

# Socialist Worker

## For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

# More cuts to come from...

# This rotten government



FIANNA FAIL'S attacks have only just begun.

Last month axe-man McSharry announced that he planned another £400 million in cuts.

Top of the list will probably be social welfare. Children's allowances and dole payments are set for drastic cut-backs.

One thing we can be sure of is that the rich will not be paying up. Speaking at a \$ 365 a seat luncheon in New York, Haughey told his American guests that he was absolutely committed to private enterprise.

We should know!

We have borne the brunt of the cuts so that capitalists in Ireland can be subsidised and pampered.

- Total subsidies to industry amount to approx. £745 million in any one year.
- Taxes on profits at 10% are lowest in Western Europe.
- Capitalists are given full freedom to repatriate their profits. This means that up to £1,000 million leaves the Irish economy each year.

And still they cannot create jobs. Fianna Fail—like the Coalition before them is involved in a planned expulsion of thousands on the emigration trail.

Last year they got rid of 30,000. Their programme of cuts and redundancies will make sure it remains that high again.

This awful government must now be fought. The attitudes of the ICTU in making concessions has been a disaster for the working class.



## May 68: when all was possible— pages 6-7

## STRABANE

# The daily round of repression

THE NATIONALIST border town of Strabane in Co. Tyrone has a history of immense unemployment, emigration and working class oppression.

With a staggering 4,000 of a 12,000 population unemployed, Strabane life is extremely bleak. As well as the highest rate of unemployment in Western Europe, the nationalist youth of Strabane have to face another kick in the teeth in the shape of military repression by the British Army and the RUC

Personal checks, body searches, beatings and death threats are the stale taste of life in this nationalist town.

Most of the harassment happens after dark and young people like myself are aware that when we venture into the town centre after 8.00pm at night, we do so at our own risk.

It is not safe to even go to a disco at the week-end for fear of harassment or attack. A popular social venue at the week-end is the Inter County Hotel in Lifford, a mile from Strabane. One young girl, Elayne McNicholl was stopped by the RUC at the Border checkpoint between Strabane and Lifford on her way to the Inter County Hotel, searched, verbally abused and viciously punched in the face. She had to return home because of this.

### INTIMIDATION

The level of harassment has got to such an extent that an "intimidation file" was compiled by Fr. Joe McVeigh's "Community for Justice" organisation.

It highlighted 75 cases of harassment over the last 12 months ranging from being stopped, searched and abused in the public streets to raids on houses, incidents of arrest, torture and death threats.

They were broadly representative of the "jack boot" tactics which Nationalists in Strabane are forced to endure.

22 year old Colman McCrossan in a recent interview stated, "Anyone who is thought to be politically aware is harassed to make them get out. The boot is put into you before you become politically developed to

force you to quit the town".

The harassment is mainly carried out by a group of 6 "elite" RUC men, commonly referred to as the "Dirty Half Dozen". They are Constables Paul McClatchey, David Moffat, Kieran Francis O'Malley, Stephen Kincaid, David Buchanan and Paul Deacon. They were also involved in the SAS murder of three IRA volunteers, Charlie Breslin and brothers Bunty and Davy Devine in February of 1985.

The members of the memorial flute band formed in memory of the three IRA men have been singled out for harassment by the RUC and army.

Nicholas Tighe, Dominic Carlin, John Connolly and Guy Breslin are four members of the band that I have seen being harassed on numerous occasions.

Two examples of the level of harassment are Danny Breslin and Raymond Gilloway who were stopped 63 times between two of them in just one month—November 1986. Danny Breslin was stopped 28 times, Raymond 35—that's more than once a day!

Constable Paul McClatchey was found guilty and fined £100 for brutally and viciously attacking Dominic Carlin on July 7th last year.



He is the only policeman or soldier to be convicted of their blatant attacks of nationalists in Strabane. He appealed against the conviction and the fine was dropped.

What this picture shows is that the RUC, British army and judicial system are in no way neutral. This is something which any young person in Strabane from the "Head of the Town" area or the Ballycolman would be able to tell you.

Such young people have a choice between permanent unemployment and a life of poverty or the emigration trail. But on top of this they also have to bear the brunt of RUC and British army repression in the Sectarian Six County state.

There's a lot of complaining done about the level of harassment in Strabane. It's about time there was a campaign set up to get people out on the streets to protest about it until it's stopped.

—ARTHUR CONAGHAN

Old hypocrite

THE Dublin '68 Committee organised at the end of April to examine the progress of civil rights over the last twenty years.

The Civil Rights Movement began when groups like the Derry Housing Action Committee took over houses for homeless Catholics.

What a pity then to see the chair of the meeting handed over to Kevin Boland.

Boland was the FF Minister for the Environment in the 1960s. He was responsible for the housing crisis in Dublin.

When the Dublin Housing Action Committee took to the streets, Boland ordered the Gardaí to baton charge them. He denounced them as "communist agitators" in much the same way as William Craig denounced the Civil Rights marchers in the North.

But now the old hypocrite is basking in the glory of those he attacked!

RESIDENTS IN Dublin's working class districts will be anxiously awaiting FF Minister of Environment, Pdraig Flynn's latest manoeuvres in the continuing saga of the capital's deteriorating smog problem. At the end of May, Minister Flynn will announce his latest proposals to deal with the killer smog.

Dublin Corporation officials have for years been complaining bitterly about the existing legislation and the lack of funds to seriously tackle the problem.

In 1987 it was, at last, decided that government legislation was necessary and the Air Pollution Act was introduced. Grand. But wait for it. The Catch 22?

The Corporation according to an amendment to the Act introduced by Minister Flynn, must establish "the incidence and cause of air pollution" in any area prior to designation as a smokeless zone. Result? No action can be taken.

The cause of air pollution and the ensuing killer smog in the densely housed working class districts has long ago been established as the burning of coal in open grates in this city.

So why in 1987 did our man Flynn delay and frustrate the Corporation Environmental Section?

Minister Flynn answered the question in the Dail last May. It is "to largely satisfy the concern expressed by the Coal Information Services". As baldly as that, if you please. CIS is part of Coal Distributors Ltd which effectively controls the supply of coal in the entire Dublin area. The minister, you see, has to satisfy their concerns about a possible collapse in their very substantial profit situation if smokeless zones are introduced and domestic coal is no longer a saleable product.

Listen to Mr Stan Lenihan of CDL/CIS addressing a recent press conference. "Banning coal and creating smokeless zones is not only unscientific, it would have fatal repercussions for the elderly and lead to hypothermia deaths".

This comment contradicts scientific fact established and acted upon everywhere else in the world. It also shows up again the cynical, harsh face of an economic system that would weep crocodile tears over hypothermia deaths whilst ignoring all the



medical evidence that smog kills people, particularly the elderly, the very young and it is a serious painful health hazard to all those unfortunates who suffer chest complaints, asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory illnesses prevalent on this damp island. All to preserve and protect the almighty profits of CDL and their ilk.

There is a daily smoke limit (250 micrograms per cubic metre) laid down by EC directive and agreed by the World Health Organisation. CDL over the years have issued their own set of measurement figures which, as you can imagine, conclude that the smog situation is "exaggerated", "not a serious problem" etc.

But official figures reveal that in 1987 alone, smoke pollution in Dublin had risen by as much as 44% over the previous year.

Last winter, the EC directive was breached 21 times at five Corp monitoring stations. In the worst hit smog area, Ballyfermot, the smog level was almost double the permitted level. The facts are that in Ballyfermot alone, all smoke limits were breached every day during 1986/87. It is the city's worst blackspot.

Other cities have long since solved this smog problem. Belfast, since the sixties, have reduced their smog levels from 264 to 38 micrograms per cubic metre.

This has been achieved by designating parts of the city as smokeless zones and thus progressively eliminating the problem.

Cost? £2.5 million per year.

Dr. Eamon O'Connor (CDL) would have us and the government believe that "should coal be banned it would cost £180 million to convert the system." Rubbish!

The Dublin Health Inspector's report for 1985 stated that burning coal in an open grate ensures that the minimum amount of heat is produced and the maximum pollution produced in Dublin".

A Dublin hospital is currently monitoring deaths week by week caused by city smog levels. Doctors are advising patients with serious chest infections to move away from the worst areas or risk death. And on and on it goes.

Are there alternatives to burning coal to provide heat? It is astonishing that the question is asked at all at this stage.

There is a natural gas resource on this island that must be the obvious answer. Bord Gais would agree. "It is the logical answer", they say, "because it is clean and cheap".

The governments answer? £250,000 last month to continue the survey of 835 houses in Ballyfermot so as to conform to Mr Flynn's amendment to the Air Pollution Act. More protection for vested interests, Mr Flynn, and to the cemeteries for the very old and the very young this coming winter.

Bord Gais should be set to work immediately to make the conversion. But then, of course, Bord Gais is a publicly owned company and the friends of Minister Flynn in CDL will not be pleased.

—SEAN FOX

Dublin killer smog

## BROTHERS?

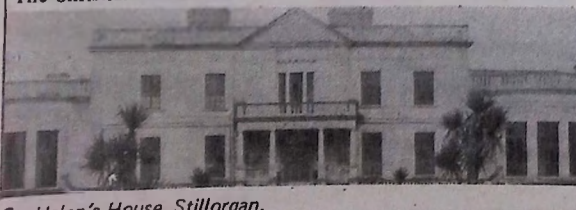
THE CHRISTIAN Brothers have turned their hands to making a few bucks. They have sold a 70 acre site in Stillorgan for a massive £5 million. The buyers are Phoenix Properties and Finance who intend to turn it into a huge residential development.

The site also contained the sumptuous St Helen's House. The Christian Bros have

turned a blind eye to local feeling. A torrent of objections have already come in about the sale.

The huge price paid for the site is a sign of the wealth that the Catholic Church holds. The general area between Stillorgan and Blackrock is prime building land. Most of it is controlled by the various orders of the Catholic Church.

So the next time they are looking for the "Peter's pence"—tell them to dip into their own pockets.



St. Helen's House, Stillorgan.

# US OUT OF THE GULF

LAST MONTH: the US government stepped up the pressure in the Gulf. US warships destroyed Iranian oil installations in a dangerous escalation of the conflict timed to co-incide with a fresh Iraqi offensive.

Later, US government officials ordered the massive US naval fleet in the Gulf to defend "neutral" shipping from Iranian attack.

When the massive US fleet was assembled in the Gulf last year, its brief was to provide naval protection to US-flagged shipping. The US is now taking upon itself the total policing of the Gulf.

The US is adopting this threatening posture towards Iran in an attempt to re-impose US domination in the region. That domination was badly dented by the Iranian revolution that overthrew the US's placeman, the Shah.

### VIETNAM

Following its defeat in Vietnam, US imperialism was on the defensive throughout the seventies into the eighties. The Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 was a further blow.

