

Dublin Spartacist  Youth Group

Ireland: workers to power!



Bodenstown 1934: Protestant socialist workers from Belfast's Shankill Road join annual commemoration of Wolfe Tone, leader of 1798 United Irishmen uprising. Not Orange against Green but class against class!

no credit

**International Communist League
(Fourth Internationalist)**



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Introduction

This pamphlet consists of a small but representative selection of material produced by the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), formerly the international Spartacist tendency, on Ireland. The programmatic centrepiece of this collection is the "Theses on Ireland". Other material has been chosen to elaborate, illustrate and develop the essential programmatic points of the "Theses". From the time of Marx and Engels to today the Irish question has been of vital significance in the international working class movement.

"Theses on Ireland" were first published in *Spartacist* no 24 in Autumn 1977. As the *Spartacist* introduction notes, they were the product of discussions in the London Spartacist Group in late 1976. These reflected broader discussion within our international tendency, including an examination of the Bolshevik and early Comintern work and debates on the national question, and our grappling with analogous situations in the Middle East, notably the question of Palestine/Israel. The "Theses" are a reassertion and rigorous application of the Leninist/Bolshevik approach to the national question, notably on the question of interpenetrated peoples, in counterposition to the revisionist/nationalist prettification and apologetics for the "nationalism of the oppressed". It is only working class socialist revolution that can provide a progressive solution to situations such as that which exists in Ireland. The "Theses" have stood the test of time well.

An elementary starting point of a revolutionary programme and an acid test for would-be revolutionaries in Britain is the demand for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland. The article "Westminster butchers" (p14) shows how most of the fake left in Britain buried this demand at the time of the Republican hunger strikes in 1981 in order to appeal to "humanitarian" bourgeois opinion and the Labour Party traitors. Our selection also includes the article "Northern Ireland: for a proletarian solution!" (p21) published in the aftermath of the criminal Enniskillen bombing by the Provisional IRA in 1988. The distinction between defensible acts of terrorism and those that are indefensible indiscriminate acts against the civilian populations is crucial to a class perspective. This article illustrates the opportunism rampant among other left groups, veering from vicarious cheerleading for indefensible atrocities to abject capitulation to imperialist hysteria.

While the "Theses" dealt with the question of British imperialism's broader designs in Ireland, they did not address Ireland's strategic position, the question of the Atlantic Alliance/NATO and the Republic's phoney "neutrality". The article "No to NATO's Ireland deal!" (p19), takes up the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, when the American imperialists, along with their British partners, were in the midst of prosecuting a massive anti-Soviet war drive and were anxious to secure Ireland as a reliable strategic outpost.

This international context was also vital in the founding of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group which came in the wake of the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and

the capitalist reunification of Germany. The comrades won to the DSYG chose the ICL's fight for proletarian political revolution and the defence of collectivised property rather than the centrism of the Irish Workers Group (co-thinkers of the British Workers Power group) which purports to be Trotskyist but has acted as soft-core advocates of capitalist counterrevolution. During the recent Gulf War the DSYG fought for the defeat of imperialism and the defence of Iraq, against the popular front coalitionists who refused to take a side against imperialism and against those who appealed to the Irish bourgeoisie on the basis of "making neutrality real". We called for working-class political strikes against the war, particularly at Shannon airport which the US Air Force was using for refuelling.

The article "Robinson's popular front: trap for workers and women" (p31) addresses the election of Mary Robinson, and the widespread illusions in her, not least as a proponent of women's liberation. As we said at the time, Robinson represents the desire by one wing of the Irish bourgeoisie to give the clericalist state a liberal facelift while strengthening their ties with imperialism, in the context of "Europe 1992". The "Theses" took up the reactionary character of the Republic, and in subsequent propaganda we have sought to emphasise the central importance of the struggle against the myriad, overt and deep manifestations of the oppression of women in Ireland. In early 1990 the comrades who were to become the founders of the DSYG intervened into the struggles to defend abortion rights, raising the call for "free abortion on demand" and "women's liberation through socialist revolution". Together with the article on Mary Robinson, the articles "Irish students fight anti-abortion reaction" (p24) and "Ireland: Church hierarchy weighs in against condoms" (p34) develop this crucial point.

In "Dublin Spartacist Youth Group launched" (p28) we emphasised the desperate need for a Leninist vanguard which can act as the "tribune of the oppressed". While the fight for women's liberation in Ireland has a central strategic importance from the standpoint of making a socialist revolution, the oppression of gays and Travellers is no less hideous. Homosexuality is still illegal in Ireland in spite of a European Court ruling that the law must be changed. A particularly horrific consequence of this state-sponsored bigotry was the Fairview Park murder in 1983 (see article, p17) where the murderers of Declan Flynn blatantly admitted their crimes and were set free by the courts. And as for Travellers, the daily harassment and discrimination against them continues unabated.

The formation of the DSYG is an important acquisition for our international tendency and especially for our work in these islands where we now have a presence in England, Scotland and Ireland. Two years ago, our British comrades incorporated the slogans "For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles! For a Socialist United States of Europe!" in the masthead of their paper, *Workers Hammer*. As they put it at the time:

"Our slogan of a federation of workers republics points to the necessary interlinking of class struggles on the

Isles. Certainly given the preponderant weight of England, genuine progress to a socialist order requires that the English bourgeoisie be defeated and Westminster rule smashed 'in the belly of the beast'. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin—following Engels—noted that in general Marxists uphold 'the republic one and indivisible'. But in the special conditions of the existence of four nations, he argued that a 'federal republic' would be a step forward in the British Isles. Our call for a federation underscores the *voluntary* nature of such an association. The slogan has an algebraic character; we do not presume in advance what the constituent elements of such a federation will be. As such it is analogous to and an extension of our call for an Irish workers republic as part of the socialist federation of the British Isles, which was designed to take account of the unresolved question of where the Protestant community will fall."

— "For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles! For a Socialist United States of Europe!", *Workers Hammer* no 111, November/December 1989

The Scottish and Irish proletariats provide a reservoir of working-class militancy which is of vital importance in this perspective. Like John Maclean in Scotland, James Con-

nolly epitomised the very best of these traditions. The two articles on Connolly (p37, p44) evaluate his work and together with the article on the Easter Uprising (p42) seek to draw out the revolutionary proletarian lessons of that period. The articles point to the way Connolly struggled to unite the working class, Catholic and Protestant, in the face of a deepening communalist divide on the eve of World War I.

Finally the article "Derry 1968: how the left failed" (p10) is a participant's graphic account of how opportunities can arise to advance the unity of the working class across the sectarian divide. And it underlines that unless a party of the Bolshevik type, with tested cadre from both communities, is forged on the basis of a revolutionary programme these transitory openings cannot be the springboard to the necessary struggle for proletarian state power.

With the exception of "Theses on Ireland", in reprinting these articles we have retained the text of original introductions.

Dublin Spartacist Youth Group, sympathising group of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

10 September 1991

reprinted from *Spartacist* no 24, Autumn 1977

Theses on Ireland

The theses on Ireland reprinted here were adopted by the International Executive Committee of the iSt on 5 August 1977.

1. The current situation and social configuration in Ireland is the result of centuries of brutal British imperialist domination. It contains features characteristically associated with the former multi-national states of Eastern Europe, as well as with both the colonial settler states which established their own political economy by excluding or destroying native populations, and colonies in which the native population is exploited and oppressed by a relatively thin colonial hierarchy.

In the absence of any significant section of the Irish working class historically freed from national/communal insecurity, the result is a seemingly intractable situation in which prospects for the development of a genuine class-struggle axis and for an end to the interminable cycle of imperialist exploitation/repression and inter-communal violence appear remote. The strong possibility remains that a just, democratic, socialist solution to the situation in Ireland will only come under the impact of proletarian revolution elsewhere and concretely may be carried on the bayonets of a Red Army against opposition of a significant section of either or both of the island's communities.

Nevertheless, no matter to what extent a bleak immediate prognosis is justified, the conflict in Ireland presents a crucial test of the capacity of a revolutionary internationalist tendency to provide a clear analysis and program and to confront the national question in the imperialist epoch. For revolutionists, who refuse to deal in the simplicities (ultimately genocidal) of the nationalists, the situation in Ireland can appear to be exceedingly complex and intractable. The "Irish question" provides a strong confirmation of the unique revolutionary potency and relevance of the international Spartacist tendency's understanding of Leninism, particularly in relation to geographically interpenetrated peoples.

2. An essential element of our program is the demand for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army. British imperialism has brought centuries of exploitation, oppression and bloodshed to the island. No good can come of the British presence; the existing tie between Northern Ireland and the British state can only be oppressive to the Irish Catholic population, an obstacle to a proletarian class mobilisation and solution. We place no preconditions on this demand for the immediate withdrawal of all British military forces or lessen its categorical quality by suggesting "steps" toward its fulfilment (such as simply demanding that the army should withdraw to its barracks or from working-class districts).

At the same time we do not regard the demand as synonymous with or as a concrete application of either the call for Irish self-determination (that is, a unitary state of the whole island) or for an independent Ulster—two sol-

utions which within the framework of capitalism would be anti-democratic, in the first case toward the Protestants and in the second toward the Irish Catholics. Nor is the demand for the withdrawal of British troops sufficient in itself, as though it has some automatic, inherent revolutionary content or outcome. As the eminent British bourgeois historian A.J.P. Taylor observed in an interview:

"I don't know what the term bloodbath means. If it means people will be killed, they are being killed all the time. The alternative is not between an entirely peaceful Northern Ireland in which nobody's being killed and a Northern Ireland in which a lot of people will be killed. If the British withdraw some sort of settlement would be arrived at. You can't tell what it is because the forces in play can't be judged until they can operate....

"...the presence of the British Army in Ireland prolongs the period of conflict and uncertainty....

"This [possibility of a united Ireland] is a matter of relative strength. Owing to the history of the last thirty years or perhaps longer, owing to history since 1885, when Randolph Churchill—Winston's father—first raised the cry of 'Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right'—in the past ninety years the Protestants of Northern Ireland have been taught to think of themselves as a separate body, almost separate nationality within Ireland, and have established now a longterm domination of Northern Ireland, partly because of their superior economic strength, partly because of the backing they have received from the British Government, and partly because they are, or up to now have been, the more determined. For them, Protestant domination is the answer to the situation in Northern Ireland."

