Irish deal and the associated austerity drives on both parts of the border. Of specific interest to PD was the response - the confusion among the mass of the population, the lack of a coherent leadership able to mobilise the working class in a global fightback and the role of a small marxist organisation in helping to build that leadership and unify the revolutionary forces.

## OUR ROLE

To do this we had to redefine the role of our organisation. Since the period when we spearheaded the Civil Rights agitation of the '60s we had generally seen our role as organising a marxist layer in a broad anti-imperialist movement which, as the political and economic crises became more acute,

would link up with independent leaderships within the working class.

The H-Block struggle forced us to think again. We saw that the organisation of workers within the anti-imperialist movement and the challenge to traditional pro-imperialist leaderships was no easy thing that would occur spontaneously. It would have to be fought for within the workers movement itself.

It was this experience, and discussion of developments within the Fourth International - the worldwide revolutionary marxist organisation to which we belong - that led us over the past three years to 'turn to industry' and try and implant our organisation within the working class movement. This has recorded some successes but it also became clear that we had not fully defined our role or come to terms with programmatic and strategic questions posed. The conference set about re-examining these questions.

## SPLIT

Sadly this re-examination came too late for a minority of our members. They argued that our failure to recruit more new members and past failure to fully develop our political line showed

that there was no longer any role for an independent marxist organisation. They pointed to the move to the left within Sinn Fein and the growth of their political organisation and also to the large sector of H-Block militants who had joined Sinn Fein. Their conclusion was that the place for marxists today is inside Sinn Fein and that Peoples Democracy should be dissolved.

This view was decisively rejected by the delegates. We did not disguise the need to redefine our political positions and strategy but pointed out that we had had to do so in the past and invariably our organisation had been politically strengthened as a result. Despite our difficulties we had been able to develop the only clear and unambiguous analysis of the Anglo-Irish sell-out presented so far.

We pointed out that a foundation of marxism was the need to organise collectively. This doesn't necessarily mean the slavish defence of one political organisation but some method of organisation must be preserved. All our members welcomed and supported the leftward trend in Sinn Fein but argued that while there are quite detailed political debates within Sinn Fein there is no tradition of organisation around a general political program. To abandon this broader need to organise is essentially to abandon the struggle for a marxist program.

Since the conference the six members proposing the dissolution of the organisation have announced their intention of resigning from PD. We deeply regret this - the more so since they outlined no political project or concrete tasks for individual marxists within the Republican movement. Essentially they appeared to believe that a marxist leadership would develop spontaneously inside the Republican movement.

For us however the development of such a leadership for Irish workers will involve a long, complicated process of mass struggles, many of which will be led by the Republican movement. Such struggles will raise new political problems and tasks. We are convinced that marxist will be best placed to deal with these problems in an independent organisation - not as isolated individuals, whatever their fine qualities.

## NEW BEGINNING

This was demonstrated by the discussion at the conference. One fundamental issue debated was the nature of the Irish revolution. Do we look to third world countries like Nicaragua or to the industrialised

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# P.D.- A NEW BEGINNING

countries of Europe? The answer was that Ireland was a country dominated by imperialism but situated within Europe. We could therefore expect that the political struggle against imperialism would be the dominant question but that its expression would be modified by the size of the Irish working class and their expectations. We could learn much from other revolutionary movements but our task as marxists is to uncover the specific and unique elements of the revolution in Ireland. For example, the anti-imperialist struggle must deal with the immediate economic and social struggles of workers and confront the bureaucratic leadership of the mass of Irish workers.

Another issue to be discussed was the idea of a **vanguard** - the politically advanced layers who at a specific time lead the revolutionary movement. The minority argued that the vast majority of these layers was within Sinn Fein. We agreed that this was true of most of the **organised** layers but for from true of all anti-imperialist militants - all one has to do is compare Sinn Fein today to the size and power of the H-Block movement. We also concluded that the vanguard that could lead the revolution to victory had not yet been built. The Republican movement, with its understanding of the central dynamic of the anti-imperialist struggle, was an **essential component**, but also essential was an understanding of the leading role of the working class and of the need to unify **all** the struggles of the oppressed in one mass struggle.