Unless US imperialism can regain the initiative, it risks losing the confidence of ruling classes in its "sphere of influence". It was its position as number one military power that provided the US with this "sphere of influence" in the first place.

If the US manages to re-impose its will in the Gulf, ruling class tyrants throughout the West will sleep more soundly.

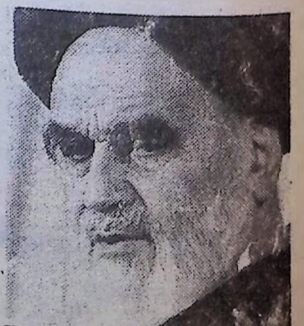
That is why socialists in the West have to demand the US gets out of the Gulf.

Despite Ireland's "neutrality", our rulers stand firmly in the Western camp.

Khomeini's regime in Iran is a reactionary dictatorship resting on the defeat of the revolution. Nonetheless a victory for US imperialism will not mean liberation from oppression for the mass of Iranians but fresh subjugation to US interests.

For us, the enemy is the bosses at home—and their allies in the West.

Socialists must stand up against America's imperialist mission in the Gulf.



### WHAT'S ON

For details of SWM Public Meetings see page 9.

# WE THINK Haughey's message: EMIGRATE OR ROT!

WHEN CHARLES Haughey visited America last month, one of his first visits was to an American Congressman, Charles Donnelly. Donnelly is sponsoring an act to increase the number of Irish people who can emigrate to the State. Haughey met him to give encouragement to his efforts.

It has become official Fianna Fail policy to get rid of as many people from this country as possible. That is why Lenihan had the gall to claim that "This small island is too small for all of us". That is why Minister for State Frank Fahey is backing a scheme to give the unemployed four weeks dole in their hand to get the hell out of the country.

The effects of the pro-emigration policy have been devastating. 30,000 have emigrated from Ireland each year in the last two years. A quarter of a million will have been forced out by the end of the 1980s. In the West of Ireland, a survey has shown that one in 17 are emigrating.

## CAMDEN

The Camden Irish Centre in London in a report claimed: "If this figure were to be reflected countrywide, we are in a situation comparable to the famine". Just like the fifties, London has become a giant magnet for the unemployed Irish. But conditions there can be woeful. Accommodation can cost over £50 a week for a tiny bedsit.

The size of unemployment in the South East of England, at over 400,000 and the growing number of emigrants means that wage rates barely cover the cost of accommodation. Many Irish emigrants now find themselves queuing up in the early hours of the mornings for

Irish navies to take them on for a mere £20 a day.

It is no wonder then that thousands of young Irish emigrants have turned to squatting. There are an estimated 1,000 Irish squatters in the Kilburn/Cricklewood area of London alone. Having fled the dole and depression that Irish capitalism offers, they face the prospect of miserable accommodation and police harassment in London.

The joke is that FF politicians and the British Tories who run the North tell us that "socialism will never work". They preside over a system which cannot provide jobs. Despite their best efforts to offer tax havens and grants to the multi-nationals and the native rich, their system is a miserable failure.

## HOPE

Their primary hope is that emigration will act like the safety valve that it was in the fifties. By taking out the youngest and most rebellious section of the population, they believe that they can maintain a slimmed down, leaner and more competitive brand of Irish capitalism. They hope too that the rotten suffocating brand of Tweedledee, Tweedledum politics will continue.

But the conservative success story of the fifties will not be repeated. A recent ESRI survey has shown that even with the growing trend of emigration, the Irish working class will not diminish. In fact in the short term it will continue to increase.

Between now and 1996, 62,000 more people will enter the workforce—including a slightly higher proportion of women. Ireland, North and South, will remain an urban industrial society with all the problems that will pose for the conservative right.



Derek Speers (Report)

Moreover, the pattern of emigration whereby thousands took off and never returned will be probably be different. Today unlike the fifties most Irish emigrants in America and Canada are illegals. There is no widespread boom in the world economy to offer them well paid and permanent jobs. Instead they find themselves in industries such as the building

industry which are most prone to the growing world recession.

The Right's policy of mass expulsion of their own people will not work. Instead, it shows to a new generation of Irish workers who have not yet experienced the defeats of the past, just how cynical and rotten are their political masters.

The tasks of socialists today is to turn that mood of despondancy and

despair into anger. That means targetting Fianna Fail and anyone who will stand as their allies.

Foremost among those allies at the moment is the bureaucracy of the ICTU who have entered a National Plan with them to make thousands redundant.

A real fight against Fianna Fail will demand a battle against the compromisers in our own ranks.

## CORK

### The rich are getting richer

## A MODEL IRISH BOSS

Larry Goodman, Fianna Fail's favourite millionaire, showed a nasty turn in class hatred recently. After taking over the Baliboro Co-op recently, he immediately embarked on a redundancy programme.

At first the ITGWU stood firm and put up some resistance. A short strike followed. But Goodman was to stoop to some 1913 style methods in an attempt to break the strike.

He ordered his security firm to hire extra workers to break the picket lines, under the guise of "protecting the plant". The firm in question

turned up at the Dundalk Labour Exchange and managed to get a few of the unemployed to scab. Needless to say they kept on signing on.

Now the ITGWU in Dundalk are investigating whether any of their own members were involved in Goodman's scabbing operation.

And they may be contacting the revenue commissioners to report on the security firm that was prepared to hire unemployed for scabbing.

Goodman himself need not worry. His connections with FF go deep. In his battle for Baliboro he had FF TD Liam Lawlor up working for him.

THE RICH are getting ever richer through the sale of prime Southern Health Board land. 120 acres of land is being sold off at a going rate of £2,000 an acre.

The land is attached to Our Lady's Hospital, and is described today as "the Rochestown Road of the northside". The sale may be sanctioned by the Minister for Health, Dr. O Hanlon. The local community associ-



Larry Goodman

ation, County Council and Corporation have expressed concern about the giveaway bonanza deal.

John Hartnett of Parnell Place, bought up 58.8 acres for £95,000. Another lot, of 59 acres, is being sold for £300,000 to Denis McSweeney of Chetwynd, Togher, and the 1.62 acre lot is going for £16,000 to solicitor, Adrian Stokes of Grand Parade.

All the land has been purchased in trust. Meanwhile the SHB now being funded on a week to week basis. It has already made substantial cuts.

One worker stated that "temporary staff, apart from nursing, was vastly reduced last year and is now at a minimum. It is clear that any further reduction must be in the area of temporary nursing and this will be very detrimental to the services that can be provided".

Clearly the Fianna Fail government is in a mood for a fight with hospital workers. A fight that some Cork doctors have suggested will mean the unnecessary death and suffering of many patients particularly the old and infirm. Many more hospital workers will be sacked in the process of paring our health service down to the bone.

## KILKENNY

### Jobless protest

THE FAS offices and the Unemployment Exchange in Kilkenny were at the centre of a protest picket in March.

The protest was organised jointly by the Kilkenny Council of Trade Unions and the Centre for the Unemployed.

Originally the protest was planned for Desert Hall, but this was changed suddenly after strong objections from the (unemployed) Youth Group. The Youth Group strongly believe that the protest should not be outside the building in which they are based.

It is more than cynical that Desert Hall should be chosen. But then who knows what the organisers of the protest were aiming at? It is only understanding the rivalry between both groups that one gets a clearer picture.

The protest itself lasted for one hour and had, by all accounts very little support. It should be understood that this lack of support, is not entirely due to the sudden change of venue;

It looks like the organisers of the protest were not serious in their task of protesting against Jobsearch. There are three reasons for believing this.

1. FAS finances the Centre for the Unemployed, while the Trades Council runs the Centre.
2. The Employees of the Centre were not told about the protest until questions were asked of the Centre's Co-ordinator Eddie Slattery (Joint Organiser of Protest).
3. Leaflets about the Jobsearch Programme were available on the shelves in the Centre for the Unemployed.

The only way that Jobsearch can be smashed is by the Trade Union Movement as a whole, taking on the government in its attempts to introduce these schemes.

Unfortunately this will not be done when we have a situation where the ICTU are involved in the National Agreement.

Jobsearch will definitely continue as long as protests are organised badly by our trade union leaders.

There is opposition to the Jobsearch Programme among the unemployed. But for the present these are isolated instances.

What is needed is a genuine fightback against Jobsearch.  
—MICHAEL DELANEY  
KILKENNY SWM

## INTERNATIONAL

## FRENCH ELECTIONS

## Mitterrand faces harvest of betrayal

by CATHERINE CURRAN

IT SEEMS clear that a victory for President Mitterrand in the forthcoming elections will not bring France any closer to Socialism. The thousands of workers who voted for him in 1981 have not only failed to gain anything, but have lost a lot of ground in the class struggle.

By uniting the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, Mitterrand came to power in 1981 with a promise to create a new society. Workers hopes were further raised by the election of a Socialist and Communist Party majority to the National Assembly.

The traditional right was so divided that many right-wing supporters voted for Mitterrand rather than Giscard d'Estaing.

It seems likely that the same kind of voting behaviour may help Mitterrand this time too. Although he is expected to win, he has been careful not to support radical Socialist policies. In fact, he is careful to emphasise his centrist approach, talking very little about socialism.

Any future government he appoints will be centrist, and probably right-centrist at that.

But this sell-out to the rich was predictable. Mitterrand has used both the CP and the French Socialist Party as stepping-



Nazi Le Pen

stones to power, and abandoned the sinking ship. But the failure of the Socialist Party was not purely a result of Mitterrand's lack of commitment to socialist principles. It points to the absolute uselessness of parliamentary reformism as a means to changing society.

When Mitterrand came to power first, it now seemed that workers' standards of living would be improved. Social Welfare payments and

income supplements were increased. This, however, was part of an economic strategy based on left Keynesianism. It was hoped to expand consumption by increasing domestic consumption: ie increasing supply by increasing demand, thereby stabilising the system and promoting economic growth.

This strategy failed miserably. Capitalism was too deep in the throes of crisis on an international scale for it to work. The PS did not draw the obvious conclusion that capitalism does not work. Rather it moved to the right and adopted the policies of the traditional right.

This meant in practice an onslaught against workers, who promptly began to lose more in terms of taxation, redundancies and pay freezes than they had ever gained by electing a Socialist government. Austerity for workers, plus concessions to the bosses of industry, swung the balance of class struggle so that workers who had fought for a 39-hour working week in 1981 (and won) were now demoralised and fragmented organisationally.

## DISILLUSIONMENT

This disillusionment with reformism and parliament did not lead to any shift to the left in workers' consciousness. Instead, the Extreme Right began to gather force. The National Front weighed in with an anti-immigration campaign which found support in both right and left-wing elements

of government. Laurent Fabius, the Socialist prime minister, announced on National Television that the Front Nationale was raising genuine problems.