—*Troops Out*, No. 2

As historically demonstrated by examples such as India, Libya, Cyprus and Palestine, the withdrawal of British imperialism, while a necessary objective of the communist vanguard, in itself does not automatically ensure an advance in a revolutionary direction. Thus, the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland must be linked to and constitute a part of a whole revolutionary program.

3. As Leninists we are opposed to all forms of national oppression and privilege and stand for the equality of nations. Writing in 1913 Lenin succinctly set forth as follows the fundamental principles underlying the revolutionary social-democratic position on the national question:

"As democrats, we are irreconcilably hostile to any, however slight, oppression of any nationality and to any privileges for any nationality. As democrats, we demand the right of nations to self-determination in the political sense of that term...i.e., the right to secede. We demand unconditional protection of the rights of every national minority. We demand broad self-government and autonomy for regions, which must be demarcated, among other terms of reference, in respect of nationality too."

—"Draft Programme of the 4th Congress of Social Democrats of the Latvian Area," *Collected Works*, Vol. 19

Thus, the right to self-determination means simply the right to establish a separate state, the right to secede. We reject the notion that it means "freedom from all outside interference and control" or entails economic independence. In the general sense the right to self-determination is unconditional, independent of the state that emerges or its leadership.

However, for Leninists this right is not an absolute demand, a categorical imperative, to be implemented at all times and everywhere there is a nation. It is only one of a range of bourgeois-democratic demands; it is a part, subordinate to the whole, of the overall programmatic system. When the particular demand for national self-determination contradicts more crucial demands or the general needs of the class struggle, we oppose its exercise. As Lenin notes:

"The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small part* of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected." [emphasis in original]

— "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,"
Collected Works, Vol. 22

In particular, in the case of interpenetrated peoples sharing a common territory, we oppose the exercise of self-determination by one nation where this flatly conflicts with the same right for another nation. In this situation the same general considerations apply, namely our opposition to all forms of national oppression and privilege, but in such circumstances the exercise of self-determination by one or the other people in the form of the establishment of their own bourgeois state can only be brought about by the denial of that right to the other. Under capitalism this would simply be a formula for reversing the terms of oppression, for forcible population transfers and expulsions and ultimately genocide. It is a "solution" repeatedly demonstrated in history, for example in the cases of India/Pakistan, Israel/Palestine and Cyprus.

In general, our support for the right to self-determination is negative: intransigent opposition to every manifestation of national oppression as a means toward the unity of the working class, not as the fulfilment of the "manifest destiny" or "heritage" of a nation, nor as support for "progressive" nations or nationalism. We support the right of self-determination and national liberation struggles in order to remove the national question from the historic agenda, not to create another such question. Within the framework of capitalism there can be no purely democratic solution (for example through universal suffrage) to the national question in cases of interpenetrated peoples.

The same general considerations apply not only to "fully formed" nations, but also to nationalities and peoples which may still be something less than fully consolidated nations, for example the Eritreans in their struggle against Amharic domination or the Biafrans at the time of the Nigerian civil war. Indeed, not infrequently the historical formation of nations is tested and completed in the process of struggles for self-determination. Our opposition to the exercise of self-determination by an interpenetrated people would also apply where one or more of the groupings, though not a historically compacted nation, has sufficient relative size and cultural level that the exercise of self-determination could only mean a new form or reversal of

the terms of oppression.

4. Concretely, in Ireland the question of Irish national self-determination was not fully resolved by the establishment of the Republic of Eire. But to demand "Irish self-determination" today represents a denial of the Leninist position on the national question. It is incumbent on revolutionists to face up to exactly what the call for "self-determination of the Irish people as a whole" means.

Obviously the call is not one for the simultaneous self-determination of both communities, an impossibility for interpenetrated peoples under capitalism. In another sense the demand is about as meaningful as calling for "self-determination for the Lebanese people as a whole" in the middle of last year's communal bloodletting. In the case of Ireland such a demand utterly fails to come to terms with the question of the Protestant community of Ulster, comprising 60 percent of the statelet's and 25 percent of the whole island's population. Such a demand is a call for the formation of a unitary state of the whole island, including the *forcible unification of the whole island by the Irish bourgeois state irrespective of the wishes of the Protestant community*. It is a call for the Irish Catholics to self-determine at the expense of the Protestants. It is a call for the simple reversal of the terms of oppression, an implicit call for inter-communal slaughter, forced population transfers and ultimately genocide as the way forward to the Irish revolution.

5. The present six-county enclave in Northern Ireland is a "sectarian, Orange statelet," the product of an imperialist partition. Prior to the partition revolutionaries would have opposed partition, striving to cement revolutionary unity in the struggle for independence from British imperialism. However, with the partition, the accompanying communal violence and demographic shifts, and the establishment of a *bourgeois* republic in the south it was necessary to oppose the forcible reunification of the six counties with the rest of Ireland. At the same time the present statelet guarantees the political and economic privileges of the Protestants. We oppose the Orange state and the demand for an independent Ulster as forms of determination for the Protestants which necessarily maintain the oppression of the Irish Catholic population of Ulster, an extension of the Irish Catholic nation. Since they are the local bodies of the British repressive state apparatus and the training ground for the present Protestant paramilitary groups and a future reactionary Protestant army, we demand: Smash the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR).

6. There is a series of urgent democratic demands that apply to the situation of the oppressed Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland. We demand full democratic rights for the Catholic minority and an end to discrimination in housing and hiring. But such demands must be linked to class demands which transcend the bounds of bourgeois democracy. Without the demand for a sliding scale of wages and hours, for example, the call to end discrimination will simply imply leveling in an already economically depressed situation. The relevant partial, negative, democratic and economic demands must be integrated into the revolutionary transitional program which transcends the capitalist framework of economism and democratic reformism.

7. Historically the Protestants of Ulster were an extension of the Scottish and English nations. The 1798 United Irishmen uprising was led by the Protestant middle class and reflected the impact of the French and American bourgeois revolutions on the nascent capitalist class (overwhelmingly Protestant) in Ireland. This insurrection against British imperialism, which was defeated in part by the development of the reactionary sectarian Orange Order and the mobilisation of the peasantry by Catholic priests, was the opportunity for the establishment of a modern nation of the whole island. Since that time, though the most modern capitalist sectors remained Protestant for a long period, the Protestants have acted for the most part as loyal and fervent defenders of the union with British imperialism. The bigotry and discrimination among the Protestants toward the Irish Catholic nation necessarily exceeds the worst excesses of Irish Green nationalism, and most of the sectarian murders in the current period have been carried out by Protestant paramilitary groups.

Though not yet a nation, the Protestants are certainly not a part of the Irish nation and are distinct from the Scottish and English nations. Presently their separate existence is defined in large part as against the Irish Catholic nation and at the ideological level is expressed in religious terms. With their own social and cultural fabric (epitomised in the Orange Order) and history of opposition to the Irish nationalist cause, they have therefore acted as the "loyalist" allies of British imperialism. At the same time, in this century the allegiance has been more a means than an end, demonstrated, for example, by the willingness of Sir Edward Carson to seek German aid if British imperialism would not fulfil the Ulster Protestants' demands and by the 1974 Ulster Workers Strike.

In all likelihood, a definite resolution of the exact character of the Ulster Protestant community will be reached with the withdrawal of the British army and will depend on the circumstances surrounding this. The particular conditions will pose point-blank their future and the "solution" to the Irish question. The solution posed by A.J.P. Taylor is but one possibility:

"The question is whether the Irish nationalist majority is strong enough to expel the Protestants. If they are, that is the best way out."

—quoted in the *Guardian* [London], 13 April 1976

At the same time the social organisation, weaponry, military expertise and alliances of the Protestants, make a "Zionist" solution entirely conceivable. On the other hand, if the withdrawal of the British army was in the context of massive class mobilisations, opportunities would undoubtedly arise for a class determination of the question.

8. Attempts to ignore or deny the separate identity and interests of the Ulster Protestants through the familiar liberal plea that British or other socialists cannot "tell the Irish how to wage their struggle" or the argument that only oppressed nations have a right to self-determination can be rejected easily on general theoretical grounds. The Protestants are neither a colonial administration (as were the British in India) nor a closed colour caste (as are the whites in South Africa). Arguments that the Protestants have no legitimate claim because they were originally settlers and the present statelet is an artificial imperialist creation are based ultimately on notions of nationalist irre-

dentism and "historical justice." Although sometimes expressed as the demand that the Protestants go "home," such arguments are in the last analysis genocidal. Also inadequate is the explanation of the Protestants as simply a backward sector of the Irish nation, whose loyalism/Orangeism is purely an imperialist ideology given a certain nationalist tinge in order to attract a mass base.

9. Protestant communalism does have a material basis in the marginal privileges enjoyed by the Protestant workers. The most explicit attempt to confront and discount the Protestant community's separate identity in "Marxist" terms is the description of the Protestant working class as a "labor aristocracy." This explanation is similar to the New Left theories about the American white working class and involves an attempt to broaden the term so as to destroy its original meaning, while failing to recognise that the Protestant community extends through all classes and strata of society. Even to claim that the entire Protestant working class of Northern Ireland is a labour aristocracy is a gross distortion of the term. The Northern Ireland working class as a whole has some of the worst wages, unemployment and housing in the British Isles. Moreover, wage differentials between Protestant and Catholic workers are not so marked that the two communities have significantly different living standards.

10. From the point of view of the general interests of British imperialism the border between Ulster and the Republic is now anachronistic:

"United Kingdom soldiers and officials and money are heavily deployed in Northern Ireland because Westminster has clear obligations there. English Governments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries planted the garrison-colonists whose descendants' presence has been the principal source of Ireland's twentieth century distress; and London is the seat of such authority as the Province knows. To withdraw that authority now would intensify the problem of public order without in the least advancing a settlement of the central political question. The search for an acceptable local administration would simply continue in worsened circumstances. Britain's strategic interest in Northern Ireland is dead, and its economic interest is all on the side of withdrawal; but moral as well as practical considerations demand that British resources should remain engaged until both the political and the public order problems are at least within sight of resolution."

—*Observer* [London], 1 February 1976

While historically British imperialism has used the sectarian divisions, played the "Ulster card" to its own advantage, it is not now committed to the preservation of the Orange statelet and would prefer a settlement which would remove its direct political responsibility on the island. With the decline of Ulster industry and the growth of investment opportunities in the south, the border is an obstacle to its overall intentions. But at the same time as it adopts various schemes to this end British imperialism is constrained to maintain capitalist law and order and prevent a complete breakdown in the social order. The increase in independence talk by Ulster Protestants, the Ulster Workers Strike of 1974 and the significant number of Protestants imprisoned for political offences do not reflect mere "tactical" differences between the imperialists and their subordinates, but rather a divergence of interests between genuinely distinct forces.