## OUR ROAD FORWARD

In these debates our members were re-stating a central truth about marxist understanding. Unlike Republican consciousness or Trade Union consciousness it does not spring directly from our experience as militants in the struggle. It has to be learnt. Yet it is no dry formula, but the living experience of generations of workers across the world. Applied by a collective organisation it is a uniquely powerful tool for analysing the problems of the revolution and mapping a road forward.

It would be impossible to adequately summarise in one article two days of debate which covered many of the major questions of the Irish struggle and the international revolutionary struggle. For the members of PD the conference debate advance their understanding and ability to intervene in struggle. Despite the difficulties of a small organisation and of the split confidence was renewed that marxist politics were vital to the future of the Irish revolution. Too many mass

struggles in the past have been defeated by lack of political clarity. Fighting for our program is our best way of ensuring that the same fate does not befall the present struggle. Future progress can only come through developing our ideas and winning new members. Thus the conference outlined

some key tasks; developing our propaganda through the production of a journal, centering activity around a response to the Anglo-Irish deal - and last but not least a drive to recruit. That's why we ask those who agree with our analysis to join - **NOW!**

## LOYALIST DAY OF ACTION

One thing is overwhelmingly clear in the aftermath to the Loyalist one-day strike in the North. That is that the Anglo-Irish deal contains no commitment to shackle the Orange monster created by imperialism.

That monster was on display to the eyes of the world. Bigotry and intimidation weren't incidentals in a mainly peaceful protest. They were the central elements of the stoppage. And all the ballyhoo and bluster about impartial policing went out the window as the RUC took up their traditional role as an Orange militia.

However condemnation of the RUC or of the prominent role in intimidation by UDR members should not blind us to British policy. There was a clear decision to keep troops in barracks and allow the Loyalist thugs free rein. The intention of the Anglo-Irish deal is to preserve Orange supremacy - not to confront it.

The Loyalist mobs did face one real challenge. That was from the large 'back to work' movement that arose spontaneously from ordinary trade unionists and nationalist workers. Despite the beating and the threats they did record victories - in one incident motorists enraged at the intimidation of midwife on her way to visit a patient advanced on a barricade and the RUC moved in - to protect the Loyalists! the road wasn't long in opening.

This movement did organise on a workplace and community level but they faced a total lack of leadership. Shamefully Terry Carlin of NICTU found it easier to criticise the right to strike in general rather than the Loyalist reaction that fueled this one - and he wasn't leading any back to work marches.

The Republican movement warned of the danger of Loyalist attack but didn't raise the need to deal with the political offensive that the strike represented and the need to carry the fight to the workplaces.

Dublin have maintained a grim silence. After initial screams of protest the SDLP have joined them. Further debate about the role of the British and the RUC will only show how little they count for and thus the real extent of the Anglo-Irish betrayal.

This issue isn't finished. Molyneux may have stepped back from Loyalist violence, but the events of the day of action make it impossible for him and Paisley to negotiate. The Orange thugs, having tasted power, will want to try again.

Tom King has said '**We shall not be moved**', but in fact there has been nothing but movement from the British and we can expect further attacks on the rights of the majority of Irish people. The SDLP's role was vividly illustrated by the details of the secret discussions with unionists. In John Hume's words '**nothing is ruled out**' - and cabinet seats for the SDLP seem to be enough to involve them in discussion.

It's time the majority of Irish workers organised against this - by organising a back to work movement, by protesting the pattern of job discrimination that gives the Orange hold over industry in the North, by protesting trade union inaction and unwillingness to confront loyalism and by organising trade unionists in the South. London and Dublin will look now towards even further appeasement of Loyalism. We should be constructing the working class power that can break it - and them.

# THE BY-ELECTIONS

The January 23rd by-elections in the North can hardly be said to have advanced Loyalist plans to derail the Anglo-Irish deal. The Orange vote was not substantially different from that of the last general election and fell 80,000 short of the 500,000 target - and the loss of the Newry/Armagh seat did not bring any smiles to Unionist faces. However the fall in the Sinn Fein vote was a clear set-back for the anti-imperialist movement. We can't ignore this. We need a balance-sheet if we are to advance and overthrow the the Anglo-Irish betrayal.