Since no support could be expected from the parliamentary majority, it should have been the role of the revolutionary left to lead an anti-fascist campaign. This did not happen, and the National Front was barely opposed.

In the March 1986 elections, it obtained 12% of the votes in Marseilles, a city noted for its high proportion of immigrant workers.

## LESSONS

Meanwhile the CP had suffered enormously from its involvement with the reformist PS. In 1978, the PS and the PC had 22% and 20% of votes respectively.

By 1981, the distance between them was 10% of votes rather than 2% in favour of the PS. By 1986, the PC had lost over half of its support.

However they failed to learn the lessons from this and are willing to participate in similar coalitions, with Mitterrand this time around.

Only the Trotskyist group, Lutte Ouvrier, has consistently condemned Mitterrand. They point out that there is little difference between Mitterrand, Chirac or Barre in terms of how they act in Parliament.

Revolutionary Socialists must build on the struggles of the working class and refuse to engage in discussions on how to manage the bourgeois economy. This



Candidates from top: Mitterrand; Chirac and Barre of the right; Laguiller of Lutte Ouvrier and Lajoinie of the PCF.

is not in the interest of workers.

But Lutte Ouvrier has taken the extraordinary position of not regarding Le Pen's National Front as a fascist party. The candidate of Lutte Ouvrier, Arlette Laguiller, spends more time opposing Le Pen's income tax policies than attacking his racism. Workers must be convinced that there is an alternative beyond the framework of bourgeois democracy. This will not

happen so long as the crisis in the far left's strategy remains unsolved.

At the moment, workers are disillusioned with left reformism; the LO strategy of not intervening in workplaces in which they do not have workers, nor of pushing left ideas outside workplaces, is leaving a void which the Revolutionary Left cannot afford to ignore. Disillusionment with reformism does not necessarily lead to revolution.

## SOUTH AFRICA

## Moses frame-up trial re-opens

THE TRIAL of the black South African trade union leader, Moses Mayekiso and four others accused of treason re-opened in February. Since Mayekiso was originally charged in April 1987, the trial has been continually postponed in an attempt by Pretoria to deflate the growing campaign against the frame up.

As a key figure in the trade union movement, Mayekiso is a prime target of the apartheid regime.

The trial itself is a farce. The main source of evidence for the prosecution is Mayekiso's activities in the Alexandra Action Committee. This is a body that took over the running of the Alexandra Township where Moses lived. The committee organised the



The brutal arrest last year of Moses

expulsion of police and government administrators.

Now the state is using the same legal doctrine of "common purpose" to prosecute Mayekiso as they did to convict the "Sharpeville Six"

of a murder without any evidence of their actual involvement in the killing.

Moses' "treasonable" act was to participate in the setting up of alternative governing structures to that of the apartheid state. The running of the township by the AAC was carried out by elected representatives from the community. A trial report from the Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign Newsletter state that: "Even the most hostile of the witnesses agreed that, during this period of 'people's power', life in the ghetto had been more relaxed, that crime had declined and the overall atmosphere was preferable to that under the previous regime".

This makes no difference to the state though. It is not even concerned with proving Mayekiso's actions illegal, only treasonable.

They claim that he was

"guilty of encouraging actions which usurped the legitimate authority of the state". The precedent being set at this trial, is that even perfectly legal activities can be treasonable.

The political significance of this trial is not lost on black South African workers. A leading shop steward at the Haggie Rand Metal Working plant in South Africa said, "We want to show that workers are serious about fighting for the release of Moses".

Speaking on how he saw the fight going forward, he said, "We need to build in the stronger sections and show what can be done even in these conditions and the confidence will grow. In March '86 we had a three week sleep-in strike at HR-illegally. We won what we fought for and the state didn't dare intervene."

Workers have continued to show their support for Maye-

kiso and his comrades despite the State of Emergency. Reports on the case are circulated and the public gallery of the court is packed with workers wearing Free Moses Mayekiso tee shirts, on days when the trial is open to the public.

Support for Moses abroad is growing as well. In Ireland and Britain the campaign has received the support of hundreds of trade union activists. The International Metal Workers Federation and the United Auto workers in the US have launched campaigns as well.

"Free Moses" committees are active in Brazil, Belgium, Australia, Spain and Holland.

Anyone interested in making it an issue in their trade union branch or showing their support should write to: Friends of Moses Mayekiso, c/o NUJ, Acorn House, 314-320, Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP

-EVE MORRISON

# What are SF and SDLP talks about?



**THE TALKS** between John Hume of the SDLP and Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams have enraged Unionists, annoyed the British government and puzzled most people.

Thousands of words have been written in the bourgeois media speculating on why the talks are being held and, in particular, on why Hume chose to give Sinn Fein such credibility just when they needed it most.

In fact, there's little mystery as to why both parties are involved in the talks: it's all about respectability. For Sinn Fein it's a recognition of their "relevance and legitimacy".

The talks imply they have a place in the mainstream of political life in Northern Ireland—as a bona fide political party who must be talked to because they represent a significant section of the population.

For the SDLP, it's also about respectability. It's an attempt to show that they are not so respectable that they are incapable of representing those in the nationalist ghettos who presently look to Sinn Fein.

There is a massive gap of course, between the constitutional nationalism of the SDLP, which seeks a solution within the present Northern Ireland framework, and the revolutionary nationalism of Sinn Fein which wants to see the end of the N. Ireland state.

What unites the two parties is their desire to represent and to win the support of the nationalist population.

As a constitutional nationalist, Hume sees the violence of the IRA as a barrier. It stands squarely in the

way of the peaceful, devolved government which he and his party would like. Hume cannot, however, just ignore or condemn the Provos because the Republican Movement does have considerable—if largely passive—support within the nationalist community which he and the SDLP seek to represent.

The "talks about talks" in which the Unionist leaders have been indulging with British Secretary of State, Tom King, have progressed to the stage where another attempt at devolved government looks likely. But neither Thatcher nor the Unionists will tolerate the participation of Sinn Fein in any such plan.

The SDLP have no problem with this. They want to be the only nationalist party. To dismiss Sinn Fein out of hand, however, in return for a couple of seats on a new power-sharing executive would mean also abandoning a whole section of the nationalist working class—in areas like West Belfast, the Bogside and Creggan for example—to total alienation.

## 'PEACEFUL'

For the SDLP, then, the talks are to show themselves willing to take the views of that section of the nationalist population into account; to show that they are willing to dirty their hands talking to Sinn Fein as the representatives of those people and that they have tried to persuade the Provos to become involved in a new, "peaceful" initiative.

Hume is no fool. He knows the IRA will not, cannot, call a ceasefire. He has known from the outset that the talks will break down. When they do, he can now say: we tried. We tried to bring Sinn Fein with us,

they wouldn't have it. Any arrangements reached in talks now with the Unionists about devolution are bound to exclude them, but that's not OUR fault; we put our necks on the block to try to include them.

Adams, too, knows that the talks with the SDLP can go nowhere. But Sinn Fein, despite their left-wing rhetoric, have always said that the nationalist people of the North of whatever class should come together to get rid of the Brits.



Adams knows talk can go nowhere

For them, there is nothing wrong with getting together with those whose class interests are directly opposed to those of the working class, as long as it is in the national interest.

In a recent issue of *Fortnight* magazine, Adams spelt this out when he said: "What was significant about our meeting was not that it happened but that it took so long to happen". It was, he said, the duty of Mr Hume and I to meet, "Together

we represent the non-unionist electorate of the six counties".

The talks could not have come at a better time for Sinn Fein.

For a while now, it has been increasingly evident that the republican movement is in a political cul-de-sac.

The "armalite and ballot box" strategy has brought the Provos as far as it can. Most republicans will admit that the SF vote in the six counties peaked at about eleven per cent. Far from a growth in support in the South, the exploitation of Enniskillen, the Eksund and the killings of the two British soldiers in Andersontown combined with increased repression have produced a viciously anti-republican atmosphere. Since, apart from the national question, there is little to choose between Sinn Fein and other left-wing reformist parties, there can be little hope of progress for Sinn Fein through the ballot box.

## DEADLOCKED

Militarily, the IRA and the British Army agree that the situation is deadlocked and that there can be no military solution. To make matters worse, the Provos have suffered a number of severe attacks last year. From Loughall last May through the Eksund and Enniskillen to Gibraltar, they have lost experienced volunteers and tens of tons of arms. The security forces appear to act on good information and informers are obviously a problem.

In this situation the Provos will clutch at any straw which might offer a way out of the impasse they're in. But no amount of talking, no degree of political re-organisation

or education can make any difference. What's needed is a fundamental change in the politics which lie behind the Republican Movement.

The basic divide in Ireland, North and South, is not between opposing national interests. It is between class interests.

As long as republicans believe that the basic divide in Irish society is along lines of nation rather than class they will inevitably be pushed towards alliances with middle class nationalist groups like the SDLP. And middle class groups—because they are middle class—have no interest in changing the present constitutional arrangements.

What's needed are politics that offer an entirely different kind of appeal to the mass of the people. We need politics that can hold out the possibility of a totally different kind of society where there is no unemployment, no discrimination, no poverty, no repression, where the mass of working people make for themselves the decisions which affect our lives.

That kind of politics can bring real hope and inspiration to all the working people of Ireland, Catholic and Protestant, North and South.

Because of their politics, Republicans cannot get themselves out of the impasse they're in. Republicanism which offers only a vision of national independence cannot really change anything in Ireland.

Only the politics of revolutionary socialism with its aim of a total transformation of society can bring the unity of the working class needed to rid Ireland of the oppression of capitalism and of British imperialism

—GORETTI HORGAN

# MAY '68



# 'WHEN ALL IS POSSIBLE'

by MARNIE HOLBOROW

by more than a third, to 26% of the Gross National Product.

This had been done at a cost to French workers. They were the second worst paid in the Common Market and working the longest hours. Action had begun before May for wage claims and work practices and had met a hardened response from the bosses. That frustration blew up in May.

The students too were products of the new French capitalism. A more educated workforce was required for the new burst of the economy. Student numbers had swelled from 100,000 in 1945 to a massive half a million in 1967. The universities were creaking under the strain. The type of course offered seemed irrelevant. Traditional conservative ethics were resented. The student protests had first started over petty rules about single-sex halls of residences.

But both workers' and students' perceptions were not only formed by what happened in France. Viet-

transformation of a student movement into a strike movement of workers astonished everyone. One leader of the CFDT explained:

"Put yourself in the shoes of our lads. In a few days they learnt many things.

"First of all that action pays. No one used to talk of the problems of university, now everyone does. . . No one thought De Gaulle would be beaten in the streets. Then Pompidou gave in and the students occupied the Sorbonne. On top of this there was the demonstration of 13th May. There had been nothing like it since Liberation. . . People had never imagined themselves so strong".

"Everything is possible" was one of the dominant slogans of May. The students' action had showed that change was possible. Workers quickly drew the lessons.