11. We reject the argument that Protestant workers are so reactionary that only force will convince them and that the *precondition* for winning them is the destruction of the Orange statelet. The understanding that the current partition is inherently oppressive is perverted into a conception of a "two-stage" revolution in which the socialist tasks can only follow the completion of Irish national unity on the whole island. Sometimes linked to this is the claim that it is "naïve" to expect the Protestant and Catholic workers to unite on "economic" issues, since it is these that divide them. By analogy, no working class could ever transcend its sectional interests. Economism is the political expression of the failure of the working class in the absence of a revolutionary leadership to reject bourgeois ideology and place its revolutionary class interests above particular, sectional or apparent needs or desires. The above argument is based on the central premise of economism—that the working class cannot transcend its immediate sectional interests and identify with all oppressed and the future of humanity. Such "anti-economism" is in fact a denial of the pertinence of the Transitional Programme in the service of the nationalism of the oppressed.

12. The Protestants feel legitimately threatened by the proposal for a united (bourgeois) Ireland, that is, their forcible absorption into an enlarged version of the reactionary clericalist state of Eire. The communalism/nationalism of the Protestants has a defensive character and is not the chauvinism of a great power. A united bourgeois Ireland would not provide a democratic solution for their claims and we must therefore reject such a solution. Such a state would necessarily be sectarian, and the Protestants will not voluntarily enter such a union.

The difficulties of such a solution are indicated in the earlier experience of the Bolsheviks. At the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 the Ukrainian delegate Merejin observed in an amendment to the "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions":

"The attempt made to settle the relationship between the nations of the majority and the minority nationalities in territories of mixed population (Ukraine, Poland, White Russia), has shown that the transfer of the power of government from the hands of the big capitalists to the groups of petty bourgeoisie constituting the democratic republics not only does not diminish but, on the contrary, aggravates the friction among the nationalities. The democratic republics oppose themselves to the proletariat and attempt to convert the class war into a national one. They become rapidly impregnated with nationalistic exclusiveness, and easily adapt themselves to the practices of the previous dominating nations, which fermented discord among the nationalities, and organised pogroms, with the assistance of the government apparatus, to combat the dictatorship of the proletariat...."

The present Irish bourgeois republic is a clerical reactionary state in which the Roman Catholic Church enjoys considerable real and latent powers. An essential aspect of this is not the current level of religious persecution or discrimination (though the current repressive measures directed mostly against the IRA are an indication of the Irish bourgeoisie's intentions), but the relationship of Roman Catholicism to Irish nationalism, especially as it helps to define the divisions between the two communities.

Leninism and nationalism are fundamentally counterposed political viewpoints. Thus, while revolutionists struggle against all forms of national oppression, they are also opposed to all forms of nationalist ideology. It is a revision of Leninism to claim that the "nationalism of the oppressed" is progressive and can be supported by communist internationalists. In one of his major works on the national question Lenin stressed:

"Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the 'most just,' 'purest,' most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism...."

— "Critical Remarks on the National Question,"
Collected Works, Vol. 20

To attempt to dismiss the above-mentioned features of Irish nationalism and the Irish Republic, to suggest that somehow these matters are not important, is to imply that Irish nationalism and capitalism are in some way "progressive" and (unlike all other nationalists and capitalists) will not promote racial, sexual and communal divisions in the working class, in particular will not discriminate and persecute non-members of their national grouping.

13. Ireland, like other situations of interpenetrated peoples as in the Middle East and Cyprus, is a striking confirmation of the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. The inevitable conclusion is that while revolutionists must oppose all aspects of national oppression, they must also recognise that the conflicting claims of interpenetrated peoples can only be equitably resolved in the framework of a workers state. We struggle for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. While the establishment of a united workers state of the whole island may be preferable, the above demand is algebraic, leaving open the question of where the Protestants fall. This recognises that the nature of the Protestant community has not yet been determined in history. As such, it is counterposed to calls for a "united workers republic" or for a "united socialist Ireland" (where this demand is not simply an expression for left/nationalist or Stalinist two-stage theories). Placing the demand in the context of a socialist federation has the additional advantage of highlighting the essential relationship of the proletarian revolution in the whole area and the virtual impossibility of the resolution of the Irish question on a working-class basis outside this framework. This, and the strong representation of Irish workers in the working class in Britain, points to the demand for a British Isles-wide trade-union federation as a method of promoting joint struggle and cutting across the divisions in the working class in Ireland.

14. Particular emphasis must be placed on the demand for programmatically based anti-sectarian workers militias to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage. The British bourgeois press and the local imperialists' bloodstained henchmen in the British Labour Party responded hysterically to a composite motion at the 1976 BLP Conference demanding the withdrawal of British troops and the formation of a trade-union based militia, despite the fact that the motion was the inadvertent result of right-wing culling of motions expressing ersatz Irish nationalist positions and a mealy-mouthed resolution from the *Militant* grouping. Our demand is not the same as that

of the deeply opportunist and BLP-entrist *Militant* group, which links its call for trade-union militias to the call for troop withdrawal in a way that makes the existence of trade-union militias a precondition for troop withdrawal and which sees the militias as growing organically out of economist struggles. In Ulster the problem is not that the workers are not armed. Such militias will need a broad and strong programmatic basis if they are not to be derailed or coopted. They cannot develop just out of trade unionism but fundamentally require the existence of a strong and authoritative revolutionary cadre. Each militia unit would need at least one member of each community and the presence and strong influence of trained revolutionary cadre. Consequently, the demand for an anti-sectarian workers militia is closely linked to the growth of a Leninist party based on a developed revolutionary program. Without being based on the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the British army and without our analysis of terrorism, for example, such workers militias would simply be the armed adjunct of the women's peace movement.

15. In military conflicts between Irish nationalist organisations and the British army/state authorities we defend the actions of the former since this is still a struggle of an oppressed nationality against imperialism, even though their struggle may be associated with a program which, if accomplished, would violate the democratic rights of the Protestants. This stance implies nothing about the program of these groups, which can range from those similar to the Zionist Stern Gang and Grivas' EOKA to more radical "socialist" nationalists.

Outside this military struggle with British imperialism and its direct agents, in the conflict between the Irish Catholic and Protestant communities and their respective organisations, the national/communal aspect transcends any formal left/right differences. Such violence is frequently directed against symbols of non-sectarianism (for example, pubs where both Catholic and Protestant workers socialise) and is an obstacle to any form of integrated class struggle. Terrorist acts directed against the Protestant community by organisations of the oppressed Irish Catholic community are in no way a blow against imperialism, not justifiable as the "violence of the oppressed" and are no more "progressive" or defensible than similar acts by Protestant paramilitary groups. Thus, while attacks on British army posts or the bombing of Aldershot military barracks are politically defensible acts, the pub bombings (both in Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods), the London underground bombings, the South Armagh shootings and other such acts of indiscriminate terrorism are completely indefensible, in no way representing a blow against imperialism. Such acts, based as they are on nationalist and genocidal premises, can only deepen communal divisions and erect barriers to working-class unity.

In such circumstances we recognise the right of both communities to self-defence. Simply because an organisation claims to be fighting on behalf of the oppressed and against imperialism does not make all its acts defensible. If this were so, then revolutionists would be compelled to defend the actions of both the EOKA in Cyprus and the Zionist Stern Gang in Palestine (organisations to whom the Provisional IRA are akin), not only when they attacked British imperialism but respectively in their attacks on the Turkish community and the Palestinians (at Deir Yassin, for example). Only with this understanding of terrorism can the workers militias in Northern Ireland be armed against capitulating to a blanket approval of the terrorism of the oppressed or becoming a mask for the machinations of imperialism.

16. In the history of the Irish labour movement there have been examples of significant workers' solidarity which have temporarily cut across the sectarian divisions. Invariably, as in the case of the 1919 Belfast engineers' strike and the mass unemployment marches in the 1930's, they have been countered with massive sectarian mobilisations intended to wipe out the fragile proletarian unity. In the absence of a revolutionary party, there can arise examples of transitory unity, albeit on pacifist or reformist grounds. A sequel to the South Armagh shootings was joint marches of Protestant and Catholic workers; but they marched to demand the strengthening of the RUC, which must be smashed.

Even such examples indicate the potentiality for workers unity. The instances of class solidarity are not proof of a deep-seated strain of class unity or that the situation is not poisoned by sectarian hatreds, but indicate that the opportunity can arise for a revolutionary organisation, though perhaps hitherto isolated, weak and small, to intervene, altering the course of the conflict toward a class determination and proletarian revolution.

For the Immediate and Unconditional Withdrawal of the British Army!

Smash the RUC and the UDR!

Down with the Prevention of Terrorism Act and All Other Special Powers Acts in Britain and Ireland!

Full Democratic Rights for the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland!

No Discrimination in Hiring and Housing! For a Sliding Scale of Wages and Hours!

For a Programmatically Based Anti-Sectarian Workers Militia To Combat Orange and Green Terror and Imperialist Rampage!

For a British Isles-Wide Trade-Union Federation!

Forward to the Irish Section of the Reborn Fourth International!

No Forcible Reunification! For An Irish Workers Republic Within A Socialist Federation of the British Isles! ■

Derry 1968: how the left failed

Last October marked the tenth anniversary of the first Civil Rights march in the city of Derry, Northern Ireland. In the following article Paul Lannigan, who participated in the 1968 struggles as a member of the Healyite Socialist Labour League in Derry and is today a member of the Spartacist League Central Committee, discusses the events and analyses the failure of the left to put forward a programme of proletarian class struggle. The article is based on a presentation given by Comrade Lannigan to a Spartacist League public meeting in London on October 27.

Anyone familiar with the left-wing press in Britain and Ireland can hardly have missed the dutiful marking of the end of a decade of upheaval in the Six Counties by almost all of the ostensibly revolutionary groups. Articles entitled "10 Years in the North of Ireland" or "Derry: Ten Years After" have proliferated. Some of the authors have tried to rewrite history; others, notably prominent participants in the Derry events like Eamonn McCann, have sought to apologise for not doing what they know should have been done; while still others have merely gone through the motions, giving perfunctory nods to acknowledge the existence of this troublesome island off the west coast of the Isle of Man.