What are the facts? The total Sinn Fein share of the Nationalist vote fell from 46% in 1983 to 35% in January - a decline of 11%. In the same period the SDLP vote rose 11% from 54% to 65%. This picture is seen in each of the four constituencies contested - a fall in the Republican vote and a corresponding rise in the SDLP vote. This is very far from a collapse of the Republican vote and indicates the willingness of a major segment of the Northern nationalists to fight on but it is a significant erosion and a boost for the SDLP at a time when they were involved in their greatest ever betrayal. Since then Fitzgerald and Thatcher have not been slow to use the result to justify the Anglo-Irish deal and the increasing repression.

## THE EXPLANATION

Sinn Fein have advanced a number of explanations for the result. It was due to: **"the lack of a [Sinn Fein / SDLP] pact...tactical voting...Nationalist abstention...Alliance Party supporters voting SDLP"**. These sorts of comments in An Phoblacht/Republican News don't even address the problem. Rather they show the dangers of electoralism within the Republican Movement itself.

Elections by themselves won't change the nature of the state. For revolutionaries there has to be a plan that uses the elections to draw the mass of the population into action. Recent Sinn Fein elections haven't had this, and the tasks of organising elections, votes and constituency work can become things in themselves, divorced from the struggle, and encouraging the sort of routine and mechanical explanations given for this election result.

What elections are is an opportunity to **explain** to the masses the issues facing workers and an opportunity to **organise** around the major issues of the class struggle. There's no doubt about

what the issue was in these elections - the Anglo-Irish deal.

## FACING FACTS

Sinn Fein didn't face up to this. Firstly they opposed the deal while claiming that concessions won come from Republican struggle - there aren't any concessions and this simply caused confusion. Secondly they said that this wasn't the issue in the elections - anti-unionist unity was. Thirdly they built their campaign around unity with the SDLP - a unity which the SDLP rejected in the first days of the campaign.

All of this was wrong. There are no concessions and unity is only relevant in terms of opposition to the deal. The SDLP having taken the decisive step of actively supporting partition and the British presence, were not likely to unite against it, and suggesting unity blurred the issues for SDLP and republican voters.

## H\_BLOCK CAMPAIGN

In order to develop a new strategy for Socialists and Republicans we need to examine the lessons of the H-Block campaign. Demands were put on the SDLP to support the prisoners. Pressure generated by this offensive, with a mass movement growing in all 32 counties, forced the SDLP to abstain in the Bobby Sands election campaign. In areas where bourgeois politicians openly opposed the prisoners, they were thrown out of office - for example Gerry Fitt in Belfast.

This was a major step forward for Republicans. In the 1970's they were content to denounce the SDLP and the capitalist parties as traitors, ignore the need to break the SDLP's base, and insist that armed struggle alone would win.

## THE MASS MOVEMENT

This step forward was consolidated by Sinn Fein's subsequent electoral offensive. It was described as the **'ballot-box and armalite'**. Unfortunately another element was left out - mobilising the masses. The longer the mass movement was demobilised, the more Sinn Fein were going to face problems. The high tide of the electoral advance was in June 1983. In the two subsequent polls - the EEC elections in 1984 and the local elections in 1985 - Sinn Fein's electoral advance was frozen. Now the by-elections show a decline. We have in fact seen the end of the electoral momentum generated by the H-Block/Armagh campaign. There is no way forward outside of rebuilding

the mass movement and facing head-on the SDLP collaborators and their allies in Leinster House.

Sinn Fein's decision to stand in these elections was a correct one. It would have been wrong to boycott the elections in the face of a challenge by Hume. That would have been a retreat to the apolitical Me Fein position of the 1970's. Also they were correct to try and put the SDLP on the spot. However to do this successfully we must put forward transitional proposals which will win the support of SDLP supporters and bring forward the struggle. Here the republicans fell down. There unity proposals put no conditions at all on the SDLP leadership.

## ACTION NOW

Before the election PD argued for a united electoral program that linked opposition to repression with opposition to the Anglo-Irish deal. This would have had the advantage of mobilising independent support beyond the Republican movement itself, dividing SDLP support and clearly separating the SDLP leadership from the resistance struggle.

This proposal wasn't taken up. Yet these issues and the need for a balance-sheet can't be left to the next elections. We need to organise **now** - and that means that Socialists and Republicans have to put forward a clear and unambiguous message, to fight the SDLP and the Dublin collaborators tooth and nail build a broader unity on which an all-Ireland movement, involving the majority of the Irish working class, can be constructed. In the medium term the Anglo-Irish deal **will** be put to a real electoral test in the next, 26-county general election. We need to be united and organised in action and to have developed a common program which lays out the broad details of the real alternative - a United Ireland!