But if workers were challenging the bosses and De Gaulle, they were also challenging their own union leaders. The occupations were started from below not called from above.

in other wages.

Initially it looked as though the Grenelle Agreement would be rejected as Billancourt, Citroen, Berliet and other factories voted to continue the strike. CGT Leader Seguy was booed at Billancourt.

But no movement can stand still. In those crucial days after 25th May there was a dire need for political solutions to be put to the striking workers. The reformists filled the gap. Having sabotaged the strike movement, they made out they would challenge De Gaulle—but only in electoral terms. Mitterand proposed an emergency government headed by Mended-France, a moderate and one time Prime Minister. The Communist Party put in their bid for power in a demonstration of 29th May calling for "a popular and democratic government".

However, it was General De Gaulle that called their bluff. He had left France at the height of the general strike, supposedly to talk to the notorious General Massu of the Algerian War. On 30th May he flew back and announced a general election at which the main issue was to be the stopping of "totalitarian communism".

This was enough to rally the right, 600,000 supporters of De Gaulle thronged through Paris shouting anti-communist slogans and racist abuse at Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the student leaders.

Commentators on the events of May have often said that it was De Gaulle's speech that rallied sense back into the French people and turned their heads away from fanciful revolution. The truth is somewhat different.

## ELECTIONS

De Gaulle's plea for parliamentary elections was not going to get workers back to work. Ironically enough, the very communist threat that De Gaulle was denouncing was his best ally. It was the CGT leaders that enabled the return to normality that De Gaulle so wanted.

There was opposition from the local strike committees. Citroen and Peugeot stayed out until June 25th, the journalists till mid-June and many had large minorities voting against the deal. At Flins the local deal—consisting of 14% increase, an hour and a half off the working week and some wages for days on strike—was rejected by 40%.

But the trade union leaders and the reformist parties behind them had managed to shift the mood. The ten million workers who had moved together in struggle now trickled back to work and the movement fell back. It did so because the old leaders of the labour movement had done all they could to get a return to work in the key factories.

By so doing, they had brought a change in attitudes which enabled the Gaullists to win the elections.

They had said revolutionary change was not possible. As the strike wave ebbed so De Gaulle support in the election campaign grew. At the polls on June 23 and June 30, he was returned with a majority unrivalled in the history of Republican France.

## '68 Almanac

- 2 May Anti-imperialist Day called by students union (UNEF). Left/Right battles on university campuses.
- 3 May Student revolt spreads. Riot police (CRS) invades Nanterre. Cohn-Bendit arrested by police, for "assault."
- 6 May Nanterre students protest at Cohn-Bendit's disciplinary hearing. Riot police move in on protesters. Arrest 500. Police cordons attack students. Full scale fighting in Latin Quarter.
- 8 May 50,000 students demonstrate across Paris. Workers join demonstrators. Mass meeting at Mutualite Hall in Paris.
- 10 May "Night of the Barricades" throughout Latin Quarter. Pitched battles with CRS. 367 wounded, 460 arrests.
- 11 May CGT and CFDT join call for demonstration for Monday 13th
- 13 May 800,000 on demonstration, the biggest since liberation in 1944. Main banner: students, teachers, workers, solidarity"
- 14 May 2,000 workers at Sud Aviation factory at Nantes occupy.
- 15 May Workers at Cleon Renault factory (Rouen) barricade themselves in factory.
- 16 May Cleon workers bring out Flins Renault and massive Boulogne Billancourt Renault plant occupied. Odeon theatre occupied and transformed into permanent debating place for all. 1,000 students march to Billancourt in solidarity.
- 18 May De Gaulle cuts short Roumanian visit.
- 19 May 2 million workers on strike
- 22 May 10 million workers on strike. Cohn Bendit declared "undesirable alien". "We are all undesirable aliens" demonstration.
- 24 May De Gaulle's plea to return to order ignored. Agricultural workers fraternise with striking workers in Rennes and Nantes.
- 25 May Start of Union/Government talks.
- 26 May Grenelle Agreements reached. Deal rejected at Citroen, Berliet, Sud Aviation, Rhodiacaeta.
- 27 May CGT Leader Seguy booed at Renault and told to resign at 40,000 strong mass meeting at Charlety stadium.
- 28 May Mitterand proposes Provisional Government under Mended-France.
- 29 May 500,000 On CGT demonstration: calling for a "popular and democratic government with Communist participation". De Gaulle leaves France and has talks with General Massu at Baden-Baden.
- 30 May De Gaulle's television broadcast.
- 1 June Right wing demonstration: "Le communisme ne passera pas" and "Cohn-Bendit a Dachau".

SOMETIMES a few hours can have more impact than ten year years.

The evening of Friday, 10th May in Paris's Latin Quarter. Students and school students, wind down the Boulevard St Michel to the Seine. They are on the fifth demonstration of that week.

The demonstrators find their way blocked by rows of CRS riot police in full battle gear, spread out across the bridges of the Seine.

The students fan out in the adjoining narrow streets and set up barricades. They dig up cobblestones from the streets, parked car, material from the building sites. The Night of the Barricades had begun.

The CRS in charge after charge driving students from their defences and rifle-butting and beating them with truncheons. The students fighting from the barricades, then carried off wounded and bleeding into police vans. The pitched battle that raged until the early hours struck a deep cord in everyone who saw and heard the news the next day. 367 students wounded, 460 arrested.

Just 3 days later, on the Monday following, hundreds of thousands of workers took to the streets. In Paris 800,000 workers marched behind a banner which read "Students, teachers, workers, solidarity". Union leaders from the CGT and the CFDT—who had only days before denounced the students as "false revolutionaries"—fell in behind the students at the front of the march.

On that demonstration were some workers from a small factory called Sud Aviation in Nantes, south west of Paris. They had been having 15 minute strikes for the past weeks against short-time working. The day after the demonstration, they locked up the manager and supervisory staff and barricaded themselves in their factory.

They were the first to occupy. The next day the Renault factories took up the call. The gearbox plant

at Cleon, near Rouen, then Flins, then Le Mans and the vast Renault plant at Billancourt, just outside Paris were occupied. By the Friday of that week workers occupations held every Renault plant, all the aerospace industry, and were spreading to the metal industry of Paris and Normandy and the shipyards of the West.

By Monday, strikes spread to white collar workers. Insurance industries, department stores, banks and the print. By the end of that week museums, film studios, theatres, even the Folies Bergeres, the Parisian Can-Can dancers, were affected. Footballers refused to play. The TV journalists struck and radio newscasters announced their strike over the radio.

## GROUPS

Local and workplace groups—committees of action—ran the strikes on the ground. In Nantes the strike committee took control of running the whole town issuing credit tokens and rationing petrol.

In the third week of May, 10 million workers were on strike—the biggest strike that western has ever seen. The Night of the Barricades had started something that was to leave its imprint on a whole generation.

How did the occupations spread so quickly? The answer lies in what had been happening in French society.

De Gaulle's France was very authoritarian. It was more like the less developed capitalism of Mediterranean Europe or the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe. De Gaulle ran the government virtually single-handedly and excluded other political representation. "Ten years is enough" were the first chants of May.

This authoritarianism had responded to the needs of the French ruling class. It wanted a major push to make French capitalism more profitable. Under De Gaulle the rate of capital accumulation was raised

nam had raised important political questions about imperialism. (France had been in Vietnam before the Americans) and showed that it could be knocked back. The National Vietnam Committee had been founded in France in 1966 and many of the students had been on its demonstrations. 1968 saw the Prague Spring in Eastern Europe and civil rights battles in the USA. Both challenged ideas about "western democracy" and "socialism".

But how did the workers come to identify with the students? The

The union turn-out for the 13 May demonstration was the result of pressure from the rank and file and the CGT leaders hoped it would end there.

During the first week of the general strike the union leaders were powerless in face of the spontaneous upsurge of struggle.

But on 25th May they entered into negotiations with Pompidou the Prime Minister. The following day they had struck a deal. The Grenelle Agreement conceded a 35% rise in the minimum wage and a 7% increase

# WAS



## What went wrong

IN MANY of the nostalgic outpourings 20 years on from May 68, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the fact that it was a student revolt.

Ten million workers on strike seems to have receded into the background. Yet that was what was most important. The sheer scale of workers' action amazed everyone. Particularly those people who had thought that the sixties had begun to buy off the workers.

Andre Gorz, theorist of the "new working class", spoke for many on the left when he wrote in early '68 that there would be no more general strikes. Workers had a material interest in new capitalism and so could no longer lead towards social change. The French workers proved Gorz and the others wrong.

If May 68 was anything, it was a tremendous one in the eye for the idea that revolutionary general strikes simply could not happen in Europe any more.

But didn't May 68 just prove that workers were won back to the old way—to Gaullism and that real change is not possible?

The truth is that there was nothing inevitable about the movement falling back after the third week in May. Indeed it had to be consciously pushed back by the union leaders and the leaders of the CP.

A minority of workers did openly refuse the reformist solution. The problem was that they had only their own local rank and file organisations to fall back on and no co-ordinated political party to give

a political lead to their action.

The Committees d'Action did provide a means by which different sections of workers and students could come together and exchange experiences of the struggle and co-ordinate action. However, they could not substitute for a political party. More general assemblies of these committees could not in themselves decide a political response in the crucial days at the end of May. Indeed, when the groups met then they remained inconclusive on what to do.

Lack of political leadership from the base of the movement left it open to capture from on top. The only alternative that really posed itself to De Gaulle turned out to be the old traditional left whose only aim was getting a say in the government.

There could have been another way. There was the option of extending and deepening the strike movement. That would have involved a maturing of the spontaneous committees of action into real workers' councils which sought the involvement of all sections of workers through strike committees, mass meetings, picketing rotas etc.

Sadly few on the left were clearly arguing for such things. Too often, revolt against the union leaders had led many to reject methodical organisation altogether. Others hoped that some spontaneous

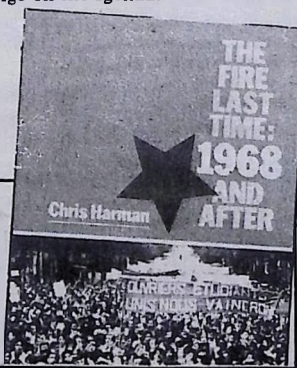
alternative might emerge without the conscious leadership of a revolutionary organisation.

Many of the revolutionary left were simply unfamiliar with working class organisations and unused to putting their arguments to workers even if they did understand like the JCR the key role of the working class.

The revolutionary left did grow after 68. The JCR and the Maoists and the Cohn-Bendit's 22 March Movement were formally banned in mid June. Their size however multiplied in the vacuum of 68, yet it could not fill it.

A revolutionary organisation cannot rely on its political development in these high points of struggle alone. It has to have in its midst a significant core of experienced revolutionaries—trained in Marxist ideas and working class struggle in the more difficult times—who can then take advantage of those momentous upturns when they occur.