The Spartacist League has a different reason for addressing the events of 1968 in Ireland and their aftermath. We believe that our tendency has a programme which can be applied to unravel the tangled knot of national/communal, social and religious conflict that is the stuff of Irish politics. Our programme, summed up in the slogan "Troops out now—not Orange against Green, but class against class", points to the crucial need for a proletarian struggle against both imperialism and all forms of nationalism as the key to the resolution of the democratic and socialist tasks in Ireland.

Working-class unity in Ireland, considered a grotesque and utopian pipe-dream by the "socialists" of the British left, cannot be regarded as merely desirable for an effective fight to defeat imperialism and establish a workers state in Ireland. Particularly in the twentieth century, the attempt to create any kind of governmental regime in Ireland has necessitated the consent of the Protestant community. The attempt by the British Liberals to impose a neo-colonial "Home Rule" solution on Ireland in 1912 foundered on the rocks of northern Unionist opposition. As recently as 1974, the social power of the subjectively pro-imperialist Loyalist bloc was again demonstrated in the Ulster Workers Council strike, which defeated the Sunningdale proposals for a "power-sharing" executive and a federal Council of Ireland.

Our considerations are thus fundamentally practical. Without the splitting of the Protestant community along class lines, the possibilities for a successful indigenous proletarian revolution in Ireland are virtually nil.

We are not blind to the difficulties of achieving this goal of working-class unity. However we are not of that school

of petty-bourgeois pessimists who see only the problems. The history of the working class in Ireland is not merely one of sectarian divisions. There is also a fine tradition of united working-class struggle established by the 1907 Belfast shipyard strike wave, or the 1919 engineering strike. Even since partition, which significantly hardened the communal divisions, there have been important instances of united working-class action; the most important was the Belfast Outdoor Relief Workers strike in 1932. In this major struggle, Protestant and Catholic workers not only struck together but fought together in riots against the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). It took an eight-day curfew to quell these street battles.

Derry 1968 was not another Belfast 1932. The Protestant and Catholic workers were not engaging in joint mass struggles. However it is clear that in 1968 it was possible for revolutionaries to penetrate both sections of the working class and, by drawing on and transcending the different traditions of struggle, to create the basis for a party which could provide a way out of the impasse in Ireland.

Origins of the Civil Rights movement

Firstly it is important to examine the origins of the Civil Rights movement. The sharpness of the upheaval in Derry came out of the deep sense of grievance felt by its majority Catholic population over various acts by the Unionist government during the 1960s. The permanent economic depression which hung over Derry (unemployment was 16 per cent, and for males 25 per cent) was exacerbated by the consciously discriminatory policy of the Unionist government in favour of the predominantly Protestant areas of the Six Counties. An example was the siting of Northern Ireland's second university in the small Protestant town of Coleraine, although Derry was a natural choice because of its size and because there had been a University College in the city since 1865.

Measures like this served to increase the resentment of the Catholics in Derry. The nature of the political structure added to this resentment: a majority of the electorate voted anti-Unionist and yet a Unionist Corporation was consistently elected. This was accomplished by the gerrymander: an electoral ward of 14,000 voters elected 8 councillors, while two wards containing a total of 8000 voters elected 12 councillors. This effective disenfranchisement of the 70 per cent Catholic population was maintained by the refusal of the Corporation to house Catholics, particularly outside their own ward. Housing was politically very important since non-householders were not allowed to vote in local elections. This housing policy reached a low in 1967, when no houses at all were built in the city.

Housing was in fact the spark which set light to the situation. The first Civil Rights demonstration, in Dunganon in August 1968, came after the allocation to a 19-year-old Protestant girl of a house in which a Catholic family

had been squatting. This was quickly followed in October by a demonstration in Derry, organised by left-wing activists in the Derry Housing Action Committee.

Everyone expected that the march would pass off peacefully, like the Dungannon one. But October 5, 1968 was to be the occasion of the most violent shake-up in Ireland since partition and the civil war. The Minister of Home Affairs banned the demonstration. People were thus quite tense; but the atmosphere was more festive than martial as we marched along Duke Street. Even when we came to the RUC tenders which blocked our path to the Craigavon Bridge, most people sat down in the road and sang civil rights songs. Then the sky fell in.

The police baton-charged. A cordon of police along the back of the demonstration blocked the path of fleeing demonstrators. This experience changed people's world-view more than 10,000 lectures on the state ever could. From then on street corners, fish shops and bookies' shops were all arenas of the hottest political debate. It was an incredibly fertile period for the development of a socialist organisation.

However as soon as the "lefts" like Eamonn McCann, who had played a key part in organising the October 5 demonstration, realised the extent of the explosive discontent they had inadvertently tapped, they immediately abdicated their position of leadership in favour of a group of "responsible" Catholic businessmen. The latter intervened virtually unopposed to form the Citizens Action Committee (CAC) at a meeting in the City Hall on October 9. These gentlemen immediately proceeded to remove all the latent class content of the movement. The CAC leaders pushed a line of pacifism and respectable anti-Unionist unity, calling off a planned march and substituting a mass sit-down protest in Guildhall Square.

"One man, one job"

The original demands of the Civil Rights protests were "One man, one job", "One man, one vote" and "One man, one house". These demands clearly had a democratic edge against the anti-Catholic discrimination of the Northern Ireland state. Moreover, in the early stage of the struggle the "jobs" demand was generally understood to mean the need for *more* jobs, not for throwing Protestants out of work and giving their jobs to Catholics. Similarly with housing. The demands, while vague, were thus potential focuses for a class-wide fight for social equality against the capitalists.

There was a widespread recognition among the protesters that many Protestants lived in even worse conditions than some working-class Catholics. For instance, on the Protestant Shankill Road in Belfast in 1969, 97 per cent of houses had no indoor toilets and almost as many had no hot water.

For those sages who regard the Protestants as a labour aristocracy or as a "white settler caste" it appears that the difference between outside toilets and swimming pools is academic. Their hygiene must be on a par with their political insight. What these people do not understand is that the system of discrimination also involves political patronage.

Thus in order to get good jobs and houses, Protestant workers had to vote Unionist, restrain any militancy over wages, job conditions etc. The disparity in wage levels between Northern Ireland and Britain for the same job in

the same firm shows the effect that this system has had on the possibilities for working-class action of any kind. And this has not been completely lost on Protestant trade unionists. A meeting of predominantly Protestant shop stewards in Belfast in 1965 called for an end to discrimination on religious grounds. The various splits in the Unionist monolith over the last few years reflect in a distorted way these class tensions.

However, in 1968 any possibility of intersecting this feeling and organising a united working-class struggle was wasted by the "lefts" in Derry. The formation of the CAC gave the mass movement a liberal democratic pan-Catholic colouration, with demands like "One man, one job" fading rapidly into the background or taking on an anti-Protestant connotation. When one of the two Protestants on the CAC, Claude Wilton, stood for election in 1969, the popular slogan was "vote for Claude, the Catholic Prod", identifying him with the Catholic side *against* the Protestants.

Class struggle or pan-Catholicism?

I was then a member of the Socialist Labour League (SLL—later League for a Workers Vanguard) in Derry, and this group, while small, had some possibility of fighting for class unity in this period. The SLL's social base in Derry was mainly Catholic, while in Belfast it consisted mainly of Protestant trade unionists. Our attack on the Civil Rights movement was not, however, centred on its supra-class, anti-Protestant character but on its limitations as a protest movement.

There was one concrete case which opened up particularly good possibilities for raising the class question: a busmen's strike in Derry in 1969, in which we were strategic in leading a largely Protestant workforce out on strike against the introduction of one-man buses. Here was a perfect issue for raising the call to defend and win jobs for *all* workers through an end to discrimination and work-sharing at full pay. Moreover, this was an issue which the CAC would never have touched. However our calls for class unity were so formal and abstract that we did not see the CAC as the key obstacle to it. Thus we did not use this strike action as a way of splitting the pan-Catholic alliance.

The SLL, except in one case when it led a strike of dockers and shirt factory workers against RUC repression in Derry, was generally peripheral and too small to make a strong impact, particularly given its flawed and abstract programme. However, Eamonn McCann and his co-thinkers in People's Democracy (PD—originally a loose student organisation in Queen's University, Belfast) have a much greater responsibility for what happened to the civil rights struggle. In his well-known book about the Derry events, *War and an Irish Town*, McCann himself expresses rather well what he did wrong, albeit with a reformist perspective:

"If any group had fought consistently—from within or without the civil rights movement—or both—for such a programme, the all-class Catholic alliance, which is what the civil rights movement became, could not have held together. And such a programme, hardly the normal stuff of Northern Irish politics, would not have attracted immediate mass support; but it might have enabled those of us in Derry at least to go on *talking* to Protestants in the Fountain in 1969. At any rate the matter was never put to the test. No such group existed or emerged."

Despite the fact that the programme McCann refers to does not transcend social-democratic reformism, he does seem to have learned *something*. But not so. After ten years of annually beating his breast over his sins, McCann still doesn't recognise that broad supra-class movements are roadblocks in the fight to win even democratic demands. Today, writing in the pages of *Socialist Review*, he supports the Anti Nazi League Carnival. Perhaps in ten years' time McCann will be apologising for his mistakes on the ANL. Like the ANL, the CAC was a means for the liberal bourgeoisie to defuse, divert and prevent any real action by the working class in defence of its interests.

McCann describes the craven capitulation of the left rather well:

"By the middle of 1969 'the left' was established as those who were most impatient and most willing to run risks, who wanted to go along the same road as the moderates, but further, faster. It was not at all established that the left wanted to go along a different road." (*War and an Irish Town*)

Burntollet and the Bogside

In January 1969 People's Democracy organised a march from Belfast to Derry which maintained the spirit and programme of pan-Catholic pacifism. This march was a complete adventure, organised with a conception of self-martyrdom. PD took a group of students through the most backward Orange country areas of the north, with an explicit policy of non-violence. They went to what McCann proudly called the "lunatic extreme" of allowing the marchers to be beaten to a pulp by Protestant followers of the fanatical reactionary Reverend Ian Paisley, without so much as an attempt at self-defence.

At this stage Protestant *workers* were not generally being mobilised against the Civil Rights protesters; it was mainly rural and lumpen elements who stood behind Paisley. But PD's pacifist antics were completely self-defeating: they were no way to win respect—let alone support—among the Protestant working class.

