



the PLOUGH

TOWARDS AN IRISH WORKERS REPUBLIC

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DUBLIN SHOP STEWARDS MUST FIGHT PRICES

The present lull, following the acceptance of the 3rd National Wage Agreement by a two-thirds majority of the trade union movement, if not overcome with decisive action by the Dublin Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committee could in fact lead to a general decline and disintegration of the committee.

A central factor in the emergence and growth

of the committee, the now ratified N.W.A. is still very much a focus for the committee. But the manner in which the committee can attack the N.W.A. is in the present context quite different from the "Vote No" campaign of two months ago. Despite the massive restrictions imposed on trade unionists certain sections are attempting to take up the struggle right on the

shop-floor. The recent strike of Corporation workers was a reflection of this desire to fight. A determining factor in the possible success of all these struggles is the solidarity given to all these strikers. Here, the Dublin Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committee has partially realised its role. But their intervention in these sporadic strikes will not be enough to give

the committee the stability it needs. This instability is partially caused by the fragmented structure and bureaucratic nature of the trade unions. Solidarity has been forged

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BRITISH TROOPS TO PULL OUT?

ONLY STRUGGLE WILL DECIDE!

It has been known for some time that faith in the Sunningdale Agreement is declining. What is now becoming clear is that many of the parties to the agreement want either to abandon it altogether or seriously modify it.

THE FAULKNERITES

The Faulknerite Unionists are also reconsidering the whole question of Sunningdale. Since the Wilson-Cosgrave summit there has been major tensions in the Faulkner camp. Roy Bradford, the most important figure among the Faulknerites apart from Faulkner himself, wants to unite with the official Unionists and kill the Council of Ireland by stages.

Even the Alliance Party, while formerly accepting the agreement, has stiffened its preconditions for acceptance. The Free State government has been criticised for not carrying out its side of the bargain viz a viz repression of Republicans. And the party leader, Oliver Napier, attributed the precarious state of the Assembly Executive to the failure of the Southern government to recognise the constitutional position of the North.

The shift of opinion among "moderate" Unionists is confirmed by the outcome of the Anglo-Irish Law Commission. The Faulknerite representatives dug their heels in on the implementation of extradition thereby putting obstacles in the way of ratifying Sunningdale.

STRUGGLE!

A temporary short term settlement inevitably means finding some formula which will permit a capitulation to the Loyalists. Any such formula will mean an acceleration of repression against the Catholic minority. Already the British Labour government has initiated this process through increasing arrests, sealing off Catholic areas etc. Parallel with this the para-military Loyalists have been



given a freer hand as the resumption of the anti-Catholic bombing campaign varifies.

While all this happens the SDLP continues to tie the hands of the Catholic working class. Because there is no effective opposition to them they have so far been successful. Most of the revolutionary organisations seem to imagine that the Catholic minority will suddenly awaken

and renew their unanimous support for the democratic and anti-imperialist struggle. They persist in their dogmatic and isolated politics, treating the central task of mobilising the Catholic community as a side-line activity. This mistake must be corrected - only a massive struggle by the Catholic working class can bring down Stormont and open the road to a united, socialist Ireland.

THE BRITS

The surest indication of this came from the new British Labour government. The Labour Minister for Defence, Roy Mason, threatened that British troops could be withdrawn in the near future. His statement caused a furor and Mr. Wilson and Merlyn Rees later reaffirmed that British troops would remain until "peace" returned to the North. But senior ministers with so much responsibility do not make such obvious blunders on such delicate matters! Mason undoubtedly reflects British Labour Party thinking on this issue. At any rate since British Labour took office there has been considerable rearrangement of troop deployments. Republican Intelligence sources claim that some companies have disappeared in the process.

The growing crisis of British capitalism makes it impossible for a British government to work out a long term strategy for a permanent settlement in Ireland that could have a reasonable chance of success. The actions of the British Labour Party indicates that it is seriously considering a short term solution, regardless of the ultimate consequence, which would free its hand to act in Britain before returning to impose a final solution in Ireland.

R.M.G. STUDENT VICTIMISED AT OXFORD

On 29th March 18 students, including 1 member of the Revolutionary Marxist Group, Irish Section of the Fourth International and 9 other members of left-wing organisations were suspended for one year by the disciplinary court of Oxford University. This sentence was imposed on them because they had occupied the Indian Institute at the University, as part of the current agitation to gain the British National Union of Students demand for

the Establishment of a Central Students Union in the University. Irish University students are more used to this lack than are many British comrades of the Oxford 18. In most of the newer colleges this very minimal claim which demand that students should have their own control over at least part of their academic environment has always been recognised by their Universities. Here among other things it has yet to be achieved. In Ireland

especially because of the internal dynamic such demands raise the Government and university authorities are also unwilling to grant such concessions easily.

In Oxford the university is dominated by a hidebound academic bureaucracy. It is not coincidental that one of our comrades should be disciplined for fighting in Oxford the same battle that our student comrades are fighting here.

HOW CORPORATION WORKERS WERE DEFEATED

This article is based on an interview with a striking militant of the A.U.E.W. in the recent Corporation strike at Stanley Street.

When the strike of Corporation workers ended, there were in reality only forty men still holding out. Members of the Vehicle Builders Union, the Sheet Metal Workers Union and the A.U.E.W.

had been on strike since the 13th of February, exactly 9 weeks. The 9 other unions had agreed by an aggregate vote to accept the deal offered by the Corporation. The militants remaining on strike had decided "in the interests of trade unionism and solidarity" to return themselves. As far as these men were concerned the holding of an aggregate vote was a tactic (by the T.U. Officials involved) to draw in even those who were scabbing on the strike and use them in the vote against the militants.

As the strike progressed, the T.U. officials were extremely anxious to end it, so in contrast to the first two offers, where ALL the unions voted individually, they called for an aggregate vote on the 3rd Offer. It is obvious in whose interests the aggregate vote was!

The role of the T.U. officials was scathingly outlined to us by some of the men involved in the strike. "If the union officials put as much energy into fighting the management for the mens claim, as they did trying to fight and put down the militants on strike; i.e. through an aggregate vote, then the men on strike could have won their claim".

As far as these strikers are concerned, the strike was an embarrassment to the officials, many of whom "have perks with the job". It would not do for the executive of Congress to be upset or displeased with these officials. Particularly criticised were the executives of the N.E.E.T.U. and the E.T.U., who went "to get their knuckles rapped" (to Congress) and returned to the men, helpless with an ultimatum - return to work! Now! The executives of these unions,

the men claimed, were playing a wait and see game. Not wishing to pursue a course directly contrary to the wishes of Congress, they did not want to put themselves out of favour with the strikers. The main priority of these T.U. officials, of most of the unions was "to get the strikers back to work, thereby suting the needs of the management and not the men, they collaborated, not negotiated with the bosses; the right of the men to better wages, was never their main interest".

Out of ONE union ALONE, 60 men went sick, during the strike! The initial strikers estimate, roughly that there were about 400 workers scabbing directly and 250 who went "sick". This is extremely annoying and

the fact that the sacrifice of 350 men, secured a deal that benefits the whole 1000 men.

When asked about the type of picketing they undertook, the strikers, drew attention to the structure of the Corporation depots i.e. the fact that there are about 1000 doors to be covered. Vaster areas could have been covered had they the pickets. On Ballymun in particular, they assert, was a legitimate place to picket, it is a place of WORK. The pickets were lifted at the request of the tenants associations, but subsequently the strikers found that private trucks were breaking the strike by removing rubbish heaps etc. An unofficial agreement between the tenants and the pickets that they the tenants would march to City Hall in support

of the strike was never carried out, thus leaving the pickets quite bitter.

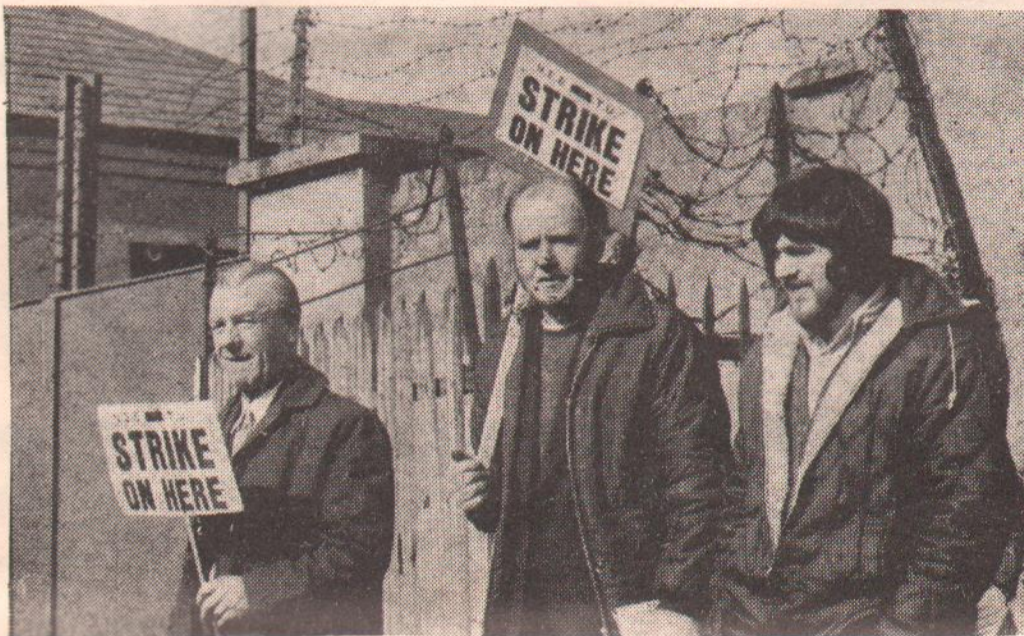
The strike culminated with the acceptance of a new pay scale, to be paid fortnightly to the workers. No measures of increased productivity were agreed to. The new scale was not the same as the ESB workers scale, which formed the claim, but was considered a general improvement.