May 68 was a tremendous source of inspiration for many socialists. We must ensure that the fire next time really puts revolutionary change on the agenda.



"The Fire Last Time—1968 and After" by Chris Harman £7.95 post included from SW Books PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

### MARXIST CLASSICS

## Portrait of an outcast

TROTSKY'S "My Life" was written in 1930 as a way of raising money for its suddenly impoverished writer. It is written in a luxuriant style with a long account of boyhood. At times it's literary style makes it a little slow for a modern reader. But it is worth persevering with for a superb account of Trotsky's fight for working class revolution.

The book sets the record straight on Trotsky's "Menshevism". In the early days of Russian socialism, he argued against Lenin on the nature of the party: "At the time of the London Congress in 1903 revolution was still largely a theoretical abstraction to me. Independently, I still could not see Lenin's centralism as the logical conclusion of a clear revolutionary concept". He sided with the Mensheviks against Lenin for a very short time believing that the Bolsheviks were building a centralised party to substitute for the working class. But very soon formally withdrew from the Mensheviks when he saw their compromise with the liberal bourgeoisie. He did not join the Bolsheviks formally until 1917, by which time he had already become with Lenin the unquestioned leader of the revolution that became the October revolution.

Despite his differences, Trotsky kept in close touch with Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the intervening years. It was in co-operation with the Bolsheviks that Trotsky became President of the 1905 St Petersburg soviet.

After the 1905 revolution, Trotsky developed his theory of Permanent Revolution. Here he argued that Tsarism in Russia would only be overthrown by the establishment of the workers state; Workers power in Russia would however only survive by the spread of the revolution to the more advanced capitalist countries. The theory was in contradiction to the dominant view that Russia had to pass through two stages: a democratic revolution and only later a socialist revolution.

But by 1917 it had become clear that Lenin had come to agree with this view. He had to fight the "Old Bolsheviks" inside his own party who wanted to give critical support to the moderate Kerensky government that came to power in February. Trotsky now played a major role in organising the October insurrection.

He found himself imprisoned by the Kerensky government in the July days of 1917. The Kronstadt sailors came to seek his advice in Kresty prison: "I advised them to put off the squaring of their account with Kerensky until they had finished Kornilov".

The army of soldiers, workers and sailors that rose against the White Guard General Kornilov, became the basis for the forces of the October revolution itself. The Bolsheviks took advantage of their victory over Kornilov to arm the workers and to ensure that power would go to the soviets.

Trotsky, released by events from prison took control of the Smolny Institute, the Bolshevik stronghold and prepared for the seizure of power, the insurrection.

On the night of the 24th October he issued an order to all those under his command, "If you fail to stop them (Kerensky's forces) with

words, use arms. You will answer with your life."

He describes the scene himself, "Armed detachments from the districts march along the streets, ring the bells at the gates or open the gates without ringing and take possession of one institution after another. Nearly everywhere these detachments are met by friends who have been waiting impatiently for them—all the more important points in the city are given over into our hands almost without resistance, without fighting, without casualties. The telephone alone informs us, "We are here!"

Next day, taken by surprise as are all the government newspapers, the Kerensky parliament demand an agreement with the Bolsheviks. Trotsky's reply to them was:

Our uprising has won. And now we are being asked to give up our victory, to come to an agreement. With whom? You are wretched disunited individuals. You are bankrupts. Your part is over. Go to the place where you belong from now on—the dustbin of history".

Afterwards it was Trotsky who built up the Red Army, in many cases having to use former Tsarist officers.

Though fighting against the American, Japanese and British expeditionary forces together with the White Guards, and with poor arms and starving conditions, they managed to beat them all back.



After the Civil War, Trotsky faced his great battle with Stalin's doctrine of Socialism in one country.

Trotsky understood very well, because he was a Marxist, that Stalin, unconsciously at that time, represented the backlash, the reaction to revolution and its failure to spread internationally to Germany, France, Britain, USA. All revolutions in history have been followed by reaction. Even the limited nationalist revolution in Ireland was followed by a period of Free State government terrorism and reaction. That magnified a hundred times was what Stalinism was about.

"Socialism in one country" had nothing to do with socialism. It was a code word for the Russian bureaucrats that set them on the task of building up Russian industry and the Russian state. By arguing that socialism was being built in Russia, Stalin transformed the world's communist parties into defenders of the Russian state, rather than agitators for revolution in their own country. They consistently sought out "progressive allies" who made friendly gestures to Russia.

Trotsky was first exiled to Siberia and then expelled from Russia to Turkey where he rested for a moment to write "My Life" in 1930. His comment on his banishment was: "Since my exile I have more than once read musings in the newspapers on the subject of the "tragedy" that has befallen me. I know of no personal tragedy. I know the change of two chapters of the revolution".

"My Life" is a superb introduction to the politics of Leon Trotsky and his fight for world revolution.

—JIM BLAKE

# When the Irish Labour Party went RED

"IT IS almost respectable now to be a socialist". So claimed the new General Secretary of the Labour Party, Brendan Halligan, in 1967. It was the first signal that the most conservative social democratic party in Europe was about to turn left.

The sixties had been a decade of boom in the South of Ireland. The economy grew at an annual average of 4% a year—double that of the fifties. Rural Ireland declined but in the cities there were jobs to be had. Between 1960 and 1978 employment in industry grew by 24%.

For the first time there was a growth in the Irish population as emigration fell off. The South had begun to catch up with the great boom in the world economy.

All of this gave tremendous confidence to the working class. The building workers started a fight for the 40 hour week. Previously conservative workers such as bank clerks and teachers were taking action to demand wage increases. Respect for the picket line and solidarity was established.

In many cases the control of strikes rested in the hands of lay executive committees rather than the full time bureaucrats. By the end of the sixties it was clear that the number of strike days lost was double that of the fifties and that three times as many workers had been involved.

This outburst of militancy sought a political outlet. The Irish Labour Party was then the only party on the left. It had been out of Coalition for ten years. Its old extreme right leader, Norton, had died.

In 1963 the tiny National Progressive Democrat Party which consisted of the veteran left-winger Noel Browne and his ally Jack McQuillan dissolved itself and joined the Labour Party. In 1967, the ITGWU broke from its unspoken alliance with Fianna Fail to affiliate to the Labour Party. A year later, the ATGWU and its leader Matt Merrigan joined.

There now followed an influx of left-wingers into the party. Very soon the Dublin Regional Council of the party was totally dominated by the left. Many workers who had fought for the 40 hour week, or who had followed the Dublin Housing Action Committee in its marches against the housing cuts turned to Labour. The mood was for a break with the green Tory politics of Fianna Fail. Connolly who had long since been buried in the history books as a saintly nationalist was re-discovered.

Thousands began to wear the Connolly badge and flocked into the party that now claimed to stand in his tradition.

Labour also attracted a section of the tiny left wing intelligentsia; Conor Cruise O'Brien, then a left winger and a contributor to the British New Left Review magazine joined. So did Justin Keating, a former Communist Party member and David Thornley, then one of the best known TV presenters.

Faced with this new mood of confidence among workers and the pressure from the left, the leadership began to use left rhetoric that would put Emmet Stagg or MD Higgins to shame. Brendan Corish, the then leader declared that if there was ever a prospect of coalition being raised again, he would retire to the back benches. Michael O Leary declared that their aim was "to drive the other conservative parties into one great camp".

By 1969, the left wing was riding high. Two conferences that year showed the depth of their influence. Not only was Coalition ruled out, but a series of radical policies were passed which Labour has never equalled since.

The party committed itself to nationalising the banks and all major financial institutions. The building industry was also to be nationalised in order to beat the housing crisis. The estates of large landowners were to "be vested in the community".

The Labour Party declared itself opposed to schemes of profit sharing and workers' participation in companies. These, it said, were a "device for controlling and exploiting for profit".

## RADICAL

Under the impact of the May events in Paris, it produced a very radical education document. Schools were to be placed under local democratic control; there was to be pupil representation through student councils and discipline was to be maintained by students themselves.

It even passed a resolution that: "recognised the need for social revolution on a world scale to oppose the force of counter-revolutionary imperialism and racism".

The party also lent support for the Civil Rights Movement in the North. Its Northern spokesperson, Cruise O'Brien took the platform with the likes of Bernadette McAliskey to back the movement against the Stormont state.

**But throughout all this left rhetoric it remained a classic social democratic party. All sections of the party were busily engaged in formulating policies for when it was the majority government.**

There was no section that saw the mass activity of workers themselves outside the walls of parliament as the key to socialism. Capitalism was to be taken over from the top by the nationalising zeal of a left labour party and its commitment to a plan for Economic Development.

In June 1969, the Fianna Fail government called a general election. Labour entered enough candidates so that it could form a majority Labour government. All overtures from Fine Gael, then describing itself as a party of the left were rejected! O Leary was to describe them as an "alliance of the most



top. Noel Browne and Matt Merrigan ran as independent Labour candidates. left. Cruise O'Brien and Brendan Corish.

reactionary elements of the countryside and a certain section of the professional classes of the towns".

Labour's campaign was met by an outburst of red-baiting. The Fianna Fail leader Jack Lynch, toured the convents attacking "godless Marxism". Neil Blaney declared that Labour had a secret plan to invite in the Red Army to set up nuclear warheads around the coast. A remark of Cruise O'Brien's that an Irish embassy should be opened in Cuba was taken as proof positive that a Cuban style regime was in the offing if Labour won.

Labour's response to the witch hunt was weak in the extreme. Its general secretary Halligan said that the party was only trying to implement the teachings of Pope John 23rd in his encyclical Mater et Magistra. Another left winger John O'Connell claimed that Labour's left policies had actually fallen short of the Pope's.

Despite the witch hunt Labour did well in votes. In Dublin it won nine times as many votes as it had done previously in 1957. It reached its highest vote in recent years with 18% of the vote. But the combination of the witch hunt and the rejection of an electoral pact with Fine Gael hit its rural TDs hard. It only won 8 seats outside Dublin and overall the number of its TDs had declined from 22 to 18.

This now became the occasion for a backlash within the party against the left. The left was open to this attack. Labour was essentially a party geared to elections and to maximising its presence in the Dail.

The left itself shared these assumptions. The whole thrust of its policies had been geared for implementation by a majority Labour government. But now its own rhetoric was losing seats in the rural areas.

**Soon after the election an extreme right wing TD from Limerick, Stephan Coughlan launched an attack on anti-apartheid campaigners and left wingers who "were completely opposed to our Christian**

**traditions". A month later he showed just what those "Christian traditions" were by justifying the anti-Jewish program in Limerick in 1904.**

Corish and Thornley opposed any moves to discipline him lest Labour's rural base was to slip even further.