The rally in Derry at the end of the march dissolved into riots sparked off by the news of Paisley's attacks. The riots were the occasion for the most violent RUC rampage to date. Vigilante squads were set up to defend the Catholic Bogside after this display of Orange state repression, and barricades went up for the first time—soon to be dismantled at the instigation of the CAC. The riots continued up through July, both against provocative Loyalist parades and against the RUC. They peaked with intense battles against the RUC on the occasion of the Loyalist Apprentice Boys march on August 12, which as an "annual parade" was exempt from a ban on marches. These battles led directly to the introduction of British troops.

But with a radically different perspective from the prevailing pan-Catholic liberalism and pacifism, it would have been possible to build an organisation which could cut across the communal divide. One of the first deaths from sectarian violence was that of a Protestant worker named King who was killed in the Protestant Fountain area of Derry in early 1969. He had a heart attack after a Catholic crowd beat him up at the entrance to the Fountain.

In those circumstances it would have been crucial to say

to the people who were defending the Bogside against the RUC: "We're for a working-class defence force, we're for defending *every* section of the workers against the police and against sectarian attack. We think that those who attack the Fountain are against the working class, that we should defend the Fountain against these kinds of attacks." That approach could have begun very early on to still the communal side of the Catholic protest movement and to keep open the possibility of united class action with the Protestant workers.

Troops and the left

But the Irish left had a very different perspective. People's Democracy's pacifism and liberalism very quickly revealed its natural corollary of reliance on the bourgeois state. When the Belfast-to-Derry march finally hobbled, battered and bruised, into Derry's Guildhall Square, PD leader Michael Farrell called for the intervention of a United Nations peacekeeping force to protect the Catholics!

Eight months after Farrell made his call, an imperialist "peacekeeping" force was indeed sent to Ireland: the British army. The Catholic population was intensely relieved when it arrived, as they'd been facing three continuous days of police and B-Special riots. And the gentlemen of the left in Ireland naturally couldn't find it in themselves to call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops—though they were very outspoken against imperialist intervention in Aden.

In Britain the International Socialists, in their usual "principled" fashion, reacted to the proximity of the issue and to the consciousness of the Catholic masses by supporting the sending of imperialism's armed thugs. They said that troops would give a valuable "breathing space" (an unfortunate turn of phrase) to the Catholics. And they cut out the regular slogan in the "Where We Stand" box in *Socialist Worker* which called "For the withdrawal of British troops from abroad", changing it to "Support for all national liberation movements" without explaining the switch at all.

The International Marxist Group refused to call outright for the withdrawal of the troops, simply advising sagely that "The Bogsiders will learn that the British army will not protect them from the B-Specials." To its credit the SLL, both in Ireland and in Britain, put out a call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. It has to be understood that imperialist intervention can never create a solution in the interests of the working class or the oppressed, in Northern Ireland or anywhere else. After a brief honeymoon when cups of tea were brewed for the troops the illusions of the Catholic masses were completely smashed, particularly by the Falls Road curfew in July 1970, when people were forced to stay in their houses for three days.

The national question and the class question

McCann drew the obvious lesson from the installation of the troops that one major problem with the Civil Rights movement was that it didn't raise the question of the border, of partition. But, lacking a working-class perspective, he simply moved from tailing bourgeois liberalism to tailing the petty-bourgeois nationalism of the Provisional IRA. That's a development which typifies much of the

guilt-ridden British/Irish left.

For us, neither the southern state nor the northern Orange statelet can in any sense be seen as an ally of the working class. Both states deny a whole series of democratic rights: one guided by pro-imperialist Protestant communalism, the other by Catholic bigotry. Vorster in South Africa once said "I would give up all my legislation for one article of the Special Powers Act in Northern Ireland." But the southern state has an equally vicious Offences Against the State Act.

So when in August 1969 southern troops were moved to the border we would have opposed their intervention, just as we vehemently opposed Britain's intervention. We reject the programme of a united capitalist Ireland, either as a "progressive step" or as a satisfactory goal, because that could offer nothing to the Protestant workers but a reversal of the terms of oppression—at best making them second-class citizens in a united Republic. To advance such a programme in 1969 and 1970, just like today, was to guarantee that Protestant workers would be pushed away from any possibility of unity with the Catholic masses and back into the arms of their "own" bourgeoisie.

But without confronting the national question and defending the right of *both* communities to exist, calls for class unity can only be abstract and empty incantation. This was precisely the problem with the SLL at that time. The national question was a distant part of the maximum programme which was not allowed to interfere with the daily economic questions; and when the SLL finally addressed it they came down on the side of Green nationalism.

The lack of an organisation fighting for an anti-nationalist working-class programme has been dearly paid for since 1968. Thus, rather than being split along class lines, the Civil Rights movement eventually fragmented along predictable, but not predetermined, lines. Karl Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that:

"The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seemed engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language."

So the streetfighters of 1969 became Republicans, exchanging the stone and petrol bomb for the gun. The Catholic working-class youth of the North, potential cadres of a proletarian vanguard party, saw no alternative in their struggle against imperialism than the petty-bourgeois nationalist Provisional IRA.

When you look at the number of personally courageous militants who have died in the service of this historically defunct cause, you realise that there has been a tremendous waste. Republicanism contains a backward-looking romanticism—the idea that each generation must give up some of its sons "to die for their country". And this warped, deformed tradition leads the working masses *nowhere*.

In Ireland, even more than most semi-colonial countries, the struggle for a bourgeois nationalist solution to the national question is an entirely futile one. The partial and deformed completion of the national revolution in 1921

undercut the social base that a nationalist organisation would need to defeat imperialism in the North, and partition hardened the division between the Catholics and a million-strong, heavily-armed Protestant majority in the North which had no desire for unity with the new Free State.

The underlying truth that there can be no democratic solution to the Irish question without the consent of the Protestants helps explain the craven approach of the Provisionals, who fight not so much to *defeat* imperialism as to bring it to the negotiating table. Hence they refuse to call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops, preferring to ask for a "declaration of intent" to withdraw by Britain. In addition, the Provos continually seek negotiations with reactionary Unionist leaders, seeing them and not the Protestant workers as potential allies.

1838 and 1938

Various left groups tell us that the programme of 1938, the Transitional Programme of Leon Trotsky, is out of date. I would say that the programme of 1838, the bourgeois programme of Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Movement, along with all its later cousins, is out of date.

Before 1972, the programme of the Provisional IRA and of People's Democracy—the programme that many Republican militants laid down their lives for—was nothing more than the abolition of Stormont. So Stormont was abolished—but, with nothing to replace it, that simply meant direct Westminster rule in the North. And today the only significant movement in the Catholic ghettos is around the demand for political status for Republican prisoners, pending a general amnesty. That's a minimum programme which, to say the least, comes nowhere near addressing the overall needs of the working class.

Against the bankrupt "tradition of the dead generations" which is Republicanism, we have a different tradition. Our programme is based on the need for the kind of united class struggles against the bourgeoisie that occurred in Belfast in 1932. That means a fight for a conscious leadership which can address the question of sectarian violence alongside the fight to get the British troops out, by building anti-imperialist, anti-sectarian workers defence squads.

That means a leadership which will fight for a socialist solution to unemployment, bad housing and the poverty-level standard of living in Northern Ireland, through raising transitional demands like a sliding scale of wages and hours, an end to all discrimination in housing and employment and a programme of socially-useful public works. A leadership which will break down the communal barriers, tearing Protestant workers from their reactionary Orange masters just as it breaks Catholic workers away from their rulers and misleaders, north and south, the Green bourgeoisie and the nationalists.

The struggle to build an organisation fighting for such a programme will not be easy. However, unlike the Republicans and their acolytes, our politics will enable us to take advantage of future Derry 1968s in the fight for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. ■

Avenge Bobby Sands! Smash H Block! Troops out now! Westminster butchers

It took 66 days to kill Bobby Sands, condemned to a slow and painful death by the arrogant butchers of Westminster. In Parliament, the announcement that "Robert Sands, Esquire, the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone" was dead met with an obscene solidarity of Labour and Tory with Margaret Thatcher's refusal to budge an inch on his just, elementary demands. But around the world it met with demonstrations of outrage and indignation at this calculated, imperialist murder. In Catholic West Belfast, the announcement that Bobby Sands, officer of the Irish Republican Army, was dead was met with the beating of dustbin lids, the construction of street barricades and the rattle of British rifle fire. Northern Ireland stands ready to explode.

Bobby Sands died a martyr in the struggle against brutal imperialist oppression. The proletariat will remember him, his death will be avenged. In the US, East Coast dockers announced a 24-hour boycott of all British shipping. In Ireland there is talk of a general strike the day of his funeral. In Britain the labour movement must sweep aside the treacherous leaders who condone this imperialist atrocity with massive demonstrations of protest against this vicious ruling class. The British government's terror and murder in Northern Ireland—carried out with the full support of the Labour traitors—is *vile, repugnant and criminal*. **GET THE ARMED BUTCHERS OUT NOW! FOR THE IMMEDIATE, UNCONDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL OF THE BRITISH ARMY! SMASH THE IMPERIALIST TORTURE CAMPS! AVENGE BOBBY SANDS!**

The British press claims it was "suicide", but all West Belfast knows the truth. Cars blared their horns in the early hours of 5 May to awaken residents with the news that Sands had died in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, and within hours barricades were thrown up throughout the area. Youths hurled stones and petrol bombs at the hated army and RUC patrols. An army post at the top of Springfield Road was besieged for hours by angry crowds. Troops firing plastic bullets and live ammunition injured scores, at least one seriously. With daybreak, the street battles wound down and an uneasy calm hung over the city as preparations were made for Sands' funeral, to be held with full Republican military honours two days later. But with nightfall the rioting started again, and in the coming days everyone knows that it will escalate.

Three thousand demonstrated in Paris to protest Sands' death; another thousand marched in Athens. In Dublin security was tightened outside the British Embassy while thousands queued behind black flags at the General Post Office to sign a book of mourning and 2000 marched to the Irish parliament. American demonstrators marched in

New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles. US imperialist politicians, keeping one eye on their Irish-American constituents and worried that Thatcher's hard-line policies will provoke a major crisis in Northern Ireland, expressed their "concern" and "regret" at the death.