The strikers are grateful for the assistance of the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee, but consider it could have been stronger in terms of greater collections etc. However they are extremely critical of those "who passed the unofficial pickets initially, who are known to be members of organisations supposedly formed in the interests of the working class; where does the loyalty of these workers lie when the acid test comes, they scab!"

What the account of the strike seen through the eyes of these men clearly shows is the scandalous role of the trade union bureaucrats and of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions who urged workers to pass pickets. Justifying their directives by a reference to the two-tier picket system and the whole national wage agreement, they are in fact carrying the logic of such agreements to their logical conclusions - complete refusal to fight against the employers in defence of the workers interests.

The course of this strike, the ultimate isolation of the initial strikers, clearly proves the absolute necessity for real and active solidarity not just pious platitudes. Solidarity across the trade union movement will strengthen the struggle of the rank and file against both the bureaucrats and the employers.

ANNE SPEED



ROLLER BEARING WORKERS FIGHT FOR TRADE UNION RIGHTS

The workers of Roller Bearing in Cratloe, Co. Clare have been on strike since March 21st. During the course of the strike the Company have attempted to break the picket line by getting the Gardai to remove the strikers from the gate and by encouraging Company scabs to assault the striking workers. The company, which is American owned is managed by Sam Gizzi and it has been open since April 1973. It produces roller bearings for the export market.

The following interview with one of the militants in the struggle was obtained by the Limerick Branch of the R.M.G.

Question: What is the background to the present dispute?

MILITANT: Basically the strike is about getting

between the Estate and Limerick we could catch a bus if we knocked off at 12.

We didn't see anything unreasonable about our request for management to change the evening shift hours to fall in line with the Shannon factories. It is because of this and the need to defend our rights that we are for a union.

QUESTION: Did the Company try to victimise the workers who were trying to organise a union.

MILITANT: Yes. As I said before the firm was dead against having a union and they sacked a couple of the workers who wouldn't accept the company's right to treat us like cattle.

QUESTION: Are all the workers on strike?

MILITANT: No. Some of the workers are scabbing, but those who want a union are out on strike.

QUESTION: You mentioned before the interview that some of the picketers were beaten up by scabs. Could you tell me about that incident?

MILITANT: Two of the lads were on picket duty

QUESTION: Is there much sympathy with the strike?

MILITANT: Since the attack on the picketers by the thugs we distributed a simple leaflet explaining what is happening at Roller Bearings. We have found that Limerick workers are very sympathetic when they hear that management is encouraging scabs to attack us. Workers in the post office, engineers, the Clothing Factory and in some of the local garages are collecting money for us. Also the local farmers are sympathetic and they have been very friendly and helpful.

QUESTION: What union are you members of, and is the strike an official one.

MILITANT: We are in the I.T.G.W.U. No the strike is not official and we are receiving no strike pay. Bashford, the ITGWU man, keeps informing us that he will make the strike official but all we get are promises. We would like the Union to back us up fully.

QUESTION: How do you see future developments?

MILITANT: In order to keep the fight going and to keep up our morale we need solidarity and financial assistance from the workers of Limerick. Weekly collections in factories in the Limerick and Shannon areas would be a great help to us. Unless we get solidarity we will become isolated and Hackett and his gang will think that they have a free hand to deal with us. It is a bad thing that scabs can attack picketers and get away with it. If one firm is able to break a strike with violence others will try the same trick.

I think myself that a support committee of Limerick and Shannon workers should be set up to build up solidarity with us. That way support of us would be better organised. If this committee was effective the scabs at Roller Bearings would be unwise to continue looking on trade unionists as handy punch bags.

INTIMIDATION BY SCABS FAILS

a Union recognised in Roller Bearings. But when we approached the management over this they didn't want to know anything about a union in the factory. Because of the stubborn attitude of management we decided to go on strike. We had no other course of action to take but to withdraw our labour. The strike has been going on for six weeks now.

QUESTION: Why do you and the other workers on strike feel so strongly about having a union in Roller Bearings.

MILITANT: Because of the bad working conditions there. For instance the hours of our evening shift are from 4.30 p.m. to 1 o'clock the following morning. Because there is no public transport services at that time of the night anyone who hasn't got a car has to walk five miles back to Limerick if he has his home in Limerick. The normal hours for an evening shift in the Shannon Industrial Estate are from 4 p.m. to 12 midnight and CIE lays on buses for anyone working there. Because our factory is half way

and eight scabs led by TONY HACKETT, he lives in GARRYOWEN and PADDY MURPHY from Farranshane came along and beat them up.

These company thugs have frequent meetings with the management. We have no proof that HACKETT and the others are being told by management to beat us up but they are being told that we are endangering their jobs. This is a deliberate attempt by the firm to build up the scabs resentment against us and this had led to violence being used against us. In fact while one of the strikers was walking through Limerick one of the scabs tried to kick him. But the eejit missed and the scab got the worst of it.

QUESTION: How effective are the pickets in stopping supplies entering the factory?

MILITANT: Well most lorry drivers won't pass the line. The drivers delivering oil to the factory won't pass the picket and the Company has to send the scabs into Limerick by car to get oil. The only person who passes our picket is the local postman.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

with workers in struggle, but this has tended to be very limited. It is an obvious necessity for DSS & RFC to bridge the many chasms of the T.U. movement in order to extend and strengthen solidarity and build a strong rank and file movement.

Many workers do not immediately relate to other striking workers. Not understanding and realising the internal dynamic of many strikes, they are slow to react to forms of agitation directed at them, in search of solidarity.

A very apparent and immediate approach can be made to this milieu of trade union militants. Highly aware of the growing rate of inflation and the ensuing impoverishment of the working class, the question of the rising level of prices has been uppermost in many working class homes. The demand for "A sliding scale of wages with a National Minimum Wage" accepted by the last conference of the Committee is an indication of this awareness.

The committee must pursue this interest with vigour and immediately initiate a "Prices Campaign"; a campaign to demand and end to the present soaring rate of prices. The decision of the political parties of the ruling class, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael to make 'prices' the centre of their local election campaigns in June 1974 will only add momentum to any initiatives of the committee. It is also imperative that the lies of these bodies be exposed to the workers. Indeed such a campaign can only strengthen, extend and thoroughly ratify the demands of the committee.

The campaign could be built around such activities as: Publishing Bulletins of Price Increases. Distribution these around T.U. meetings, Tenants Associations, Supermarkets etc.; Arranging public meetings outside shopping complexes with leading militants.

The campaign could be extended with the formation of committees of trade unionists and housewives on a more permanent basis who would carry on the campaign over a long period

The campaign would not be taken up in the abstract, as the subject of rising prices is a real vital one for all workers. The opportunity to take the lead exists, the DS & RFC must grasp it now!

ANNE SPEED
BUTCH ROCHE

BRITISH LABOUR USES TORY POLICY

Increasing internment, British Army raids and a generalised stepping up in the harassment of the anti-unionist population in the North, have been the results of the British Labour Government's continuation of the policies initiated by the Conservatives.

Ex-Squadron Leader Merlyn Rees has settled into office and is getting down to the serious business of governing the six counties — over 40 newly interned, promised extension of the Emergency Provisions Act, and new restrictions imposed on entrance and exit of anti-unionist areas in Belfast.

Rees has entered the stage of six county politics in much the same manner as Whitlow two years previously: first with the "carrot" of promises designed to seduce further wearied or reformist elements of the anti-unionist population from the resistance campaign; secondly with the "stick" of military repression combining both selective harassment with general restrictions on the liberty of the whole anti-unionist people, in a frontal assault on resistance.

The imbalance of British policy is obvious — a loyalist military group is legalised after two months stated ceasefire, yet all republican armed groups, including the Officials with their two year's of ceasefire, remain illegal.

By this decision the British government has again shown that the imperialist power cannot afford to move against the sections of the population upon which its domination depends.

A further aspect of the package was the expression of the intention to extend the Emergency Provisions Act. This Act, as iniquitous as the Special Powers Act it replaces, gives the RUC and BA virtually free hands to lift, detain and keep for unlimited periods.