# HUMANE BLUESHIRTS



The closing months of 1985 and the early part of this year provided the Irish people with two related 'big events'. The first was the signing of the Hillsborough Agreement in November amid a storm of ballyhoo, while January brought us Des O'Malley's shining new party, the Progressive Democrats.

The unveiling of both had more to do with marketing techniques and manipulation of the media than providing political solutions for the vast majority of the Irish people.

## MEDIA

The media played no small part in the recruitment drive of the Progressive Democrats and in building O'Malley's weekly rallies. They drew thousands of the discontented middle class, who listened attentively to the 'Messiah' who was going to lead them to the 'promised land'. O'Malley undertook to 'break the mould' in Irish politics and move away from 'Civil war politics'. In fact what the new party has done is declared its position on the unresolved political issues which gave rise to the civil war and which, unfortunately for them, will not go away while Ireland remains partitioned and unfree.

O'Malley and his fellow defectors from Fianna Fail used their disagreement with Haughey on the Anglo-Irish agreement as one of the main planks of the new party. Haughey has all the hallmarks of traditional Fianna Fail leaders - long on Nationalist rhetoric and green flag-waving. This fear of even the rhetoric of nationalism speaks legions about the politics of the Progressive Democrats.

## CAPITALIST BANKRUPTCY

The vast majority of Irish capitalists view Haughey's rhetoric as equivalent to waving a match in a barrel of gunpowder. They want to use the Anglo-Irish deal to dampen down nationalist aspirations. But Fianna Fail populism has the support of workers. The role of the Progressive Democrats is to split that support, so they have come up with a new populism - criticising the deal as too hard on our Loyalist brethren and linking divorce and contraception, which should be rights in themselves, to support for partition. The last thing that Haughey wants is a real debate about these issues, so he retreats at once.

The aspiration for Political independence is coming under such heavy fire

because economic independence is non-existent. Irish workers faced harsh austerity and massive tax hikes in the last budget because they have to pay two masters - their own capitalist class and then the multi-nationals that they service. O'Malley takes up the issue of tax - but not against his imperialist masters - the workers are to pay yet again through dismantling what little there is of a welfare state.

## 'HUMANE' BLUESHIRTS

This is very much reminiscent of the heady opposition days of Fine Gael, when 'Garret the good' set about reorganising his party. In today's Coalition we see the contradiction that these policies present in government, with Fine Gael trailing the Progressive Democrats in the opinion polls, for implementing the very policies that O'Malley wins popularity for expounding! Maybe the middle class feel O'Malley will be more successful than Fitzgerald at cutting wages and services - certainly his party has agreed with the Coalition on all these issues while attacking them for not applying the policies in 'a humane and sensitive manner'.

## COVER

The new party serves a very useful function at the moment. Pressure from them gives the cover that the other parties need to push support for austerity and collaboration. They would serve as a useful watchdog of Fianna Fail in coalition. But the thought of Them in power simply shows how absurd their policies are and their failure to win working-class support lift the bright public relations cover and you get the same old policies. A determined fightback by workers and republicans would make them a liability and split the most reactionary elements between them and Fine Gael.

## LEADERSHIP

The other side of the coin is however the crisis of leadership in the working class and anti-imperialist movement. Whatever bourgeois combination we are faced with in the coming period, it's our ability to build a socialist and anti-imperialist alternative that's important. Peoples Democracy's Limerick councillor, Joe Harrington, has shown on a local level that broad working-class forces can be organised. We need to repeat this success in all 32 counties if we are propose the real solution to the crisis - a United Ireland controlled by and organised in the interests of working people.

# REALITY OF THE ANGLO-IRISH DEAL

The aftermath of the signing of the Anglo-Irish deal has been dominated by Unionist protest, Unionist reaction, unionist threats and unionist sectarianism. These threats have had their effect. Thatcher, Fitzgerald and and finally Hume and Mallon have rushed to the table to make concessions. In the process the cosmetic overlay of promised 'reforms' has evaporated and the bare bones of repression on which deal is constructed have show through.