Meanwhile left wingers who recognised the growing gap between the left rhetoric and the real politics of the Parliamentary party, set up the Socialist Labour Alliance. This brought together socialists from inside and outside the Labour party and included a number of revolutionary socialist organisations.

Its first conference attracted several hundred supporters. But the Administrative Council of the Labour Party declared it a proscribed organisation and purged its members from their ranks. The witch hunt against the left had begun.

The right wing was now growing in confidence. Despite Labour's declared support for the legalisation of contraception, three of its rural TDs, Dan Spring, Coughlan and Michael Pat Murphy joined with Fianna Fail to defeat a Private Members Bill from Labour's own John O'Connell. Calls for their expulsion from the Labour Party fell on deaf ears.

However it was the eruption of the Northern crisis that was to lead to the disintegration of the left inside the Labour Party. Despite its support for the Civil Right movement's campaign, Labour had no difficulty in giving full support to the sending in of the British army into the North. Increasingly, it was the left inside the party that moved to saying that partition was not the issue and that the British army was therefore playing a peaceful role in the North.

Conor Cruise O'Brien now propounded the argument of the "two communities" theory, which claimed that the Northern crisis arose from a form of tribalism. And the worst tribe were those who dared to defy the might of the state with riots and eventually the armed

struggle.

These views were given a vague left wing gloss with the claim that the sectarian state in the South had first to be changed before unity could be achieved.

The South did—and still does—enshrine sectarian Catholic laws. But both states are mirror images of each other. Claiming that the South had first to be reformed by a series of liberal measures, was simply a ploy for ducking out of a fight against the Northern state when that struggle escalated.

Labour's left now began a vicious series of attacks on the republican resistance. Noel Browne condemned their "glorification of violence". O Leary demanded that they be brought before the Southern Courts to be tried for their crimes.

The confusion of the left came to a head with the Arms crisis on 6th May 1970.

Two FF Ministers, Haughey and Blaney were sacked for involvement in a plan to ship arms to the North.

The Northern crisis had brought a major crack within the FF and the Southern State.

The Labour Party did an about turn. Michael O Leary now declared that Fine Gael had shifted to the left. Cruise O'Brien and John O'Connell, previously on the left began to openly call for Coalition.

In December 1970, a special Labour Congress was called. The Administrative Council of the Party claimed that Labour now had a responsibility to the nation".

The anti-coalition strategy had to be dropped to defeat FF. At a packed Congress the left could only muster 250 votes out of 850. The left in Labour had been destroyed. They had been beaten by two key factors. The party's electoral tradition had come up against the left rhetoric.

And the perceived threat to the Southern state had brought the usual rush by reformists to defend the state. The left who regarded the republicans as the main threat to socialism had collapsed before these arguments.

The tragedy is that the left has learned little since then.



# LETTERS

## Funny crowd the Workers Party

I FIND it difficult to understand the attitude of the Workers Party towards violence.

Recently at a Corporation meeting in Kilkenny, Workers Party Councillor Liam Quigley, was quoted as saying, "Simply, we must stand up for peace and show we are in favour of people".

Who the people are I don't know because Comrade Quigley does not expand on this. He made this statement while calling for a Peace Park to be established in Kilkenny.

It appears that the WP policy on violence is based on moral grounds not on any ideological basis.

When one hear that a

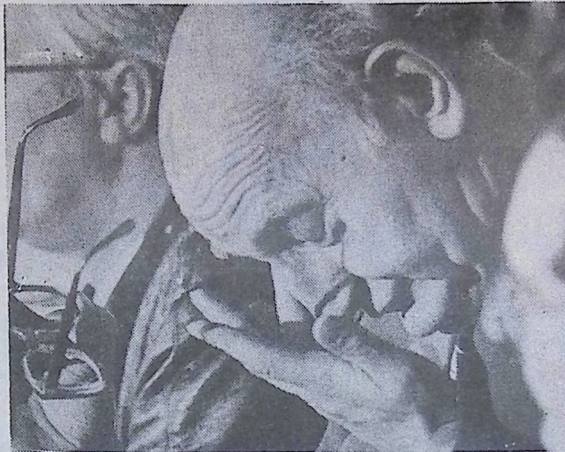
representative of the PLO attended the WP Ard/Fheis, one is even more baffled.

The attitude of the WP to Northern Ireland is even more amazing. Most of the WP's time is being devoted to attacking the Provo's while in the same breath they are calling on working class people in the North to rally round the Security Forces.

Speaking recently at a 1916 Commemoration, Proinsias De Rossa felt that James Connolly, if he were around today would be a legitimate target of the Provos.

Funny crowd the Workers Party!

M. DELANEY  
KILKENNY



Tomas MacGiolla

## SW's 'crude drivell'

"CAPITALISM. The way it distorts every aspect of our lives including our sexual relationships, is the root cause of rape", wrote Eve Morrison in an article on violence against women in last month's strangely-titled "Analysis" page. In the same issue, reviewing Noel Halifax's pamphlet on gay liberation, Brian Hanley writes: "Capitalism defined what was 'normal' and so created the 'homosexual' as a social type. Gay oppression was born".

This is nothing but crude, reductionist drivell. This is perpetuating the notion the oppression of women, the oppression of gays, imperialist oppression, racism and so on, all directly result from capitalism and once you get rid of capitalism all these absurdities will disappear. This is the magical "explanation" that SWM reduces everything to.

Sadly, reality is a bit more complex. As you well know, violence against women went on in the types of societies which preceded capitalism, so capitalism cannot be the "root cause" of rape. Similarly with gay oppression; Brian Hanley thinks that Ancient Greece was heaven on earth for gays. Far from it. The "highest

form of love" was not homosexuality but that of the unequal relationship between a dominating adult male and a weak submissive boy. Lesbian sexuality was unthinkable to the Greeks because it meant the women could direct their own sexuality and have no need of male "guidance".

(In the Greeks' simplistic scheme of things, one sexual partner took an active dominant role in any relationship—and that had to be the man—and the other a submissive role—the woman or boy.) Periods of history when repression of gays was widespread (such as the Spanish Inquisition) you conveniently forget about.

The fact is homosexuality has never been accepted in the way that we want it to be.

Clearly then, the relation between capitalism and anti-woman, anti-gay repression, is not one of creator and created.

Rather, emerging capitalism made use of already existing forms of oppression and tailored them to its own requirements until they became vital to its functioning.

A workers' revolution, by the very nature of what it involves will deal crushing blows to these forms of oppression. But it does not guarantee women's or gay

liberation. These demands will still have to be taken up and fought for.

The attitude of SWM in this respect is not very helpful. Eve Morrison in her article says absolutely nothing about the right of women to organise as women.

It's as if we have to forget

that women are oppressed as women, gays are oppressed as women, blacks are oppressed as blacks, Northern Catholics as Northern Catholics.

Distorting history serves no purpose whatsoever. If we think Marxism is so devastating an analysis of society, then we don't need to distort. Nor do we need such mechanical applications of the science as SWM gives it.

JASON O'DONNELL  
CORK

### SW REPLIES

Oppression of all kinds is a social relationship. People are held down by those on top and by the institutions and ideologies created to keep them on top.

It is bound up with the existence of classes in society. In the earliest times there was not enough produced to allow a minority to raise itself above the rest. Once society progressed to provide a surplus upon which a ruling class could base itself, class rule and oppression were inevitable until enough could be produced to provide a life free from scarcity for all.

The position of women is a barometer of class relationships. That is the marxist position. Those who reject it explain oppression either by "people having wrong ideas in their heads" or in terms of "human nature".

The first is no explanation at all as it does not explain how people come to have these wrong ideas in the first place; the second echoes the reactionary ruling class view that oppression is natural and nothing can be done about it.

The point of citing Ancient Greece is not to idealise it but to demonstrate that sexuality, like

every other aspect of "human nature" is socially determined and subject to change.

Class society creates and re-creates racism, sexism etc. Modern class society is capitalism. In this sense "capitalism IS the root cause of rape".

We defend the right of the oppressed to organise any way they like. The people who are stopping them are the capitalist class, its state and its allies, like the church, SPUC, etc. (Section 31, Diplock Courts, Supreme Court interference in the abortion referral clinics and so on.)

The point is HOW to organise to win. Until the working class organise to smash capitalism and re-organise society on a classless basis, the institutions of oppression will continue to be recreated every day.

Arguing with workers the importance of fighting all oppression and the necessity of socialist revolution is the "crude, reductionist" core of Bolshevism.

It is the politics Eve Morrison, Noel Halifax and Brian Hanley were defending and Socialist Worker stands by it.

## What we stand for

The Socialist Workers Movement is a marxist organisation fighting for a workers' republic in Ireland and for socialism internationally.

FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

We begin from the proposition that what determines the nature of any society is the system by which its wealth is produced. In the system we live under, capitalism, production is geared to profit, not to human need. Among its inevitable features are poverty, war, racism and sexism. Capitalism cannot be destroyed and these evils thus eradicated by piecemeal reform. It can only be destroyed by revolutionary action by the class which creates all the wealth, the working class.

The machinery of the capitalist state—parliament, courts, army, police etc—is designed to protect the interests of the ruling capitalist class, not to regulate society in a neutral fashion. At most, parliament can be used, sometimes, to make propaganda against capitalism. It cannot be used to smash capitalism. Only a workers' revolution can do that and establish a truly democratic society in which workers hold power directly through delegates elected from workplaces and areas and are re-callable and replaceable at any time by those who elect them.

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

This kind of socialism does not exist anywhere today. Workers do not have control in Russia, China, Cuba etc. Instead, power is held by a state-capitalist class. A workers' revolution is needed in these countries too.

We are against NATO and the Warsaw Pact and all weapons of mass destruction. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

FOR AN END TO PARTITION

The Northern State was created by British imperialism in its own interests. Sectarianism and bigotry were built into it and will continue to exist for as long as the state exists.

The marginal privileges given to Protestant workers are just that: marginal. It is in the immediate interest of Protestant as well as Catholic workers to fight against their exploitation. It is in the interest of all Northern workers to unite against the state and aim at socialism in Ireland.

We support all forces struggling against imperialism and the Northern state, regardless of differences we may have with them.

The interests of the Southern ruling class are no longer in fundamental conflict with those of imperialism. Southern capitalism is a junior player in the world capitalist system. The Southern state too, props up partition, despite occasional nationalist rhetoric.

The "national question" can be solved only by mass working class struggle against both states. Republicanism, by limiting the immediate struggle to the achievement of "national unity", and by appealing for all-class alliances in pursuit of this goal, can never lead the working class towards the defeat of imperialism.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We fight for free contraception, abortion on demand and the right to divorce. We oppose all discrimination against gays and lesbians. We stand for secular control of hospitals and schools. We fight for the complete separation of church and state.