A few days after these announcements the intention of the British government to seal off anti-unionist areas, New Lodge Road, Upper Falls and Short Strand, with special eight foot high barriers giving limited access to and from the zones. Whitelaw had Motorman as his act of appeasement to the Loyalist reaction when he smashed by military force the defences of the anti-unionist areas, now Rees had stepped up repression with the same aim by penning in the same areas.

The campaign of loyalist assassinations and sectarian attacks on anti-unionist areas was ignored by the British government, Tory and Labour. The British Army adopted a policy of looking the other way, sometimes literally when attacks were made within sight of their observation posts or check points. Again it was an example of the reluctance of Imperialism to move against what is in effect its base among the general population. The Loyalist terrorists were in any case, objectively helping British imperialism in its attempts to demoralise the resistance campaign. The SAS even participated in attacks.

But it is not sufficient to list the repression and to state that the Labour Government is following the strategy of the Tories, for the nature of the Labour Party will play a crucial role in the coming months.

Their strategy at present is in essence that of the Tories — devoted to preserving the Assembly and stabilising Ireland under the nominal control of the Southern Government and in the North, the SDLP and Faulknerite Unionists. It is a strategy supported by direct military repression, internment and the repressive legislation of the Emergency Provisions Act in the North, the Offences Against the State Act in the South.

SDLP COLLABORATORS

In the final analysis the British Labour Party serves the interests of the ruling class but it remains responsive to the demands of the working class; to pose as defenders of that class and as an alternative to mass action to put a brake on the struggles of the workers and contain them within capitalism.

This naturally creates tensions within the Labour Party, tensions greater than those within the Tory party, for it is not a homogenous grouping. Labour comprises elements from a wide spectrum of the labour movement. The internal stresses caused by these two inter related factors has been expressed in a countless wranglings within the Labour Party on major elements of policy throughout its history. Recently this has included the issue of nationalisation — but in the future it could include Ireland.

While official policy has been bi-partisanship, a number of Labour MPs have called into question the imperialist role in Ireland. James Wellbeloved has long held such a position and has recently been calling for a full inquiry into the Littlejohn and Lennon affairs, linking the two, and examining the activities of the special branch and security forces in both matters.

Recently Marcus Lipton has added his voice to a growing groundswell of opinion with the Party calling for the withdrawal of the British Army.

These are trends which will grow under the pressure of a resistance to Imperialism which can be shown to be of mass proportions — that the major section of the anti-unionist working

class rejects British domination.

In this context, Rees is on the right of the Labour Party, his second in command, Stanley Orme, more to the left. Orme, a close confidant of the SDLP, is thus placed as the right man to wring concessions from the SDLP, to make deals with them, and to understand their position in attempting to sell the British strategy to the anti-unionist people.

Reaction of SDLP

The present repression of the new Government has caused little reaction to the official line of the SDLP.

On the treatment of the Winchester Nine, they say nothing, on increasing internment — nothing; on BA raids — nothing; on further inroads into general liberty — nothing; on the extension of the Emergency Provisions Act — nothing. But on the rent and rates strike Austin Currie has called for it to be ended — he says the time for resistance has passed.

This spontaneous protest against internment by the working class was eagerly seized by the SDLP in 1971 when in order to retain any credibility it was forced to strike a radical pose. Today internment continues, the justification and the importance of the continuation of the rent and rates strike continues, but the position of the SDLP has changed.

The SDLP now has the backing of British Imperialism and is not under pressure from an anti-unionist working class united in struggle against repression.

The immediate future of the SDLP depends

on the success of the Assembly and Sunningdale. The SDLP is striving for the maximum demobilisation of the anti-unionist working class, despite continuing British Army repression. Loyalist intransigence means that the only real room for manoeuvre by Imperialism lies on the fragmented, wearied anti-unionist side. The SDLP is contributing to the attempt to lull Loyalists into acceptance of the British strategy by refusing to counter state violence or to encourage any form of opposition from anti-unionists. In this the SDLP are skating on thin political ice, for silence on such repression is a risky business. Militants in the North must apply the heat to sink Fitt and Co. This can be done by explaining the role of the SDLP and by building a movement which can present a force to oppose repression, thus outflanking the SDLP.

Need for maximum unity

It is for this that the maximum unity of forces opposed to repression is crucial.

A lead in this has been shown in County Derry with the creation of the anti-Internment Co-ordinating Committee. This includes both wings of Sinn Fein, Kevin Street and Gardiner Place, NICRA and the local PHRC and Association for Legal Justice as well as a number of other organisations.

It is the duty of all organisations opposing repression to unite on such a basis, behind demands for the ending of internment and of repression.

In Belfast the PHRC provides a basis for such

a unity. But this unity must not be expressed in simple fronts between organisations, for the central task is the involvement of the people in the resistance struggle, and to combat the weariness and disorientation of the anti-unionist working class. Local resistance committees must be developed in areas, committees such as the PHRC's in the New Lodge and Ardoyne in Belfast.

Political groups under the auspices of fronts such as the PHRC or the anti-Internment Co-ordinating Committee must attempt to develop such local bodies.

The people in anti-unionist areas who are opposed to repression must actively support such bodies where they exist or build them if they do not, with like minded people and pressure local political groups to participate.

Local committees, agitating and protesting in their areas, linked with united movements are the key to the anti-imperialist struggle.

Unity in the fronts is essential, as is unity between the fronts, for the organisation of co-ordinated campaigns.

The PHRC and ICRA have already had discussions and will be organising co-ordinated and joint protests in the future.

The provision of a coherent campaign of action of the basic issues — political hostages, north and south, repressive legislation, north and south, the Winchester Nine, that can be seen to be a viable force in fighting repression and which can overcome the fragmentation of anti-imperialist forces is the way forward for the struggle.

LETTERS



Comrades,

Re your analysis of the unionist population in the six counties.

Connolly's estimation of Unionism as a "dying cause" is a little easier to understand speaking as he was . . . (60 years ago) — than your repetition of it. Especially at a time when to quote your article "the combativity of the nationalist minority is at it's lowest in the six counties" and they are faced with "the growing strength of the loyalists" . . . rigour mortis . . . I suppose.

To say that whoever doesn't accept this, or your definition of the protestants as "bribed pro-Imperialists" will be unable to understand why they should have reacted so violently to the Civil Rights movement and the introduction of power sharing" is incorrect. Such distortions come about by viewing reality through the "prism of the national question" . . . prisms distort!

The protestant's reactions are explicable by a theory which lies (horror) outside "The revolutionary intellectual tradition of Ireland", this is no reason to ignore it, or is this what is meant

by a "principled position on the national question"?

The strategy you propose would finally . . . "herald the beginnings of a movement towards a democratic secular and socialist Ireland" you offer no proof for this . . . pie in the sky, when you die!"

The "two nations theory" offers an explanation for protestant reactions which IS understandable and avoids wishful thinking such as your own and Connolly's visions of old relations melting and dissolving under pressure of our civilised self-government.

What the revolutionaries in Ireland have to "face up to" is their dependency on Irish Republicanism, and the harm this has done to their vision, and the whole cause of socialism.

Yours faithfully

Dick Spicer

EDITORIAL REPLY

So, Dick Spicer finds it hard to understand Connolly's estimation of Unionism as a "dying cause" or our repetition of it. Perhaps some knowledge of Irish history might help enlighten him.

Connolly, in his day, was able to perceive what Spicer cannot see even with the benefit of sixty years hindsight, namely that in 1912 Unionism was forced to abandon its historic claim to subjugate the whole of Ireland to British domination. Faced with a sweeping rise

of the national movement it was compelled to restrict its claim of jurisdiction first to Ulster and eventually to the Six Northeastern counties. Writing in 1913 Connolly was able to appreciate that a hisotrical defeat was in store for Unionism. Had not the middle class leadership capitulated to British imperialism that defeat would have been total.

If Spicer cannot see this, after sixty years, of meditation, he can scarcely be expected to see what is happening today. Loyalism is certainly in an upswing but Unionism as a whole is in disarray. The Faulknerites and Alliance wing of Unionism (which have a unionist majority in the Assembly) has not only given up its claim over the whole of Ireland but over the North as well. By accepting "power-sharing" and (possibly) a Council of Ireland they have permitted the Catholic "nation" a say in the affairs of the Protestant "nation" Rigour mortis . . . you supposed right!

Spicer proceeds to attribute a simplistic characterisation of the Protestants as "bribed pro-imperialists" and says, quoting from the last issue of "The Plough" that this is in consequence of our viewing reality through the prism of the national question. A prism distorts, he says.

Firstly we do not, as our article on the Protestant working class makes clear, subscribe to the idea that British imperialism has simply duped the Protestants. The article taking the HISTORICAL development of the Northern economy into account, attempts to deal with the REAL material foundations of the Protestant workers political outlook. If Spicer has some specific disagreement with this analysis he should say so.

Secondly Spicer's technical knowledge is as faulty as his knowledge of history. A prism

resolves the various components of light into separate colours. The national question as a political prism similarly "distorts" the nature of the class struggle in Ireland by clarifying the various strands which on first sight present such a tremendous tangle. If Spicer could get rid of the watery sarcasm for a moment he might sober up enough to see that even he, with his "Two Nations Theory", views reality through the prism of the national question!