But even as three other Republican prisoners on hunger strike for political status wait behind Sands in a grisly queue, Margaret Thatcher vows to stand firm. British troops continue to shoot down and kill unarmed H-Block protesters in the streets of Belfast and Derry. Dozens of protest leaders have been arrested in Gestapo-style dawn raids. And the Loyal Labour Opposition backs Thatcher, Humphrey Atkins and the army to the hilt, crying "No surrender! Defeat the terrorists!" The army's Spearhead battalion stands ready for despatch across the water to the Six Counties and all police leave has been cancelled. While international media correspondents cram Belfast hotels, Her Majesty's Government has provided a steady stream of black propaganda, including outrageous accounts of alleged IRA preparations to set fire to Catholic homes and blame the Protestants ("IRA Plans to Burn Belfast", read the *Daily Express* headline).

In Belfast and Derry the population, Catholic and Protestant, has prepared for a bloody showdown. A few days before Sands' death the Protestant paramilitary Ulster Defence Association held a show of strength in the Shankill Road; the next morning two families reportedly moved from Bombay Street near the Falls. As an *Observer* (3 May) correspondent noted, "memories of fire-bombed houses in the mixed fringes 12 years ago are still vivid". Republican Citizens' Defence Committees have prepared contingency plans in West Belfast. Households have stocked up on bread, bottled gas, tinned goods, powdered milk. Already in mid-April, Derry more and more resembled 1969 with barricades and petrol bombs against the army and police every day. Following the martyrdom of Bobby Sands, they will continue.

Years of mythmaking out the window

When the voters of Fermanagh and South Tyrone elected Sands their MP in a bye-election on 9 April, the government's long propaganda campaign to "prove" the IRA were isolated fanatics was demolished forever. This was a sweeping, well-nigh unanimous vote by the Catholic community against imperialist oppression. The full pressure of imperialist opinion and scare-mongering had been unleashed on the voters of this border constituency, contested in a straight fight between Sands and Protestant Unionist leader Harry West. West placed adverts in the local Catholic press reminding readers of the Pope's words

against the "men of violence". The imperialist propaganda mill put it about as a fact that "an IRA gun" had murdered a Protestant census taker on the eve of the poll, even though the Republicans flatly denied responsibility for this atrocity.

Imperialism's Labour lieutenants pitched in to do their bit as well. In an unprecedented polling day appeal from Westminster, Labour spokesman on Northern Ireland Don Concannon told voters that they had a "unique opportunity to denounce the men of violence". "A vote for Mr Sands", said this servile toady, "is a vote of approval for the perpetrators of the La Mon massacre, Warrenpoint, the murder of Lord Mountbatten, and all the other senseless murders that have taken place in Northern Ireland over the years". Yet in his fortieth day without food, Bobby Sands was elected a member of the imperial Mother of Parliaments on an 87 per cent turnout.

There was an outcry from the gentlemen of Westminster, who engaged in polite debates about policies of mass deprivation and bloody repression, against having this "criminal" seated among them. Eventually MPs decided not to expel Sands from their august body—in the expectation he would soon be dead anyway. Imperialist civility! Less than a score of Labour "lefts" could even be heard to murmur that the government might consider *negotiating* ("imaginatively") with Sands. Left hero Tony Benn graciously hinted that "someone" (someone else, that is) should propose seating Sands at Westminster. Of meeting his demands, not a word was heard from Benn or anyone else. With Sands' death, it has already been mooted on both sides of the House, there will be no haste to issue a writ for another bye-election. Disliking the voters' choice on 9 April, the MPs so fond of prattling about democracy will not be in a hurry to give them another chance.

Westminster's well-nigh unanimous message to Sands was crude and vicious in the extreme. Meanwhile he was also the target of more subtle "humanitarian concern" by emissaries from Dublin, Rome, Brussels and almost everywhere else—to put pressure on *him*, not the murderous Thatcher, to concede. Snivelling pro-imperialist reformists like Belfast MP Gerry Fitt and the former Officials (now "Sinn Féin the Workers Party") condemn the desperate hunger strike as "violent", while others simply wheedle their "peace" message. But there can be no peace so long as Britain lords it over Northern Ireland, and Bobby Sands, a determined man, stood firm to the last.

Free all victims of imperialist repression!

There is real tragedy in the death of this man with the courage to die for his beliefs in a slow and agonising way. The imperialists claim he was a criminal; but Bobby Sands' courage and dignity have made him an honourable symbol for the oppressed Catholic minority of Northern Ireland in their struggle against the obscene British presence. He was an IRA officer who would not ask his men to do what he would not do himself. Dr John O'Connell, a member of the Irish Parliament who came to Long Kesh to persuade Sands to give up his fast to the death, remarked after failing: "I have never seen so determined a man." Sands and his fellow hunger strikers have simply demanded that

the Republican prisoners should not be treated as criminals. They are right. Their demands for political status and better prison conditions are just, even minimal. **FREE THE HUNGER STRIKERS! FREE ALL VICTIMS OF IMPERIALIST REPRESSION IN IRELAND!**

Bobby Sands' only "crime" was to have fought against oppression. He was moved to join the Provisional IRA after his family was driven out of their predominantly Protestant neighbourhood and he was threatened out of his job at gun-point. He spent only six months out of prison in his last eight years. Some old handguns were found in his home in 1972: this earned him five years in the Maze. Six months after his release in 1976 he was stopped in a car with three others, and the RUC found one revolver in the vehicle. Each of the four received fourteen years.

Contrast the British troops, armed to the teeth, killing with impunity. On Easter Sunday an army Land Rover ploughed into a group of protesting children in Derry at 50-60 miles an hour. Two young boys were killed and the vehicle was reversed over the broken, dead body of one. The Army Commander "regretted" this "traffic accident". Fourteen years for possessing a handgun if you are in the IRA; "regret" over a "traffic accident" for coldblooded murder if you are in the army. Such are British imperialism's scales of justice.

But the other tragedy of Bobby Sands is the sad fact that his death, however honourable its intentions, is at the service of a programme which cannot further the cause of Irish liberation. The bankruptcy of the Republicans' strategy was shown with the defeat of the last hunger strike, whose "humanitarian" focus and emphasis on recognition from notables in foreign capitals did nothing to stop the manoeuvring and arrogant refusal of elementary rights by Britain. The whole strategy of pressuring imperialism, whether by civil libertarianism or by the bomb, offers no road forward.

For anti-sectarian, anti-imperialist workers militias!

The tragedy of Republicanism is that it can only, ineluctably, fall into the communalist trap set by British imperialist divide-and-rule policies. British imperialism will face its day of reckoning in Ireland when there is a unified mobilisation of the proletarian masses surging towards power. But what Republicanism urges its supporters to fight for, to die for, is a united *capitalist* Ireland. And the Republican strategy, suited to this goal, is a unity of Catholics across class lines, not a unity of workers across communal divisions. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey summed up this perspective, which is a roadblock to the emancipation of the Catholic masses from their oppression, when she urged all Catholics to vote for Sands in the Fermanagh bye-election: "Whatever our differences let us stand together thirty-two thousand strong, beat West, beat Thatcher and save Sands' life" (*An Phoblacht*, 4 April). But such cross-class unity did not save Sands' life, nor can it avenge it through smashing imperialist oppression.

With the situation in the North about to boil over, the Catholics will be on the receiving end of stepped-up repression—from the British imperialist army, police and Loyalist paramilitary terror gangs. The IRA may well be

the only force defending the no-go areas and Catholic communities from Paisleyite atrocities and imperialist rampage. Youth in the Catholic ghettos, trapped in a cycle of unemployment, social misery, discrimination and vicious repression, are attracted to Republicanism by hope of a better future. But it is in the very nature of Republicanism that as and when the conflict deepens, polarising along the lines of the early 1970s and worse, their nationalist strategy will lead to an exacerbation of reactionary sectarian violence on both sides. Republican nationalism directs its acts of terror not only against imperialist targets like Earl Mountbatten and the British army of occupation. It is also capable of such indefensible atrocities as the killing of thirteen innocent Protestants in the La Mon restaurant firebombing of early 1978. Class unity can and must be forged against sectarian terror as well as against imperialist rampage, through the struggle for integrated workers militias.

And what about the political goal of the Republicans' fight for cross-class Catholic communal unity—a capitalist united Ireland? What sort of future does a capitalist Ireland hold that is worth dying for? Looking south, a fellow Republican faces the death sentence in Charles Haughey's Republic right now, the economy is floundering, and unemployment and inflation are especially desperate in the deliberate absence of state benefits. With elections impending, Haughey has only the "Irish unity" card to play in his bid to dodge the issue of the economy. But even here Haughey and other Irish bourgeois politicians are deliberately coy and evasive faced with the explosive H-Block issue. The prime minister lets fellow Fianna Fail member Sile de Valera do a little Green nationalist frontrunning for electoral purposes, but H-Block activists nonetheless denounce him for refusing to take a stand for Bobby Sands. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey insisted that Fianna Fail "would never rule again if Bobby Sands dies".

All the while Haughey has been working on some kind of deal with British imperialism, widely rumoured to involve a "confederal solution" or some other chimera for Northern Ireland in exchange for the republic dropping its ostensible "neutrality" and entering NATO. NATO has long been known to prize the strategic value of Shannon Airport and other potential bits of Irish real estate. The Dublin *Sunday Tribune* pointed out that a senior British diplomat recently posted to the second-highest position in the embassy in Dublin went straight there from a tour of duty at the NATO Defence College in Rome. The Soviet *Izvestia* worries out loud that Britain may use Northern Ireland as a bargaining counter to bring Ireland into the anti-Soviet war alliance. Thus even Haughey's wheeling and dealing in the name of "Irish unity" is directly in the interests of imperialism.

Popular front demobilisation

If the Republican solution offers no solution to the plight of the Catholic masses, it is not for lack of courage but for lack of political perspective to focus a death blow against their imperialist oppressors. But the supposed "revolutionaries" in Britain who enthusiastically echo Republican rhetoric and wallow in their role as "moral witnesses", face nothing more "threatening" than the pressure of pro-imperialist Labourism. And they whimper

in capitulation. The fake-left scrambled after the handful of Liberals and "left" Labourites who wanted a vague "commitment to withdrawal" only in order to better "defeat the gunmen". They dropped campaigning for "troops out now" to tailor their demands to fit the fashions of these latter-day Lloyd Georges. And now that the "left" Labourites and the Liberals—whose parliamentary spokesmen on Ireland oppose political status as staunchly as the rest—have stopped marching, the "left" isn't marching either.

As Bobby Sands prepared to die for his convictions, they awaited his death in order to act... with vigils. There have been a few humanitarian protest rallies, petitions to Westminster and Downing Street and the like, but the biggest single action has been an impotent moral gesture of confrontation with the police by a few hundred leftists on London's Kilburn High Road. The fake-left's disastrous record around the current hunger strike could not provide a more striking confirmation of the warning we have repeatedly given of the demobilising character of the popular-frontist perspective they have increasingly adopted for Irish solidarity work.