The continued pleas with Loyalists to "read what the agreement actually says" not having been enough, the various leaders have gone on to spell out in detail the reality of the deal. It means Dublin support for partition and Unionist rule in the North and a 32-county offensive against republicanism. The sectarian laws in the North will be recognised throughout Ireland with the signing of the extradition deal and in the process the 26-county constitution and the basis of any political independence will be quietly set aside.

## DUBLIN'S ROLE

We don't have to rely on words alone to see the role of Dublin and the SDLP. We have three months of their actions also. These consist of:

### ★ Daily condemnation of Republican resistance and support for British oppression.

This hasn't been restricted to condemnation of the military actions of republicans but embraces all resistance activity. Hume and Barry had no hesitation in condemning the hunger strike against the Diplock courts and informer trials and more recently Brian Feeney of the SDLP has urged on the British to further cuts of funds to community groups supported by republicans.

★ Changes in Southern society to defend in perialist interests - permanent check-points, a new 'Heavy gang' and now the signing of an extradition treaty that overthrows the constitution and further erodes the remnants of Irish neutrality in the direction of European militarism.

★ Support for unionism and partition. Fitzgerald has reached the stage where he boasts of the repression as signifying the success of the agreement and calls for a return to Stormont. Hume is not far behind, saying that while the SDLP would 'like' to have power-sharing he is willing to open unconditional talks with the unionists.

### ★ Bluster about the mechanism of the agreement to cover their total lack of power.

Where British imperialism lashes out - the recent UDR ambush of civilians or the SAS murder of Francis Bradley - Dublin calls for a report. Britain is happy to oblige, knowing that nothing has changed and that the killers will stay on the streets.

## CONFUSION

So why is there still confusion about the deal among many Irish workers? One reason is a general lack of understanding about the depth of British determination to stay here. Many

believe that this has been eroded by the struggle of the Northern nationalists. It's true that this has been sufficient to

destabilise British rule, but their political, economic and strategic interests are so great that it would take a mass rebellion by the majority of the Irish people, involving mass participation by the working class, to force them out.

Another source of confusion is illusions in the Irish capitalist class. They still have the support of Irish workers because of their claim to stand for Irish unity and independence. In fact this class is totally bankrupt and dependent on imperialism. They support this deal not because it is a step on the road to unity but because they have a subordinate role in the overall imperialist domination of this island.

## BRITAIN'S PLAN

Britain's plan is for the restructuring and rationalisation of Irish society in the interests of imperialism. This

means an end to all democratic rights, dividing the working class and preserving Loyalism - Britain's policeman in Ireland.

That's why economic developments can't be divorced from the deal. Preserving capitalism means savage cuts on both sides of the border, tax hikes, and begging for US dollars which will be used to 'rationalise' the economy and produce more poverty and unemployment. It also means an end to neutrality and integration into NATO's war drive.

## BETRAYAL

So, 70 years after the Easter proclamation, Irish capitalism has finally freed itself from the shackles of

its history. That's why the Thatcher-style Progressive Democrats split from Fianna Fail at the first sign of even mild criticism of the Anglo-Irish deal and have now linked their support for Unionism with an austerity drive in the South.

This offensive against the basic aspirations of the Irish people represents a fundamental threat to socialists and republicans, but it also represents a challenge and an opportunity to mobilise Irish workers in the struggle for freedom.

This means rebuilding the unity of the H-Block campaign and mounting a mass campaign against the collaboration. It means discussions to build a freedom charter that restates the ideals of 1916 and refutes the distortions of the Foran report and the Anglo-Irish sell-out. We need to go beyond the call for a United Ireland to spell out in detail how this represents the only real alternative to the poverty, misery and oppression that exists today. It means organising among workers and Trade Unionists to link the fight against the cuts with the struggle for unity and independence. Republican electoralism in the by-elections has not proved useful in the fight against the deal, but the idea of a freedom charter could be used as the basis of a common slate to mount an overall electoral challenge to Irish capitalism in all 32 counties.

## SEMINAR

In order to develop these ideas Peoples Democracy is organising a National Seminar in Dublin in April to commemorate 70 years of the Proclamation and to begin discussions on making the principles of the Proclamation a living reality in Ireland today. Invitations will be sent to organisations, but individuals wishing to attend and contribute to this discussion should contact our branches addresses on page four.