Spicer concludes by exhorting Irish revolutionaries to end their dependency on Republicanism and find a new course with the aid of the "Two Nations Theory" which unravels all the complexities of the national question.

The "Two Nations Theory" attributes the reactions of the Protestant working class to the alleged attempts of "Catholic nationalists" to usurp their national rights. The "Two-Nationists" support the Sunningdale Agreement as the ideal way of reconciling "national" antagonisms between Catholics and Protestants. Yet the Protestant working class overwhelmingly rejects Sunningdale as a "Catholic Nationalist" plot to take them over. Are the sophisticated (!) Two Nationists now "Catholic nationalists" with their own particular brand of Irish Republicanism? Not really; they are only a clique of pseudos afraid to face up to the reality of the class struggle in Ireland. THAT reality is the need to build a massive, democratic, secular and socialist anti-imperialist movement that will not capitulate to backward prejudices. As we said before, the sooner revolutionaries face up to this fact the better.

All letters to *The Plough* welcome.



THE PROVO ARMED CAMPAIGN

With the disintegration of Britain's Sunningdale strategy and the re-emergence of militant Loyalism, the question of defending the Catholic minority from attack gains a new importance. The assassination of over a hundred Catholic workers in the last eighteen months, at a time when Loyalism was confused and demoralised, is a fearful warning of what could happen when the United Ulster Unionist Council launches its anti-Sunningdale campaign in earnest. Unless revolutionaries begin to assess the nature of the armed resistance and its effects up to now, many changes in strategy and tactics which are necessary to prevent a major military defeat of the Catholic minority will not be made in time.

Armed struggle and the role of the Provos

When the Provo campaign was launched many socialists and republicans felt that the Civil Rights Movement had not exhausted its capacity to mobilise and sharpen the political consciousness of the Northern working class. They saw the armed struggle as an artificial adjunct grafted on by a handful of isolated diehards who wanted to substitute themselves for the general mass of people. The Provos were branded as individual terrorists and their activity castigated as sectarian and reactionary. Even today this continues to be the general attitude of the Irish Left.

Tim has shown however that this attitude is entirely incorrect. The charge that the Provos initiated the armed struggle without any reference to the level of consciousness and state of preparedness in the Catholic community is unfounded. It disregards one very simple and inescapable fact — the sectarian nature of the North of Ireland statelet.

Given the sectarian nature of Northern society it would be utopian to expect any struggle with a democratic dynamic to rise step by step until the general public understood the need for armed struggle to attain its ultimate ends. The development of revolution in the North of Ireland is resisted not merely by a narrow bourgeois elite but by an entire people who have transcended class interests (in the political sphere) to protect certain mutual privileges. A state resting on such a wide consensus has no need to conciliate democratic upsurges. It can afford to crush any mass movement at an early stage. Right from the beginning the Unionist statelet attempted to beat the Civil Rights movement off the streets. When the Catholic population resisted, the Unionist statelet mobilised more and more of its forces — first the RUC (almost exclusively Protestant), then the B-Specials (exclusively Protestant) and finally the British Army and the reactionary Orange mobs.

Thus it was inevitable that the armed resistance among the Catholic would begin before the Civil Rights campaign had mobilised the entire Catholic community, not to mention the entire working class. The Unionist statelet was bound to create a confrontation before anything like that could be accomplished. In fact the armed struggle was spontaneously launched under severe provocation in August 1969 by the Catholic workers in Derry and Belfast. In view of the sectarian divisions of Northern society it was essential that once the armed struggle reached the primitive stage of barricades and petrol bombs that it should be systematically organised. Unfortunately the Irish left failed to realise this. A naive hope persisted that things would revert to their old state and the peaceful civil rights campaign could continue to gain momentum.

When the Left failed the Catholic working class, the Catholic workers by-passed the Left and made an effort to fashion their own military defence. For example in the Strand area and Ardoyne, which subsequently became storm-centres of the struggle in Belfast, local residents

set up their own armed defence units. All over the North, Defence Committees and Associations began to spring up.

The more traditional Republican elements read the signs correctly. They worked assiduously in the committees and associations and simultaneously built the Provisional IRA. As J. Bowyer Bell, the most important historian of the IRA to date, and recognised on all sides as an objective and scholarly observer; wrote in the American journal Review of Politics: "Once the events of the summer of 1970 transformed the British army into a threat, the Catholic minority increasingly had to depend on the IRA for defence; the Provo growth was almost exactly proportional to the decay of British Army neutrality as perceived by the Catholics. By 1971 the Catholic community could not repudiate the Provos without losing their only sure defence".

Mass support and the armed struggle

The Provos took over the role of local defence force in the Catholic ghettos at an opportune moment. But there is considerable dispute on the Left as to the significance of their armed resistance and the amount of popular support they received. The Provos may have posed as the defenders of the Catholic working class areas and they may have been generally accepted as necessary but were they actually endorsed and supported by the Catholic community?

To answer this the real dimension of the struggle must firstly be understood. A proper index of this, which reveals all its ramifications, is hard to find. The number of fatal casualties — over a thousand — although crude, is probably the best. Even the significance of such a meagre statistic is not immediately apparent.

One can more easily appreciate the impact

reached the five thousand mark.

One way or another, five thousand represents only 1% of the Catholic population and is a meagre enough figure especially when compared with the formerly massive Civil Rights Movement. But once again statistics fail to convey in full the complexity of the situation. Armed struggle by its nature, even when it reaches mass proportions is always carried on by a tiny minority of a population or class. For example during the "War of Independence" (which was on the same scale as the current struggle in the North), the military mobilisation (i.e. the size of the IRA) was at most 1/3% and probably only 1/10% of the population (i.e. 3,000 strong.)

The idea that over half the working class must be armed, or prepared to take arms, before armed activity is initiated, is a preposterous, vulgarly propagated by centrist renegades from the Marxist movement.

In the light of this, a 1% military mobilisation is quite substantial. For an organisation to carry out such an extensive mobilisation it would need overwhelming popular support. There is no doubt that the Provos received this support.

Some dogmatic and sectarian socialists may wish to dispute the fact to preserve the credibility of their accusation of "individual terrorism". But British imperialism which had to deal with the situation was forced to face reality. A prominent pro-imperialist ideologue, Robert Moss, former lecturer at the Royal College of Defence Studies and an editor of 'The Economist' admitted in his book 'Urban Guerrillas' that "The terrorists in Ulster no longer appear as an isolated military force imported from Dublin". "They have managed to exploit genuine political sympathy among the Catholics of Northern Ireland". This . . . was their source of strength. By August 1971, British army spokesmen were ready to concede that as many as a quarter of the Catholics of Belfast and Derry were helping the IRA and as many as half were broadly in sympathy". (p. 93-94).

Armed struggle and mass support

Despite the obvious support the Provo campaign

"The Idea That Over Half The Working Class Must Be Armed . . . Before Armed Activity Is Initiated Is A Preposterous Vulgarity Propagated By Centrist Renegades From Marxism"

The Catholic population adopted the Provos as a local defence force and the Provos to a large extent transformed themselves into such an organisation. In this respect it is interesting to note that when the IRA split, the majority of the leaders of the Belfast Battalion staff went with the Officials while the officers of nine of the eleven local companies followed the Provisionals. In other words it was the grass-roots leaderships of the IRA and not a remote elite or some clique of fanatics totally divorced from reality, who formed the backbone of the Provos and enabled them to fulfil the role of neighbourhood militias.

Even when the Provos gained a position of pre-eminence in the Catholic community they did not immediately force the pace of the struggle. On the contrary, all the evidence seems to indicate that they tempered the spontaneous desire for retaliation by the more advanced sections of the Catholic minority, with patience. In the summer of 1970 the Catholic ghettos were subjected to tremendous provocation by Orange mobs and the youth in particular were anxious to fight back. Despite allegations by the British Army it was the Provos who prevented a premature action. As the Loyalists and British Army increased their intimidation and harassment of the Catholic minority rioting broke out recurrently. The British army of course accused the Provos of being behind the unrest but as the 'Sunday Times Insight Team' (who certainly had no vested interest in portraying the Provos in a favourable light) reported: "The Provisional IRA was present . . . but trying to STOP the rioting". And the Insight Team quotes the pro-Unionist 'Belfast Telegraph' of saying: "Even when the crunch came Catholic vigilantes continued to appeal for a return to sanity and were caught in the no-man's-land between the mob and the soldiers". And, adds the Insight Team "They (the vigilantes) were, largely, IRA men of both persuasions".

that a guerilla war in either Britain which resulted in 40,000 deaths or a guerilla war in the South resulting in 2,000 deaths, would have on the relationship between classes and the political institutions mediating these relationships. Yet, in proportionate terms, the armed struggle in the North has exactly the same dimension as these hypothetical guerilla wars in Britain or the Free State.