What is needed in Britain, as in Ireland, is a perspective of class mobilisation against imperialism and for a proletarian-socialist solution. The British labour movement today bears the brunt of endless vicious attacks by a government seeking to make them pay for the decrepitude of British capitalism. And this is the same government that has unleashed the troops on the population of Northern Ireland. To the labour movement of Britain we say: Black all military transport to Northern Ireland! Demand troops out now! Throw out your misleaders who uphold imperialist repression in Ireland just as they betray your own struggles at home!

Bobby Sands must not simply become another addition to the long list of martyrs for Irish freedom. He will only be avenged, and British imperialism and its vile deeds finally defeated, when the united Irish working class puts an end to the rule of capitalism, Orange and Green. An Irish revolutionary vanguard must be forged to lead the fight for an Irish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles. That fight must begin now—*Avenge the death of Bobby Sands! British butchers out of Ireland now!* ■

Dublin Spartacist Youth Group

PO Box 2944
Dublin 1
01-974617

Spartacist League/Britain

London

PO Box 1041
London NW5 3EU
071-485 1396

Glasgow

PO Box 150
Glasgow G3 6DX
041-332 0788

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Ireland: Catholic, Protestant bigots target homosexuals

Dublin anti-gay killers go free

In September 1982, Declan Flynn was attacked by a gang of youths out "queer-bashing" in Fairview Park, Dublin. He almost managed to outrun them but was tripped, savagely kicked and left to die a slow and agonising death, choking on his own blood. Today his murderers are free to roam the streets.

If Declan Flynn had "only" been injured, it is almost certain the perpetrators wouldn't even have been arrested. Irish law treats petty crime with more severity than such murderous attacks on homosexuals. Flynn's killers admitted to at least 20 other attacks in the preceding six weeks. A gay man who had himself been attacked carried out an investigation and handed the gang's names over to the police even before the murder. Not once did the Gardai appear to take the slightest interest. After the murder, no arrests were made for 36 hours. And at the trial all the accused admitted from the start that they had deliberately set out to attack any homosexuals they could find.

The Dublin Gay Collective described the trial:

"The defence stressed the gay aspect throughout: evidence was taken from one witness that just before the murder he had given Declan 'a peck on the cheek' while other people were watching. The implication being that such provoking behaviour explained the action." (*Qare Times*, undated)

Declan Flynn had, after all, committed the "crime" (literally under the Republic's laws) of being gay. Indeed his killers' only remorse was at the possibility that they had made a mistake and killed someone who wasn't homosexual. The judge directed the jury to find the gang guilty not of murder but of manslaughter, and on March 8 sent them home with suspended prison sentences.

A fortnight later the trial of Robert Nicholl in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, came to an end. He was accused of stabbing to death a gay man, Henry McLarnon. "There had been a considerable degree of provocation", said the Lord Chief "Justice" of Northern Ireland. "It looks as though he was defending himself, not from the threat of grave violence or death, but from the perverted sexual advances of the deceased...." Reason enough for another verdict of manslaughter and another suspended sentence.

Obviously "Justice" Lowry didn't think this case as serious as one he presided over a year previously. Then two men were jailed for a total of *five years* for consensual sex! The British laws which decriminalised private homosexual acts between no more than two men aged 21 or more were only introduced in Northern Ireland at the insistence of the European Court of Human Rights in 1982. Early in 1978, the Callaghan Labour government dropped liberalising measures in return for the support of the Reverend Ian Paisley and the Ulster Unionists in propping up their minority government. At the time Paisley had organised a "Save Ulster from Sodomy"

campaign and was aligned with Catholic Cardinal O'Fiaich in opposing even these minimal measures. When it comes to anti-gay attacks the religious bigots, Protestant and Catholic, are united.

The Fairview and Ballymena sentences were legal endorsements of the murder of gays! No wonder that on the evening of March 8 the leader of the Dublin gang felt able to lead a "victory parade" around Fairview Park, chanting "We are the champions!" Indeed he was the "champion". Reactionary religious bigotry is a strong and integral part of Irish nationalism and Ulster Protestant communalism. In the infamous anti-homosexual trial of Oscar Wilde, the prosecution lawyer was none other than Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Protestant opposition to Irish independence. The Irish nationalist leader Parnell was destroyed as an effective nationalist politician when it was revealed that he was an "adulterer". And the Irish patriot Sir Roger Casement was executed after a trial at which he was attacked as much for being a homosexual as for trying to smuggle arms into Ireland via a German U-boat during WWI. Ireland is indeed a place where the sentiments expressed by Voltaire are apt. To paraphrase, true freedom will come when the last capitalist is hung from the entrails of the last clergyman.

When the "sentences" of Declan Flynn's murderers were announced there was an uproar throughout the Republic and the Dail even called a special debate. However most of the deputies used the case as an excuse to call for more "law and order". A few prattled on about the need to give legal protection to every minority, but these people are not prepared to repeal the (British) Act of 1861 which makes homosexuality illegal.

While there is no special revolutionary programme for homosexuals, the communist programme includes demands which address the special oppression of homosexuals. But unlike sectoralists, revolutionaries understand that the fate of homosexuals—like that of any other oppressed group—is determined by the course of the class struggle. Hence, one's attitude towards cases such as the anti-gay murder of Declan Flynn offers a test of one's commitment to the full and all-sided emancipation of the oppressed. Various liberals, most of the Irish left and the nationalists of Sinn Fein and the IRSP were prepared to condemn the sentencing and agreed to sponsor a demonstration in protest. But given the capitulation by all of them, in one form or another, to the reactionary anti-abortion crusade (see "Clerical crusade targets Irish women", *Spartacist Britain* no 46, December 1982/January 1983), no confidence can be placed in their willingness to defend democratic rights for gays. The Spartacist League demands: Jail the killers of Declan Flynn and Henry McLarnon! Government out of the bedroom! Abolish the age of consent—

no legal constraints on consensual sexual activity! Full democratic rights for gays!

It is no great coincidence that the same Act which criminalises homosexuality also outlaws abortion in the Republic. The oppression of women and homosexuals is related to the nuclear family. Unlike the oppression of women, the special oppression of homosexuals is not directly based on the economic institutions of capitalism, rather it is rooted in the sexual morality of the bourgeois family. The nuclear family, with its sexual division of labour based on child-rearing, conditions sex roles which are infinitely oppressive to those who deviate from bourgeois "norms".

The Catholic church, bulwark of reaction in the Republic, does all within its power to bolster the family; today it is leading the campaign for a constitutional amendment to ensure existing anti-abortion laws can *never* be repealed. This campaign is composed of groups who have opposed every attempt at reform of Irish social law. Naturally abortion, divorce and homosexuality are anathema to those who see the bourgeois family as an "ideal". It is almost certain that nobody from the amendment campaign would disagree with one of its leaders when she denounces gays as "deformed" and says "there's something wrong with people who think they are gay" (quoted in *Qare Times*).

The workers and oppressed in Ireland require a revolutionary party built through a struggle to overthrow British imperialism and the Irish bourgeoisie and win the proletariat from nationalism/communalism, both Orange and Green. It may be understandable that many gays are suspicious of fair-weather friends on the left, whose "solidarity" lasts exactly as long as a relatively liberal political climate. In the British left press the murder of Declan Flynn has gained barely a mention from the same people who sing the praises of the Irish nationalists. No wonder—these are the same people who paint the Ayatollah Khomeini and good Catholic Walesa as the socialist's answer to the resurrection!

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 showed the way for the liberation of all the oppressed, including gays. In December 1917 *every* anti-homosexual law was abol-

ished, as part of a conscious move to spread the revolution into every area of life. The Bolsheviks' guiding principle was:

"It [Soviet legislation] declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured, and no one's interests are encroached upon." (*The Sexual Revolution in Russia*, Grigori Batkis, 1923)

While proletarian rule will do much to end homosexual oppression, the final eradication of all ideological oppression of homosexuals cannot occur until the family is replaced in socialist society. With the Stalinist political degeneration, the nuclear family was reinforced and laws against homosexuals were reinstituted; nevertheless, in the Soviet Union the proletarian property forms—the social basis for an end to all oppression—remain and must be defended against imperialism and internal counter-revolution. Only a political revolution can oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and restore a healthy workers state.

It is the working class that has the social power to create a new society in Ireland as everywhere else. In Ireland, Catholic and Protestant workers are divided along communal/national lines while the capitalists, clergymen and reactionary demagogues on both sides encourage not just religious bigotry but the oppression of women and vile anti-homosexual prejudice. Only workers revolution can equitably resolve the communal divisions. Only a planned economy can begin to tackle the permanent mass unemployment and poverty and lay the basis for a society where the oppressive bourgeois family can be replaced through the socialisation of domestic labour and women's full integration into production. The Spartacist League fights for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland, for the separation of church and state throughout Ireland, for an end to Orange privilege in the six counties and against forcible reunification, and for an Irish workers republic, part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. Only the revolutionary vanguard fighting on the communist programme can act as the "tribune of the oppressed", linking the defence of specially oppressed groups—like gays—to the social power of the working class. ■

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British troops out now!

No to NATO's Ireland deal!

Not Orange against Green but class against class!

No sooner had a beaming Margaret Thatcher and Garret FitzGerald emerged from signing their vaunted "Anglo-Irish accord" than American president Ronald Reagan signalled his congratulations. Reagan instantly called the British and Irish ambassadors into the White House to wax rhetorical about this "promise of peace and a new dawn for the troubled communities of Northern Ireland" (*Guardian*, 26 November 1985).

Within weeks of the "new dawn", Orange reactionaries were leading 100,000 outraged Loyalist marchers through the streets of Belfast, prominent Sinn Fein activists were being hunted down and arrested in a major crackdown and several hundred more British troops from the crack Spearhead Battalion were being shipped in to carry out the imperialists' bloody "promise of peace". One minute into the New Year the IRA signalled its opinion on the Hillsborough agreement by blowing away two RUC cops. In the meantime Republican prisoners launched an abortive hunger strike in protest at yet another of the British government's massive frame-up "super-grass" trials.