FOR A FIGHT IN THE UNIONS

Trade unions exist to protect workers' interests under capitalism. The role of trade union leaders is to negotiate with bosses over workers' position within capitalism. To destroy capitalism, we need a rank and file movement in the unions separate from the leaderships and fighting for workers' interests regardless of the needs of capitalism.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To destroy capitalism and achieve socialism the most class conscious sections of the working class must be organised in a revolutionary party. The SWM aims to build such a party through spreading its ideas and through its activity in the working class movement. We stand in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. We urge all who sympathise with our politics to join us.

## What's On

The Socialist Workers Movement meets regularly in branches around the country.

Each meeting begins with a political discussion.

Meetings are open to those who support the politics of the paper *Socialist Worker*, and want to find out more about the SWM.

**DUBLIN** branch of SWM meets every Wednesday at the Bachelors Inn, Bachelors Walk.  
Wednesday 4 May: Italy—the Read Years—1920—1922.  
Wednesday 11 May: The Politics of Jim Larkin.  
Wednesday 18 May: From Lenin to Stalin.  
Wednesday 25 May: PUBLIC

**MEETING:** The Lessons of May '68; speaker: Marnie Holborow, Belvedere Hotel 8.00pm.

**WATERFORD** branch of SWM meets Mondays in the Hi Bee Pub., Waterford.

Monday 9 May: Israel—The Hijack State.  
Monday 23 May: Trotsky and Permanent Revolution.  
Monday 6 June: The Revolutionary Paper.

**CORK** branch of SWM meets in the Clock Inn Tavern, every Thursday night at 8 pm.

Thursday 5 May: The Origins of May Day

Thursday 12 May: May '68 in Paris.

Thursday 19 May: China—1948-1988

Friday 27 May: PUBLIC MEETING: The lessons of May '68. Carpenters Hall

**BELFAST** branch of the SWM meets in the Conway Mill at 7.30 on Monday nights.  
Monday 2 May: Is Cuba Socialist?  
Monday 9 May: The Gulf War  
Monday 16 May: From Lenin to Stalin.  
Monday 23 May: PUBLIC

**MEETING:** The lessons of May '68.

Monday 30 May: The politics of Jessie Jackson.

**GALWAY** branch of SWM meets in Billy Walshe's Bar, Dominick St. on Tuesday nights.  
Tuesday 3 May: Marxism and Religion.  
Tuesday 10 May: Why the World Economy is in crisis.

Tuesday 17 May: From Lenin to Stalin.  
Thursday 26 May: PUBLIC MEETING: The lessons of May '68, Atlanta Hotel, Dominick St.  
Tuesday 31 May: Gay Liberation and Socialism.

## Join us!

I would like to join the SWM  
 I would like more details of SWM

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

send to SWM, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

## REVIEWS

CLASH  
CRASH

IT MIGHT seem obvious, but if you want to read about politics, don't read rock books.

I've just read an account of the progress of The Clash, from the early days of punk in 1977, through to guitarist Mick Jones leaving in 1982.

The most meaningful political statement in the book was a quote from Joe Strummer: "We're political . . . but if you think we read 'Socialist Worker', you must be out of your mind. I can't read that journalism because it's so slanted and biased. . ."

The inclusion of this quote, apart from what it says about the people who "write" rock books, really surprised me, because I had always thought the Clash were some sort of revolutionaries, albeit with a small 'r'!

Remember White Riot, or even Guns of Brixton—"whenthey kick in your front door, how're you gonna come; with your hands on your head, or on the trigger of a gun?" Didn't they name their

fourth album Sandinista, and what about those gigs for Rock Against Racism?

Strummer is even quoted as once saying he believed in socialism, but didn't for one moment believe that Russia was socialist. How then could he come out with a statement which is itself prejudiced?

Ironically, the answer lies in Joe Strummer's chosen profession—rock and roll.

Just before the break-up in 1982, upon Strummer's mysterious disappearance, ex-manager Bernie Rhodes was quoted as saying that "Joe Strummer's personal conflict is 'where does the socially concerned rock artist stand in the bubble-gum environment of today?' Whether Joe knew it or not, Bernie was probably correct.

Chris Dean of the Redskins would know all about it. The Redskins self-destructed because of their inability to reconcile their revolutionary socialism with the demands of the pop market. To shift more units, to reach a bigger



audience, there was no way the Redskins could continue to give their LP's titles like Neither Washington nor Moscow, and so they split.

Becoming a rock and roll star necessitates jettisoning all the baggage of social awareness. The

Redskins retained their politics, up to a point, but even rockin' revolutionaries can only sing ABOUT rocking the system.

Joe Strummer didn't think so—There's so much corruption. . . It's got to be flushed out. . . that's what the Clash is all about.

In the end, Joe Strummer was forced to admit that there would be no White Riot, and the Clash folded. These days he seems to be back where he started, and playing gigs for Rock Against the Rich.

Politically The Clash were never as direct as the Redskins.

Their rhetoric was often only directed against the values of the system—"that safe, soppy slush that come out of the radio"—rather than the system itself. Mind you, it never detracted one bit from the music.

—KEN MULKEARN

Sixty years of  
back slapping

"Blockbuster"—Last Emperor

SIXTY YEARS ago Louis B Mayer, (the Saatchi and Saatchi of MGM) had a brainwave.

That brainwave was the "Academy Awards" ceremony. Granted there have been better brainwaves, for example, workers' power and International socialism, but to Louis B Mayer and the Hollywood bosses, his brainwave was of equal magnitude.

Hollywood at the time

was plagued with sex scandals and its image needed cleaning up. The Academy Awards were the thing to do it.

Sixty years on, the ceremony has become known as "the climax of the Hollywood year", (sounds like an exciting kind of town!)

The TV audience is above the 400, million mark. The Oscars are big business.

The winning nominations are chosen by the 4,400 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

## No celebrations for first Australians

AUSTRALIA'S bosses reckon their nation is 200 years old, but their recent bicentennial party was spoiled by protesting Aborigines, who themselves have lived there for 1600 generations, 40,000 years before the First Fleet ever reached Australia.

Watching "Murphy's Australia", it struck me how little or no mention was made of these people, echoing the fiction surrounding the white settlement of Australia: that the Aborigines didn't exist.

Australia was first named "terra nullus"—empty land—a legal fiction which enabled the British to get hold of the land without cost. The Aborigines are today living in conditions not dissimilar to those of South African blacks.

For those of you with relatives "down under", 200 years of a nation founded on the genocide of blacks is nothing to be proud of.

It was the development of the wool industry which led to the genocide. As more land was required, hundreds of thousands of blacks were pushed from their homes. Any who resisted were killed.

Australian capitalism developed, so the bosses' attitude to the blacks changed. This had nothing to do with humanity—the aborigines were needed as labourers on the sheep stations. Blacks were herded into government settlements—pools of labour for the white ranch-owners.

Unfortunately for the bosses, the Aborigines never fulfilled the racist expectation that they would die out peacefully. On the contrary, they fought, and on one part of the workforce, fought very effectively indeed.

During the 1946 Pilbourn Strike, black workers took on the bosses over cash wages. The strike lasted three years. By uniting across tribal

boundaries, and calling for the support of white trade unionists, the Aborigines were able to challenge the ruling class which had ground them down—and win.

It was to be workers' struggles which would generate the land rights issue.

In 1966, striking employees of the giant Vestey company petitioned the government for the return of 500 square miles of their traditional land. Their demand was thrown out, but the subsequent strikes gained equal pay for Aboriginal government workers.

At Noonkanbah, a trade union ban on work involved in oil exploration on Aboriginal sacred sites almost stopped the drilling, showing that white workers could be won to the Aboriginal cause against the white bosses and government.

These days, the bosses' racist arguments get a slightly better hearing. Prime Minister

Hawke has cancelled ALP policy on land rights. The entire thrust of his Labour government's policy is to keep the bosses happy. This is why he has clamped down on the militant Building Labourer's Federation. Little wonder, then, that Haughey invited him over here last year for a chinwag.

The Aborigines have made land rights the cornerstone of their fight. We must fully support them if we really want to fight racism.

"A successful land rights campaign would not be the end of the story . . . but such struggles resist the right of bosses to do whatever they like . . . They show one more reason why the system needs to be overthrown. Their victory can help bring its overthrow all the nearer".

—KEN MULKEARN

Land Rights Now! The Socialist Case by Diane Fields. An International Socialists Pamphlet.

The fact that nobody seems to have a clue as to who the hell these people are seems to be irrelevant. But who's asking any questions when a 250 dollar statue can boost a movie's profits by at least 30 million dollars.

## WET DREAM

The average Hollywood movie has a budget of 10.6 million dollars and a further 10 million for marketing alone! Hollywood movies are a multi-billion dollar industry; and an Oscar is

every movie bosses' wet dream. Given the financial stakes the notion that the Oscars have even the teeniest bit to do with artistic merit fades very quickly.

At this year's ceremony Adrian Lyne's sexist, reactionary slash movie "Fatal Attraction" was nominated for six awards: Richard Attenborough's "Cry Freedom" is an important film. It centres around the life and death (in police custody) of black consciousness leader Steven Biko. Since the state of emergency and subsequent media censorship there has been little TV coverage of events in South Africa. For this

reason alone a film such as this should be welcomed. It's reception at the Oscars is indicative of Hollywood's racism. Just 3 Oscars have been awarded to blacks in the 60 years of the ceremony. It shows up the hypocrisy of the Hollywood saying, "If you want to send a message call Western Union"

Hollywood does send messages. The messages of the ruling class. The movie industry cannot be looked at in isolation from what is going on in the world in general.

The 1980's have seen the rotten ideas of Thatcher and Reagan gain firm ground. The rolling back of women's

rights, renewed repression of gays and constant attacks on workers have been the order of the day.

The "blockbuster" movies of the last decade mirror this perfectly. The focus is on the triumph of the individual against all the odds, ie Rambo; or the sanctity of the family in "Fatal Attraction".

These movies are supposedly successful because they offer a means of escape from the drudgery of everyday life. In reality they reinforce the rotten ideology of capitalism which make us want to escape in the first place.

—BARBARA BERGIN

# Jailers strike exposes scandal

THE PRISON officers' strike has helped to highlight the dreadful conditions that exist in the Souths' prisons.

Officers who appeared on television described prisoners being brought from their cells in the morning to empty chamber pots into toilets which then overflowed.

Following breakfast — tea and cornflakes — prisoners are then locked up again and actually spend up to 17 hours a day in their cells.

Reports on prison conditions make a nonsense of the idea that prisons "rehabilitate" people. Prisoners are treated like dirt. In the words of one former Minister for Justice, "Prisoners have no rights".

In Mountjoy every prisoner has one shower and one change of clothes per week. Limerick prison allows two showers per week but women having a period are refused extra showers.

Most prisoners are only allowed one half-hour visit per week. Prisoners are often locked up miles from home — even when their home town has a prison — making visits

difficult.

Single mothers in prison have their allowance books taken from them, leaving their children without financial support.