When this comparison is kept in mind any attempt to dismiss the armed struggle as an artificial imposition, outside the class struggle skillfully worked at by a small clique of fanatics is seen to be nonsense. The armed struggle is a mighty fact of life which must be explained by the movement of society itself and not the machinations of individuals.

Of course, all this is not to say that the dimension of the struggle automatically gives an accurate reflection of its real social foundations. To get a clear picture of the scope of mass support for, and participation in, the armed struggle, concrete facts are necessary.

For the time being these can only be guessed at. For instance, up to two thousand Catholics have been interned, accused of being members of the IRA. It can safely be assumed that for every one interned another two or three went free. At the height of the armed resistance therefore it is reasonable to estimate the membership of the Provo-IRA at around five thousand.

This figure is only a guess but it can be cross-checked with other sources. J. Bowyer Bell, referred to above, wrote that "During the period from July 1970 until January 1971 the Provo strength in Belfast passed one thousand and was somewhat less than in the rest of the Province (the North)". Accordingly, even before internment, Bowyer Bells puts the Provo membership at about two and a half thousand. It is not unreasonable to assume that following internment, when the military campaign went into top gear, the Provo membership doubled and



received it has been argued that it did nothing but harm. To a large degree, this accusation rests on the assumption that the Provos alienated the Protestant working class. This argument does not hold water because the Protestant working class was alienated long before the Provos came into existence. There had been major reactionary Loyalist mobilisations and bloody assaults on the Catholic population as far back as August '69.

Another argument is that the armed resistance at most stalled the Protestant back-lash but did nothing to help the Catholic working class to develop its struggle for democratic rights and ultimately the struggle for socialism.

While the military campaign has certainly had major political limitations a completely negative assessment of it would be wrong. As has been pointed out above, even the British army was prepared to admit that at least a quarter of the Catholic population was actively helping the IRA — hiding them out, storing arms and munitions, lending their homes for training etc. A quarter of the Catholic population amounts to 125,000 people. So many people do not actively support an armed struggle unless the armed struggle helps them in some way to achieve their urgent political aims.

In the North the immediate aim of the Catholic population was to mobilise to fight for basic democratic rights. This entailed a fundamental challenge to the very existence of the Northern statelet. The question is, therefore, did the Provo campaign aid the fight to accomplish these aims?

The answer to this question must be an emphatic YES. The most important achievement of the Provos was not that they protected the Catholic population. In this, their success was by no means complete. Their most outstanding victory was that they shifted the axis of struggle firmly onto the streets and thereby under the control of the people themselves. It was this achievement which gave the struggle of the Catholic workers all the power and trust necessary to bring down Stormont.

The importance of this achievement should not be underestimated. While the SDLP was prepared to ride the tide of mass protest, they succeeded in making Stormont the real bargaining-counter of Northern politics. Their aim in doing so was, naturally, to keep the reins of control tightly in the hands of the Catholic middle-class.

But the Provo campaign completely out-flanked them. By degree, the mass base built up by Hume, Cooper and Curry in the early Civil Rights agitation was crumbling under them. In July '71 the SDLP was no longer really an effective political force in the North. The pressure of the Provos combined tactics of sniping, bombing and rioting, eventually forced the SDLP to consider withdrawing from Stormont or face political oblivion. Although there was considerable resistance from within (especially from "leader" Gerry Fitt) the SDLP finally announced its abandonment of Stormont (July 11th '71). With that announcement the struggle was for a whole period channelled decisively onto the streets and out of the hands of the Catholic middle-class (under popular control).

It was this development which lent the mass movement leading up to and following internment its vigorous character. In the eyes of the Catholic workers, the Defence Committees, the Civil Rights and Resistance Movement Committees, the no-go areas and the street committees, became the only possible organs of power and

authority. In other words the armed struggle of the Provos must be judged as an essential and integral part of a maturing situation of dual-power in the North.

Weakness of the armed resistance

The Provo militants have fought an effective and courageous campaign. But the reason the above facts are focussed upon is not to flatter the, not to denigrate their opponents on the Left, nor even to provide an answer to the slanders of British imperialism and its native clients. The reason that the positive aspects of the Provos campaign needs to be stressed is that it is the only way to make the weaknesses of that campaign stand out.

The primary weakness of the Provo campaign is that it is a spontaneous reflex of the immediate feelings and aspirations in the Catholic ghettos. It is this above all that has shaped the nature of the armed resistance. The bombing campaign, apart from its military objectives of tying down the British army outside Catholic areas and smashing the morale of the armed Loyalist groups, is marked by definite social hallmarks which reflect the position of the Catholic population

within the Northern statelet. For instance, the direction of the campaign against the shopping centres and the big stores reflects the exclusion of the Catholic workers from the modern "consumer society" that has developed since the Second World War. Or again, the bombing and arson of factories reflects the high rate of unemployment among Catholic workers, the fact that employment is used in a sectarian way against them.

While the ability of the Provos to tune themselves to the urgent feelings and aspirations of the Catholic minority has been a great source of strength it has also been a source of frustration. The problem is that the outlook of the Catholic community is very volatile and can shift within very short periods from Left to Right etc.

This problem arises from the social structure of the Catholic minority in the North.

Firstly, there is no real capitalist class in the Catholic community — just a petty bourgeoisie which has historically been unable to create a unified ideology or provide stable political leadership.

Secondly, in most capitalist countries it is the

responsibility it was the Provos who were isolated.

A more important example in the sudden turn which occurred following the abolition of Stormont. In a sense this was an enormous victory for the Catholic population, one which the Provos played a major role in achieving. It might have been expected that it would have been followed by a major political upsurge in the Catholic ghettos benefitting the Provos almost exclusively. What happened however was the exact opposite — a lull in the mass struggle and a strengthening of the influence of the Catholic middle-class in the form of the SDLP.

The failure of the Provos to develop any deep political analysis of the situation in the North has left them at the mercy of such developments. When the wave that has carried them onwards and upwards recedes the Provos never stop to think but fight on as if everything remained the same. This kind of blind tenacity is admirable, but when it leads to isolation it is also self-defeating.

The political weakness is well exemplified in their failure to transcend traditional elitist concepts of armed struggle. This has aggravated the problems arising out of the social instability of the Catholic Community. Although the Provos had mass support for their campaign and even mass participation in it, they have not at any stage managed to integrate the mass struggle and the armed struggle.

Initially the founders of the Provos, during the preparation for the slip from the original IRA and immediately following it, played an important role in such mass democratic organisations as the Derry Citizens Defence Association. At this stage they were taking a big step forward by organising defence from below and giving the general public a say in how and why it could be done.

But once they felt the ground-swell of popular support beneath their feet their approach changed. They began to organise from the top downward displacing the broad based defence committees and substituting the Provo-IRA itself instead. The effect of this was to leave the Catholic population unorganised and vulnerable to the manoeuvres of British imperialism.

It is through practice that peoples consciousness is changed and it is through revolutionary practice that revolutionary awareness in the working class is formed. Practice must be tested and it can only be tested by workers when they are responsible for an control their own actions.

The central task of socialists and republicans is, at every step and to the greatest extent possible, to involve the broadest mass of people in revolutionary practice. Only by doing so can they consolidate behind them a social force powerful enough to overthrow imperialism and its capitalist allies in Ireland.

While giving leadership they should not however try to usurp the ultimate responsibility and control of the rank and file. In the North, where the political outlook of the working class is so changeable it is absolutely essential to keep this basic precept in mind. The Provos campaign has failed to do so. It is not enough to win mass support simply by defending the interests of the working class. Nor is it enough to draw in vast numbers into the armed campaign. What is required is that the working class should be made responsible for, and have control over, the armed struggle. The Provos have not acted in such a way as to make this possible.

In the coming period, with the growing threat of Loyalist reaction socialist and republicans of all tendencies must act together to correct this defect. There is an urgent need to revive the mass organisation, reactivate the street committees and especially to establish the vigilantes. It is only through these organisations that the ordinary people can have a say in how the struggle should develop. Provo militants can play an important role in this process by using their influence and prestige.

“The Central Task Of Socialist And Republicans Is To Involve The Broadest Mass Of People In Revolutionary Practice. Only By Doing So Can They Consolidate Behind Them A Social Force Powerful Enough To Overthrow Imperialism And Its Capitalist Allies In Ireland.”

monotonous rhythm of capitalist production itself which is largely responsible for assimilating the working class and subjugating it by force of inertia to the ideology of the ruling class. Usually it is only when the capitalist system breaks down, when huge numbers of workers are thrown onto the streets and their whole way of life changed that they gravitate towards revolutionary ideas and politics. The capitalist system in the North has largely failed to integrate the Catholic working class into the production process. While the Catholic workers have of course inherited the normal prejudices of bourgeois society these are not as deeply ingrained as they might otherwise be. The result is a certain ambivalence in attitudes which tends to veer sharply in a militant direction one moment and recede back to normal channels next.

More than once the Provos have been caught off-guard by a sudden ebbing or flowing of the political tide. One example in the so-called "Bloody Friday" episode when the British army ignored timely Provo warnings and deliberately walked hundreds of unsuspecting civilians into waiting bombs. The entire Catholic community and even many Provo leaders (Connell etc.) were numbed and cowed by the blood-shed which followed. Although it was the British army's



FREE STATE ARMY



BRITAIN'S COLLABORATORS

The two main wings of State repression are the police and the army. In recent times a big campaign has been launched by the Army of the Free State to recruit a large number of men. This is the third such campaign in less than five years and although the numbers involved in the "Defence Forces is the highest in twenty years, Minister for Defence Donegan hopes to increase its strength from 1257 to about 15,000, doubling the border battalions. The supposed purpose of this strengthening of military force

is to defeat the "terrorists" (who according to Cooney represent only a handful of isolated individuals). This of course is only one of the reasons for the present and previous campaigns. The Army will be used against "subversives", i.e. republicans, and anyone who opposes British rule in Ireland. This is already happening at the present time. The first of these campaigns coincided with the upsurge of the struggle in Northern Ireland in 1969. It is well known that the extra numbers recruited were not used to

protect the people of the North from the RUC, B Specials and British Army. At the moment the government are making it clear that the Free State Army will give every possible assistance to the British Army on the border and anywhere else if necessary. In the Irish Press April 2nd Donegan proudly announced that the Irish Army were "doing as well and probably better on Border security than their British counterparts".

Role of Free State Army in the future

However, security is not the only or main aim of the present recruitment campaign. The Border may seem a good distance away from us in the twenty-six counties, but we will be met with the Free State Army in any situation which threatens the interests of Capitalism. In a stable State if strikes, demonstrations, factory occupations have to be intervened in by the State the civil powers are used. In Ireland this means the Gardai. However, the morale of the gardai is at present at an all-time low and they cannot be relied upon to deal effectively with any serious situation. This is because the Gardai are dissatisfied with the role they are expected to play and with conditions within the Force. This has been the case for some years. For instance, in 1969 when they were denied the wage increases granted to workers they defied the orders of their officers and attended a meeting in the Masushla Ballroom in Dublin to discuss action. When twelve Gardai were suspended a "go slow" was put into effect and traffic in many areas ground to a standstill. Although they won their case, dissatisfaction still prevailed and exists up to the present time. When British troops crossed the Border on March 5th and threatened to shoot Gardai, it brought resentment to a head. There were suggestions within the force that meetings be held to discuss the role of the Gardai under Sunningdale and whether they should refuse to take part in Border patrols. They are becoming very unpopular in Border areas and are afraid that local people will not assist them in solving crimes. It would appear, also, as if they do not wish to act as a political police.

At the present time, the Army is not very well trained to deal with demonstrations and strikes etc. They have been used already to break strikes e.g. Dublin Sewage workers strike and at the Curragh Camp against demonstrations. They have also featured prominently in road-blocks (according to Donegan 1279 in 1973) particularly in the case of the Mountjoy helicopter escape. These "showings" of the Army have been for two reasons:

1. Because the Gardai are not considered very reliable
2. So as to introduce military presence gradually. Later (and not so much later, maybe) they will be used to baton down strikers and demonstrators in the streets and will generally take over the civil powers once held by the Gardai to a large extent. A couple of months ago a manual was circulated within the Army, to top senior officers and members of Administration only. Based on British Army experiences in counter-insurgency it outlined the changes needed to set up counter-insurgency

forces. The document gives details of riot control, how to crush factory occupations and general strikes, how to surround and divide up demonstrations, how to carry out house to house searches. The Free State Army may not yet be very experienced in the tactics of British Terror, but with the generous and freely-given help of the British they will not be long learning.

Smash this recruitment campaign

Among the plans behind the present Recruiting Campaign and what the outcome of having a strong repressive force will be, what action would be best for socialists and republicans to take? Posters have already appeared in Limerick explaining the job opportunities available in the Army. Some examples are printed above. While this kind of isolated poster campaigns can have some effect, on its own it will not achieve anything concrete, particularly if restricted to one area. Donegan's campaign must be opposed by the concerted efforts of everyone who is opposed to repression and British imperialism. After all, who are the Kitson-orientated Free State troops going to practice their new found tricks and weapons on? Initially against republicans and revolutionary socialists, who are prepared to fight against British imperialism and its agents North and South. At a later stage they will be used against any progressive force that threatens the status quo. It is up to Republicans and Socialists to do all in their power to point out to anyone joining the Free State Army where their loyalties must lie if they join. Also to build up public opinion against those who do join and so isolate and demoralise them. This can best be done through seriously undertaking poster campaigns on a large scale, over as wide an area as possible, explaining the nature of the Army. As well, leaflets can be distributed explaining the present and future role of the Army and public meetings should be held opposing repression and ensuring to point out who is going to do the dirty work in the South.

This would not and could not be a campaign which would last for a few weeks or meet with immediate success. It would be necessary, if such a campaign were to be successful, for Republican and Socialist forces to co-operate and unite to fight the repression made possible by a strong military force. By definition, it would be a long sometimes discouraging task to undertake. On a scale large enough to have noticeable results, if one organisation were to undertake it alone, it would completely deplete its strength.

At present, the only chance of mounting an efficient campaign against Recruitment to the Army is in unity of the forces against which that Army will be arrayed. It is of no use to think "Why did we not do all in our power to demoralise and isolate repressive forces" when people are being shot in the streets and tortured and interned for supporting the National Struggle, for Civil disobedience and for going on strike.

NOW IS THE TIME TO ORGANISE STRONG RESISTANCE !

ANGELA LYNCH

LESSONS OF U.S.I. GRANTS CAMPAIGN

The day when students were a social elite, little affected by extra-mural phenomena is long since past. The effect of inflation on the cost of fees, accommodation, cafeteria meals and books is only too apparent to most students, not to speak of general price increases. How have grant increases since 1968 attempted to cope with this problem?

Grants decrease in value

The cost of living since 1968, when the present grants scheme was introduced, has risen by approximately 55% yet the corresponding rise in the present grant scheme has been only 10%. This shows that the real standard of living of students has decreased by 45% rather than increasing towards a credible cost of living wage. While the introduction of new and more complex machinery increases the competitiveness of a firm it inevitably leads to a fall in the rate of profit. This phenomenon has been in evidence in the post-war period and has been fought in two ways:

1. by increasing exploitation of the working class through increased productivity etc.
2. by inflation, which causes those on fixed incomes such as students on grants, to pay for the crisis of the capitalist system.

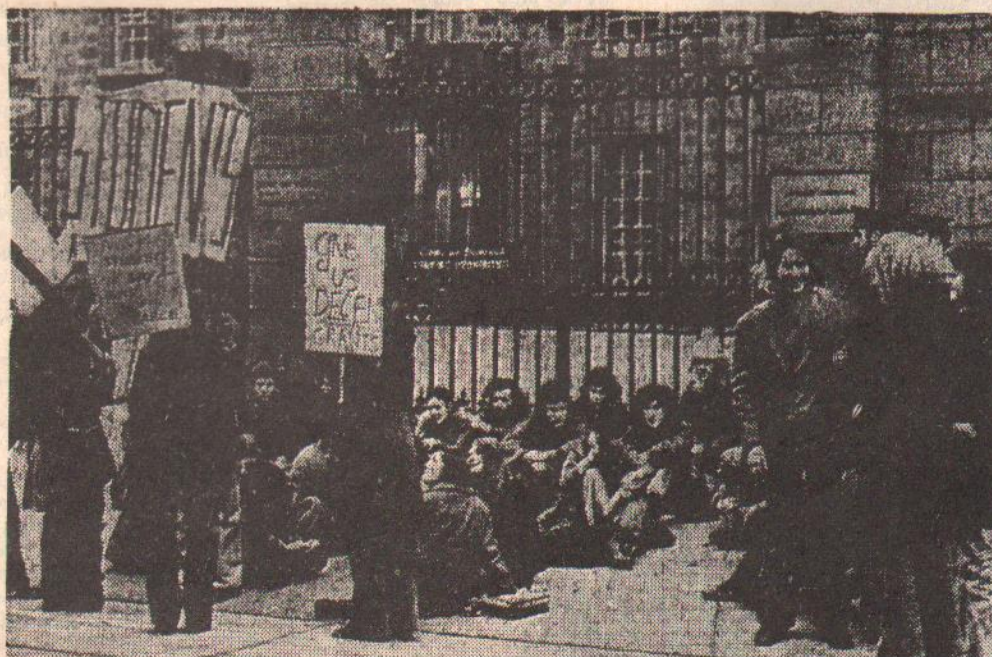
It is obvious from the above that a comprehensive grants scheme is now more necessary than ever. Equally obvious is the fact that any grants scheme must rise automatically in accordance with any rise in the cost of living (this to be determined by a representative committee of trade unionists, housewives students etc). This is the only real way to combat the effect of inflation. Unfortunately U.S.I. has shown itself completely ineffective in leading the fight for a comprehensive grants scheme as can be seen by drawing up a balance-sheet of the year's activities (or lack thereof)

The grants "Campaign" in retrospect

At the beginning of the first term no attempt was made to mobilize students despite the fact that this was a pre-condition for building up

momentum for a real campaign in the rest of the year. The excuse made by Pat Brady — President of USI — that we must give the new government a chance to right the wrong was both feeble and superficial. This implied that the problem was a lack of understanding of successive Ministers for Education rather than the limitations of the capitalist system. On this point, certain reformist students have pointed to the example of Britain as a capitalist state which has overcome the problem of student grants. One cannot equate the reforms which the working class in an imperialist country is capable of winning with those of an oppressed working class WITHIN an oppressed nation, and despite

In the 2nd term USI asserted themselves enough to call a march to the Dail with its usual methods of long marches, long speeches and sit-ins it attempted to BORE away the enthusiasm of some of the more militant rank-and-file students. Yet these methods were not successful and both the occupation of Appollo House and that of Fitzwilton were carried out at "grass roots" level. But despite this it was apparent that the more comfortable position of the British bourgeoisie in terms of manoeuvring space it has still failed to quell the militancy of students as they press forward for further demands.