Prison supposedly locks up "dangerous" criminals. Yet the vast majority of prisoners are locked up for less than twelve months — they are hardly considered "dangerous". In fact most people are jailed for crimes against property where no violence is used.

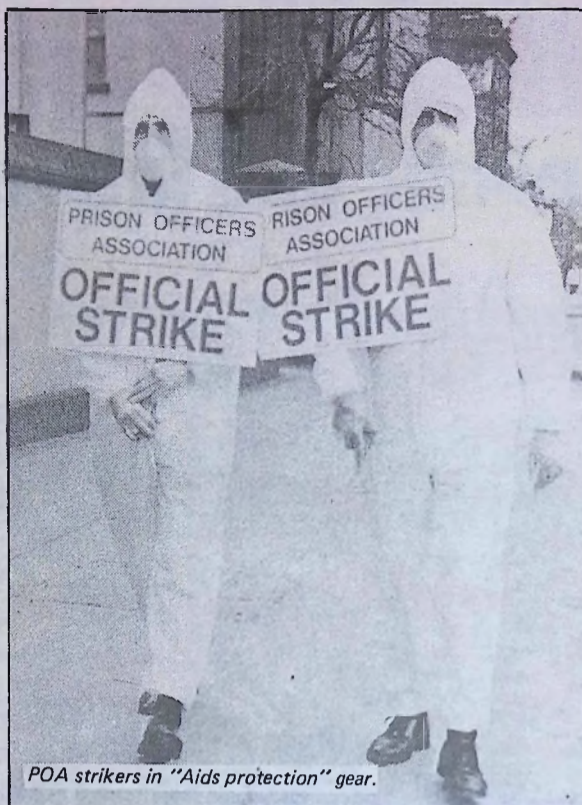
Prisons are useless as a means of stopping crime in society.

A report showed that in 1982 over 60% of prisoners had done time before. Over half of these had been in jail six times.

Prison statistics clearly show a link between crime and deprivation. The majority of prisoners come from poor, often unemployed backgrounds.

In fact, as the capitalist crisis has worsened the prison population has increased. In 1960 there were 400 prisoners. In 1980 there were 1,200. Now roughly 2,000 people are locked up in the South.

Getting rid of crime means taking on the main bunch of criminals — the capitalist class whose system keeps its victims at each other's throats.



POA strikers in "Aids protection" gear.

## SHOULD WE SUPPORT THEM?

SHOULD SOCIALISTS support the prison officers' strike? We should be clear that prison officers are not like other trade unionists — despite their membership of the ICTU. Prison officers help enforce state repression — often with brutality. They are also the people who strip search and humiliate inmates. They act under orders to isolate and demoralise political prisoners.

However in this particular strike they are in conflict with their political masters.

Speaking in the Dail, Gerry Collins made it clear that he was determined to beat them "in order to hold the line on the National Plan".

The prison officers are resisting attempts to reduce their earnings. They are also opposing a flexible shift system.

It is because of these types of issues that trade unionists, in the UPTCS, for example unanimously came out in their favour. It was the shift workers in that union who saw a connection between the attacks on prison officers and future attacks on other shift workers in the public sector.

The government is also using the same argument against the strikers as they did in the firefighters' dispute — "prison officers must take their fair share of the cuts".

For these reasons, socialists should not line up with FF.

Socialists support any divisions that emerges within the state machine. To keep down dissent and working class struggle the capitalist state employs cops, soldiers and prison officers. They often give them higher wages than the rest of us to ensure their loyalty.

The present strike is a protest by the lowest agents of the state machine against their masters. In future the working class movement will need to relate these types of divisions just as Larkin related to the RIC strike in 1907.

In the meantime socialists welcome the type of contradiction that must emerge with the prison officers between their highly repressive role — and the fact that the state still regards them as workers to be attacked under the National Plan.

## ISSUES IN THE UNIONS

# Rebuilding in the workplace

ALMOST HALF of the workforce in the South is unionised. The other half experience low pay and lousy conditions.

Although the trade union leadership goes along with attacks on the working class, workers in unions are clearly better off than those outside.

Socialist Worker spoke to Michael, who is trying to unionise his workplace,

about the problems involved. SW: How did you go about trying to unionise your job? Michael: Originally we went to the IGWU and spoke to an official. Two of us joined and got five others to join as well.

The boss heard about this and called a meeting of the workforce. He proposed setting up a committee instead of the union and the staff agreed by 2 to 1 to accept this. But after three months nothing got changed and we stopped going to committee meetings.

SW: How many people are willing to join the union now? Michael: About eight or nine say they'll join so we're getting membership forms for them. After that we may recruit another ten. Then we'd have half the factory in the union.

SW: What difficulties are there in convincing the others to join?

Michael: A lot of them have local arrangements which they don't want to give up. Three of the staff are on a fixed salary so they don't have to work as hard as the rest of us. The foreman's best friend can do overtime when he

likes and can come and go as he pleases.

Hopefully the union can get rid of these arrangements because in the long term they divide the workforce. SW: What arguments are you making in order to get people to join?

Michael: We're getting information on what unionised workers in similar jobs are paid. In our job the wages are lousy — starting at £50 a week — so we hope to convince people that fighting together in a union would improve that.

Some of us went to the boss recently to look for wage increase under the National Wage Agreement. I think we put him under pressure because he came back soon enough to give us the increase.

Then we found out that one of the lads hadn't got his wage rise. He was illiterate so the boss thought he wouldn't notice. But we went back and got him his increase. So I think some of the lads can see that by getting together we can win things.

SW: What are conditions like in your job?

Michael: The roof is leaking and the place is freezing in the winter. Then the supervisors are always giving out and abusing the workers. We have to work Saturdays whether we like it or not. If anyone is absent someone else has to cover for him.

The issues are straightforward enough but we need to convince people that they have the power to change things. We also have to show them that giving up their "perks" will be worth it in the long term.

# INTO SELL-OUT

IN MAY, the INTO will hold a special congress to finalise its attitude to teacher redundancies. Originally, the Fianna Fail Minister for Education, Mary O'Rourke, issued a circular to increase the pupil teacher ratio. She hoped thereby to get rid of 1,300 primary school jobs.

A massive campaign by parents and teachers managed to put Fianna Fail on the spot. At the end of 1986, they were even defeated in a Dail vote on the issue.

But at the very moment when it was necessary to seize the momentum by switching to a campaign of industrial action, the INTO leaders entered into talks with Haughey. The pretext was that Haughey was more

sympathetic to their sensibilities than O'Rourke.

INTO General Secretary, Quigley and Haughey agreed that a special review committee be set up to look at Primary Education. The INTO leaders did not even suggest that Circular 20/87 be withdrawn before they joined the Review Committee. Instead they used it as a way of defusing the protests. It was a case of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

## COWARDICE

Many INTO members were puzzled by this abject cowardice. But the roots of it go back to the National Plan. Gerry Quigley was one of the main architects of that deal which committed the union leaders to full co-operation in a programme of voluntary redundancies. His sabotage of the anti-cuts protests was nothing less than the keeping of his bargain with Haughey.

Just before the Easter Congress of the INTO, matters came to a head. The top INTO negotiators stormed out of the Primary School Review Committee protesting that they were banned from discussing circular 20/81. Once again they got the telephone call from the government for an immediate and direct meeting. Within days a shabby compromise deal was hammered out. The elements of this deal are:

- approximately 700 teachers to lose their jobs.
- the forced "rationalisation" of schools in order to bring as many classes as possible up to the number 39 pupils.
- a change in the manner in which the number of children on the roll are counted in order to get rid of jobs.

The deal was presented to the INTO conference in terms of "general principles". Final details were yet to be ham-



Minister O'Rourke

ered out. This was clearly designed to get the maximum vote in favour. In the end 60% of Congress delegates voted to accept.

Two arguments were used by the executive of the union to sell the deal. The first was that 2,000 of their members had already applied for

voluntary redundancies. The irony was that they had done nothing to launch a campaign against these applications. Instead, they merely noted that it was a matter for individual teachers.

The second was the classic "new realism" argument. The FF government had shifted the political climate to the right. The unions had no option but to make concessions. This ignored the way in which the sabotage by the union bureaucracy had paved the way for FF. The actions of the ICTU in setting up the National Plan with FF broke the growing resistance to the cuts and so created the political ground for FF.

Tragically, one of the leading forces trying to sell

the shabby compromise was the INTO 'left winger' Joe O'Toole. O'Toole has built a base for himself in the union by making left noises. He pulled many union activists into his campaign for election to the Senate in this manner.

But when it came to the crucial issue, he stood with Quigley in attacking rank and file militants to get the deal through.

Militants in the union now need to learn the bitter lesson that basing a strategy around progressive bureaucrats leads nowhere. It is necessary to build a clear socialist presence at the base of the union in order to resist the inevitable sell-out of those who can see no farther than the lines set by Irish capitalism.

# Socialist Worker

## For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

TWENTY years ago in France, 10 million workers went on a general strike. The country was moving to the brink of revolution. The myth that the working class of Western Europe had been bought off by the system was dead.

The events throughout 1968 led to the re-birth of the revolutionary left. For decades previously, the great choice was between American capitalism and Russian Stalinism.

But in 1968, the Americans were butchering the Vietnamese just as the Russian tanks were being attacked by the stone throwers of Prague in Czechoslovakia.

A whole generation of left wingers now looked for a different way forward than the Moscow variety of "socialism".

They came to oppose the rotten tyrannical regime of Eastern Europe. They argued that socialism had to be built on workers' democracy.

They broke with the dreary reformist road which sought to gradually change capitalism. Most of all they learnt that the key to the struggle for socialism was the self activity of the ordinary mass of working people.

May '68 was the highest expression of that sort of politics.

But Ireland too was affected by the revolutionary wave.

The Derry Housing Action Committee and later the Civil Rights Movement followed the same tradition of direct militant action.

In October 1968 a march in Derry was baton charged by the RUC. The Catholic population of the North which for so long had kept their heads down, had risen up to fight back.

The events of 68 stand out in a period of direct mass struggle. A revolutionary party that could have channelled the opposition into one united front was missing.

In the end they did not succeed. But they still send a tremendous message to socialists who are battling the rotten right wing politics today.

Today the union leaders and parties like the Workers Party and the Labour Party argue the politics of "new realism".

Struggle does not work, they tell us. Work to get more left TDs elected instead. In reality they only help turn a retreat into a rout.

May 68 showed that capitalism would only be brought to the brink by workers' action. Strikes, occupations, demonstrations drew the mass of workers into struggle. It terrified the rich and powerful. It confirmed the simple point that Karl Marx had made: *The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class.*

It is in that tradition that the Socialist Workers Movement fights.



# 1968

## THE FIRE LAST TIME

# OCCUPÉE

### INSIDE

May 68  
pages 6 & 7