Students protest outside the Department of Education, Marlboro St.

movement was weakened by the lack of earlier activity and was seen by many as a "flash in the pan" before getting back to work.

3. Last term a meeting to form a grants action committee was held. At this meeting the suggestion of a community canvass, was pushed by Bureaucrat Brady. Although he was forced by militant students to agree to the necessity for further actions such as occupations etc.

Weaknesses of proposal

The community canvass overlooks 2 very important points.

1. That the working class is not affected by ideas as such but by action, consuming energy in "explaining" our demands is in fact just an excuse for inactivity.
2. The reason why the working class has no respect for students is not just because of misrepresentation in the media, but because they do not see them as a potent social force that can change society. The way in which French students forged links with the working class was through consistent struggle for their own demands. May '68 was the culmination of a real unity THROUGH ACTION.

For real grants and NOW !

An examination of this year's grants campaign, clearly shows up its weaknesses. The primary failure is that of not instigating a consistent struggle led by a grants action committee independent of USI and based on mass student support. The government knows full well that it has nothing to fear from the annual one-day "campaign" led by USI.

The other lesson is equally clear i.e. that a fighting students organisation through militant struggle will gain workers attention and create a real basis for working class/student unity.

BETTY PURCELL

Coup in Portugal



Spinola in African colonies

The bourgeois press has acclaimed the recent military take-over in Portugal as the first break in autocratic right-wing government since ex-dictator Salazar came to power in 1932. The truth of this statement waits to be proved by the actions of the junta but certainly there have been some hopeful signs in the reported political liberalization taking place.

Portugal for the last 40 years had been characterised by its police state regime dominated by a small clique headed until 1968 by Salazar. In 1968 the recently removed Dr. Caetano was appointed as Salazar's successor with the full support of the country's military, business and R.C. Church hierarchy who saw him as the man most likely to support their interests in repressing popular dissent and maintaining the maximum exploitation for profit not only at home in Portugal but in the African Colonies of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau.

Background to the crisis

Portugal now has one of the lowest standards of living in Europe and one of the highest rates of inflation. This is compounded by the huge proportion (over 50%) of Portugal's annual budget spent on the armed forces and the high rate of emigration of Portugal youth to EEC countries to find jobs and to avoid conscription into the army. Portugal, although a member of NATO has been something of an embarrassment to the other member countries because of its economic backwardness and its police state regime but Portugal has always been under pressure from these same imperialist allies along with South Africa and Rhodesia to maintain its military presence in Africa. This is necessary to defend the large international oil and mineral investments particularly in Angola and to protect the racist white settler states of S. Africa and Rhodesia.

Of course the domestic problems of Portugal cannot be understood in isolation from the wars which Portugal has been fighting and losing against the Liberation forces in the African colonies.

The colonial dimension

In the 3 African colonies Portugal has approximately 166000 troops tied up by the guerillas, at least 3,000 troops have been killed and over £800 million has been spent to finance the 13 year old war. In Guinea Bissau ¾ of the territory is now controlled by the African Party for Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC) and since an independent republic was proclaimed in 1972 it has been recognised by 93 of the 153 states belonging to UN.

Progress has also been made by the two guerilla groups in Angola, the Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA) and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA); But it is in Mozambique that the most striking advances have been made. The Mozambique

Liberation Front (Frelimo) are particularly active in the north where international capital is financing the construction of the Cabora Bassa Hydro Electric project. Since the New Year the guerillas have spread south into the region of Beira, the economic capital and have been regularly attacking the road and rail link with Rhodesia. Numerous massacres of African civilians by Portuguese troops in Tete province were well publicised last year.

Spinola's solution

It is against this background of success by the Liberation Movement in Africa and of near economic bankruptcy in Portugal that General Antonio de Spínola on his return from commanding the Portuguese forces in Guinea wrote a book entitled 'Portugal and the Future', which put into words and crystallised the frustrations and divisions of the Portuguese ruling class. The debate took on a considerable importance because it effectively posed an ultimatum for the Portuguese Capitalist class: integration into the EEC or continuing segregation as a result of the colonial wars.

Portugal, Mozambique, Angola and Guinea each with its own parliament and governor subject to a federal parliament and central government in Lisbon which would retain power in areas such as finance, defence and foreign affairs. Obviously this proposed 'Africanisation' of the colonial administration is completely unacceptable to the Liberation Movements who demand nothing less than independence. But the ideas expressed by Spínola led to a state of political fluidity within Portugal itself.

The coup and after

On March 14th Spínola and his Chief of Staff, Gomes, were dismissed at the instigation of the hardline President Thomaz for proposing the federal solution for the African colonies. Two days later there was an abortive coup by an infantry regiment north of Lisbon who proclaimed support for Spínola but they were turned back by loyal troops. Premier Caetano tried to maintain his position by steering a middle course between the two factions but on April 25th a large scale mobilization of the armed forces in support of Spínola

TRIALS IN CEYLON

Three years after the crushing of the revolutionary JVP in Ceylon in which hundreds of socialists were massacred and thousands more thrown into concentration camps under the cruellest conditions, some of the leaders of the JVP are being brought to trial.

The Popular Front Government which is responsible for this massive repression is attempting to suppress all international knowledge of the situation. A prime target in their attempt to impose censorship has been the LSSP(R) - Ceylonese section of the Fourth International many of whose leaders are also leaders of the Ceylonese Trade Union Movement. Nonetheless the LSSP(R) despite continued harassment and intermittent imprisonment of its militants has firmly defended the victims of the Popular Front's onslaught. Bala Tampoe, who is a prominent

member of the LSSP(R) and also General Secretary of the Ceylonese Mercantile Union (CMU) has played a leading role in the leading defence of JVP leaders.

Recently Tampoe was invited to speak at a university in France, at a trade union meeting and a Human Rights Association meeting in Geneva. But with the new trials under way the Ceylonese government has refused him permission to leave the country lest their plans to frame their opponents are exposed.

The C.T.U.M. has protested its opposition to the governments manoeuvre and called a mass public meeting in Colombo, which was attended by several thousand people. But the workers of Ceylon need international solidarity and trade unionists in Ireland should make their objections heard.

The principal conclusion reached by Spínola was that Portugal could not win a military victory in any of its African colonies. Instead he argued that a political solution must be found. Spínola's policy is not a Portuguese withdrawal from Africa but the establishment of multi-racial puppet regimes in the colonies within a federation in which all decisive powers would still be held by Lisbon. The Federation would consist of 4 'equal' states - Metropolitan

succeeded in overthrowing the Government in an almost bloodless coup. The only resistance met was from the state's political police.

The coup was met by an enthusiastic response from the local population when it was learned that early decrees by the junta included the lifting of censorship, the freeing of political prisoners and the intention to hold free elections. Mass popular mobilisations have been taking place in the streets with the first opportunity in years for political expression but as slogans taken up by demonstrators become increasingly socialist in content it remains to be seen how long the junta will tolerate the threat of a popular upsurge. It is reported that Caetano handed over power to the military in order that the Government should not fall in the streets. It is unlikely that Spínola and his junta will tolerate the street mobilisations for long but the maximum use of the present opportunity should be made by all socialists in Portugal to develop the struggle and to put forward the just demands that the junta will increasingly find intolerable.

As in the similar situation in Ethiopia widespread strikes for better pay and conditions and against conscription and the African wars should be organised and the mass mobilizations on the streets should be maintained to demand the rights that have been denied for so long.

Red Faction

Peron's return as President of Argentina was expected by many to herald a period of liberalisation. But the opposite has happened. Peron has moved systematically against the left wing of his own movement and the left in general.

The chief target of his repression has been the Argentinian Trotskyists of the Fourth International. "You see, what is happening here is happening everywhere" said Peron last January "It is going on in Germany, in France... You can't stop it in any way, because it is organised on a worldwide basis. It is everywhere - in Uruguay, in Bolivia, in Chile, under different names - it is the Fourth International".

Recently the comrades of the Red Faction (PRT-ERP) - supporters of the Fourth International - have suffered a severe blow with the loss of Cde. Nancy Magliano. She was arrested on January 15th in Buenos Aires by Federal Police and has not been seen since. It is believed that Magliano, who was in ill health, was tortured to death because she would not divulge information about the activities of the Red Faction.

In the meantime, at the beginning of March, a right wing coup overthrew the left-wing Peronist administration in Cordoba, one of the main structures of the Argentinian working class. This has caught almost the entire left off guard. Only the Trotskyists of the PRT-ERP who have recognised the need for a dynamic attitude towards armed resistance are in any way prepared for the coming confrontation. It is to be hoped that their forces will not be too small to determine the outcome of any showdown with right wing Peronism.

Mario Soares Socialist party leader returns to huge welcome



REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST GROUP

(Irish Section of the Fourth International)

38 Clanawly Road, DUBLIN 5



CHURCH STATE AND CONTRACEPTION IN THE SIX COs.

Paddy Devlin's announcement that free family planning services are to be available to all from local health service clinics and hospitals in the North of Ireland has evoked a not unexpected reaction from the Catholic Church.

This limited step towards the realisation of the fundamental right of women to control their own bodies has brought the Church's domination of women and the family into question. And the reaction to the new services has not only underlined the role of the church hierarchy but has exposed the contradictions in the position of the priests in the North who have come into conflict with the hierarchy on the issue of British military repression.

In the past the non-availability of adequate birth control facilities in the North has been a by-product, not of the position of the Catholic Church, but of the needs of the Unionist ideology.

Faulkner had stated his reason for excluding facilities from the North as being out of respect for the Catholic population. Such blatant hypocrisy from the man who operated internment in the 1950s and re-introduced it in 1971, covers two factors in the policy.

Primarily it was as a response to the militant Protestant supremacists who recognised that such freedoms would lead to a downgrading of the role of the family as a prop to the state structure. And secondly, it appeased the Catholic hierarchy and contributed to its coming to terms with the Northern state structure. The state attitude to contraception made it easier for the Church to side with the state and thus act as a break on anti-unionist militancy. The results of this can be seen in the current upsurge in which the hierarchy gives unequivocal support to the forces of imperialism.

With the break-up of the Unionist monolith under the pressure of the current upsurge, the Unionist state structure has been shaken and dismantled resulting in the fact that the basis for the Orange opposition to contraception — family unity in support of state structure — has been severely disrupted.

In introducing the new facilities, Paddy Devlin has taken advantage of this. But, of course, this has not been done purely out of concern for the condition of women in society. There are definite political benefits which accrue. This is a concrete benefit which has arisen out of the new Assembly, indeed one of the few real benefits it will be possible for it to come up with. The SDLP realise that the key to the pacification of the North is the selling of the Assembly to the Loyalists. In this move Devlin has brought a positive advantage to the Assembly by showing that the SDLP is free from the strait jacket of Catholic orthodoxy and that they have been integrated into the unionist structure.

The new availability of birth control facilities is, however, an attack on the Catholic Church and its right to dictate compulsory child birth and has naturally been condemned by the clergy.

Taken in abstract, the position of the church on this issue seems contradictory. The Catholic church viewed abortion as necessary if a woman's health was in danger up to the late 16th century. Then, for three years, Pope Sixtus V deemed abortion to be on a par with murder, yet the following Pope, Gregory XVI called for all penalties against abortion to be annulled. By this century the position had altered again.

Similarly, the expressed basis of the current stand is riddled with contradictions. The Church deems killing in self-defence to be justifiable, while removing a foetus, a collection of tissues without consciousness from a woman whose life it threatens, is not. And this in itself is contradictory in that three specific health conditions allow abortions to be performed, while other equally dangerous circumstances are ignored.

Again, the foetus is stated by the Church to be a human life yet crusading catholic priests, far from giving dead "humans", burial rites, tour Ireland with two foetii in coffee jars.



people in their areas, have taken positions contrary to that of their hierarchy. Father Desmond Wilson of Ballymurphy has been publicly condemned by his superiors for actions such as the querying of the role of British Army chaplains.

Fr. Denis Faul of Dungannon has perhaps been the most active of priests in condemning British Army repression and opposing internment and has frequently made his views known on the subject and demanded rights for people from his area in the face of British repression.

But it is on issues such as contraception and

abortion that the contradictions in such positions become clearly visible. Fr. Faul demands that the women interned in Armagh jail be released — but released for what? To be released to what Connolly characterised the working class woman as "slave of the slave". Slave of the capitalist working without equal pay, slave to the family, required by the Church to bear child after child irrespective of the wishes and needs of the woman?

Fr. Faul's sense of freedom is limited by the needs of his Church. Opposition to excessive

state violence in the context of the North is not a direct threat to the domination of the Catholic Church, but opposition to sexual repression undermines it immediately.

The moral issues are mystifications. The Church is adamant on the subject of family planning because without this code, the Church loses its hold on women and the family.

By the confinement of women to a male dominated structure as child producers, the Church can retain its authority over its members.

This factor forms an important part of the church's part in society as a pillar of the establishment and protector of the state and status quo: the repressive interests of state and church in defending the patriarchal family structure are identical.

Thus, with the creation of the Northern Ireland statelet the hierarchy quickly adopted the role of defender of the state. Today, the hierarchy defends the actions of Imperialism and condemns those who oppose repression. But the pressures of the Northern struggle have caused tensions within the Church itself.

Priests, more responsive to the needs of the

"Once a free service of contraception, abortifcients, abortion and divorce is made available for a period, it will be impossible to reverse the process as this kind of life style will be accepted by the people", he wrote recently. He seems to realise that that taste of freedom, of whatever form, is sweet, and that few will give up progress, to revert to savagery and the inability to control their own bodies.

Fr. Faul is also exaggerating the strength of the "family planning" service for the North. It will mean advice and contraception available to all women, irrespective of age and marital status.

It is a step forward and one which must be extended. Women must have the right to decide how many children they want, when they want them and also if they have an unwanted pregnancy they must have the right to have an abortion if they so wish. And in Ireland many do so wish. In 1972 nearly 1800 women travelled from Ireland to England pregnant and at least 400 of these had legal abortions. In the North, despite restrictive legislation, about 500 abortions are carried out in National Health Service hospitals annually. Because of the repressive laws the back-street abortionists are continuing to operate. These figures indicate the tip of the iceberg; i.e. the vast number of medically legitimate abortions. The women prepared to go to England for their termination illustrates the need for the wide availability of contraception and of abortion facilities in Ireland, North and South. And the dictates of celibates must not be allowed to stand in the way of the freedom of the whole population to control their own bodies.

In the North the demands must be raised through women's liberation groups, trade unions, civil rights organisations and must be taken up by the organisations active in the anti-imperialist struggle: for the introduction of an abortion act which will go further than the British legislation and allow for abortion on demand, and for greater freedom for women.

The need of the 26 counties to bring secularisation to the state resulting from the pressures of the struggle in the North and moves towards greater North-South unity have already pushed contraception to the forefront of discussion. The liberalisation of the Northern legislation must be used as a lever to further push for a state run comprehensive national birth control service. This demand must be raised by all organisations and forces who claim to be working for the freedom of women.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

1. The general task of the Revolutionary Marxist Group is to help to launch a 32 county revolutionary workers' movement. We do not consider ourselves to be the basic nucleus out of which this movement will develop. We see the process as taking the form of numerous fusions in which the socialist cadre of all revolutionary groups, including both wings of the Republican movement, will come together. However we consider that as a group we can play a vital role in helping to formulate and clarify the programmatic basis on which this movement must unite.

2. What distinguishes the RMG from other Left and revolutionary organisations is our attitude towards the national question.

On the one hand the 'economistic' Left says that the class struggle has nothing to do with the national question because they confuse the class struggle with the economic struggle.

On the other hand the pure nationalists, because they are dominated by a false ideology, also deny that the national question has anything to do with class struggle. They want to keep class struggle in the background as far as possible.

As against these sectarian and opportunist approaches, we insist:

(i) that the working class is in fact the most exploited and oppressed section of the nation under the imperialist yoke of Britain, and that therefore it is in their objective

interests to struggle against every manifestation of imperialism.

(ii) because the working class is the most exploited and oppressed under imperialism it is the only section of the nation which can be depended upon to struggle to the bitter end against imperialism. All other classes, as we have been warned by Republican fighters from Tone to Mellowes, will betray. Only the 'men of no property' can be relied upon. To ignore the class struggle therefore is to compromise with imperialism, because in the words of James Connolly 'only the Irish working class remains as the incorruptible inheritor of the fight for Irish freedom.'

3. Finally the RMG is distinguished by its

unyielding internationalism. The specific peculiarities of any country are but a unique or original combination of economic, political and social tendencies which operate internationally under capitalism. For this reason it is impossible to understand adequately the revolutionary struggle in any single country, and it is impossible for the revolutionary struggle to win a final victory as long as international capitalism exists.

Because we believe this we are firm supporters of the Fourth International, and as such are part of a world-wide socialist movement which participates in and leads many revolutionary struggles.