The British imperialists and their Green Tory lackeys hope that this "Made for NATO" deal will serve to pacify the oppressed Catholic minority in the North while reconciling the Protestant majority to some form of power-sharing, and pave the way to turning Ireland into a floating aircraft carrier for NATO's anti-Soviet arsenal. But short of a genocidal bloodbath, no amount of capitalist scheming can do away with the communalist Frankenstein created in the North by centuries of British imperialism's "divide and rule" butchery. There can be only one equitable and just solution to the troubles of Ireland: the struggle for an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles! No to the Thatcher/FitzGerald accord! Imperialist hands off Sinn Fein/IRA! British troops out now! Not Orange against Green, but class against class!

The Hillsborough agreement, unveiled in mid-November, involves significant shifts in posture (though not substance) by both the British and Irish governments. Dublin has formally agreed that the reunification of Ireland requires "the consent of the majority" in the North, ie the Protestants, and thus recognised the 1921 partition. Thatcher in turn, with bi-partisan support, has agreed to set up an Anglo-Irish "intergovernmental conference" in which Dublin will be given some say over Northern Irish affairs, notably how best to suppress the IRA! For years now, British governments have vacillated

between a policy of military repression to crush the IRA and attempts at "power-sharing" to try and undermine Republican support in the Catholic community and boost the "moderate" (ie pro-imperialist) SDLP. One such attempt was the Sunningdale agreement of 1973, where a "power-sharing" assembly was set up, consisting of the SDLP and some pliable Unionist politicians around Brian Faulkner. This scheme was smashed by the reactionary Orange general strike of 1974.

This time around British imperialism is taking a more subtle approach. But the subtlety is lost on the embittered Loyalist masses and their reactionary leaders. Ulster MPs have resigned en masse to force a sort of plebiscite on the issue. At the monster Orange march in December, Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party and the more "respectable" Official Unionist Party of James Molyneux, often deeply divided in the past, stood shoulder to shoulder. Amid a sea of placards demanding "No surrender", Paisley ranted with Hitler-like ferocity against the "Jez-e-bel" Thatcher. In the eyes of the Loyalists, Hillsborough smacks of the beginning of the end of the Union, the undoing of partition.

The backdrop to the Hillsborough agreement is the concern by American imperialism in particular that Ireland's nominal neutrality and the continuing instability in the North is an obstacle to securing, particularly, the harbours and facilities of the west coast of Ireland for NATO's war plans against the Soviet Union. Moreover Britain, the US' staunchest anti-Soviet ally, has long been too decrepit to be able to afford the endless infusions of money needed to maintain "social peace" in the North. So the current deal was brokered in Washington, including with promises of financial aid. Indeed, one form of "financial aid" is the money which Reagan's so-called National Endowment for Democracy, a CIA conduit, has been pouring into the SDLP.

For what it's worth, Ireland's "neutrality" is pretty phoney. In 1949 the Irish Republic refused to join NATO only because of the question of partition. But it has pursued a deeply anti-Communist and pro-Western policy, including membership in NATO's Common Market and military contingents in numerous United Nations "peace-keeping" missions.

Predictably Neil Kinnock's Labour Party has given enthusiastic backing to the Thatcher/FitzGerald accord. Imperialist repression of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland has been bi-partisan policy from the start. Indeed it was a Labour government which sent British troops in in the first place. Yet when thirteen Campaign Group MPs voted against the accord, the Labour-cretinist fake left went into paroxysms of praise, exemplified by *Socialist Action's* salute to "Labour's internationalist 13". We say:

Keep Ireland out of NATO! Down with NATO's anti-Soviet war drive! Defend the Soviet Union!

The IRA/Sinn Fein, with its petty-bourgeois nationalist perspective of pressuring the Green bourgeoisie and the British imperialists into realising a "united Ireland", has no answer other than to appeal to the SDLP for a Nationalist united front. And the Republican-tailing British fake left echoes this futile perspective, seeking to square the circle by denying that the Ulster Protestants are anything more than English settler-colons. Typically, the centrist *Workers Power* (December 1985/January 1986) declaims that, "On the face of it, the unionist reaction is hard to understand" and concludes with the customary nationalist appeal for "Self-Determination for the Irish People as a Whole". The article does not even *raise* the question of the working class! But the Irish people are not a whole; they are bitterly divided into two communities. The partition cannot simply be wished away. As we noted in "Theses on Ireland",

"Prior to the partition revolutionaries would have opposed partition, striving to cement revolutionary unity in the struggle for independence from British imperialism. However, with the partition, the accompanying communal violence and demographic shifts, and the establishment of a *bourgeois* republic in the south it was necessary to oppose the forcible reunification of the six counties with the rest of Ireland. At the same time the present statelet guarantees the political and economic privileges of the Protestants."
(*Spartacist* no 24, Autumn 1977)

Northern Ireland is an instance of interpenetrated peoples: two communities with conflicting national rights occupying the same territory. The Orange statelet (or the call for an independent Ulster) is necessarily oppressive to the Catholic minority, an extension of the Irish Catholic nation. On the other hand, Marxists are not for reversing the terms of oppression. We oppose every manifestation of the all-sided oppression of the Irish Catholic minority—

the discrimination in jobs and social services, the army/police/paramilitary terror, the denial of its national rights. But the only consistently democratic solution in this circumstance is a proletarian-revolutionary one. The key to breaking the cycle of imperialist terror and communalist fratricide in Northern Ireland is united *class struggle* of the Catholic and Protestant workers against all their exploiters and oppressors—British imperialism as well as the Orange and Green bourgeoisies. The miners strike gave a taste of that desperately needed class unity, as Catholic and Protestant workers alike rallied in class solidarity behind the British miners.

Ireland today provides potentially fertile ground for revolutionary class struggle. The North is increasingly immiserated in poverty; the South is a land of death and misery, where the average worker can scarcely afford to buy a pint any longer. On top of that is pernicious Paisleyite bigotry in the North and benighted anti-woman clericalism in the South. A revolutionary Trotskyist party, forged in struggle against all variants of nationalism and pro-imperialist economism and in intransigent opposition to British imperialist domination, could galvanise the oppressed masses *across communal lines* and on both sides of the Irish Sea. What is needed is a programme which seeks to combat the oppression of the Irish Catholic minority in the North as part of the revolutionary transitional programme which transcends the capitalist framework of economism and democratic reformism: For an end to discrimination in housing, education and employment! For jobs for all! For anti-sectarian workers militias to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage! For the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the British army! Down with the Prevention of Terrorism Act! No forcible reunification—For an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles! No to the Hillsborough accord, NATO's deal for Ireland! No imperialist "solutions"! ■

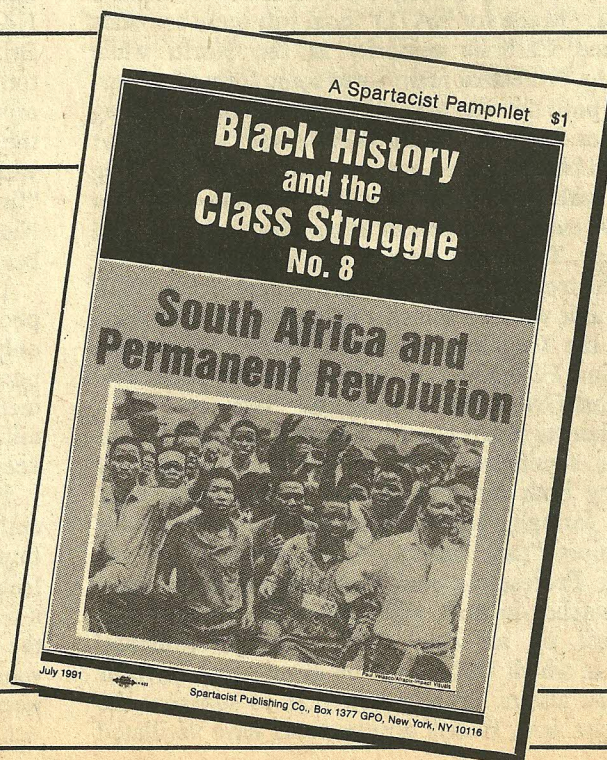
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For the immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops!

Northern Ireland: for a proletarian solution!

Not Orange against Green but class against class!

On 14 August 1969, a British imperialist government—the Labour administration of Harold Wilson—sent its army onto the streets of Northern Ireland. The military objective was to squelch growing political unrest and the looming prospect of civil war brought by months of civil rights agitation in defence of the oppressed Catholic minority and a murderous sectarian backlash by Orange bigots. Under threat of extinction at the hands of rampaging mobs spearheaded by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the sinister, all-Protestant, paramilitary B-Specials, and in the absence of an internationalist Leninist organisation capable of organising programmatically based anti-sectarian workers defence guards, sections of the Catholic community initially welcomed the arrival of the troops.

Scandalously, sections of the Irish and British left also supported the forces of British imperialism in its oldest colony. The Socialist Workers Party went so far as to announce in the 11 September 1969 issue of *Socialist Worker*:

"The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists."

The ensuing two decades "breathing space" has seen a reign of military terror directed primarily against the Catholic minority, SAS assassinations, internment without trial, torture, judicial frame-ups and police-state legislation that was the envy of the former South African premier John Vorster. Nine thousand troops remain, the RUC has ten thousand well-armed regulars and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) has taken the place of the B-Specials. Marxists demanded then and demand now *the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army*. The RUC and UDR are sectarian forces, closely linked to reactionary Protestant paramilitary outfits like the Ulster Volunteer Force. They must be smashed.

Twenty years on, the killings continue. On 9 August, Seamus Duffy, a 15-year-old Catholic youth was shot dead by the RUC sadists in Belfast. He was the thirty-first young person murdered by the security forces in Northern

Ireland since 1968 and the seventeenth victim of lethal plastic bullets. It has also come to light that the "security services" in Northern Ireland—the RUC, the Army and the UDR—provide detailed information on "republican suspects" to Protestant paramilitary outfits. One corporal Cameron Hastie received an 18-month suspended sentence for collecting information "that would be of use to loyalist paramilitaries" and has now been reinstated. But, as even the bourgeois press has acknowledged, it has been known for years "that the UDA and UVF receive a stream of allegedly secret intelligence material" (*Independent*, 31 August).

The presence of the army fundamentally oppresses the Catholic minority and further exacerbates the sharp communal antagonisms in Northern Ireland. Throughout the twenty years of bloodshed, the oppressed Catholic minority has remained defiant. Every attempt by British imperialism to extricate itself from direct political responsibility for Northern Ireland has foundered on the rocks of Protestant opposition to anything that smacks of an eventual reunification with the southern bourgeois clerical Republic. The reactionary 1974 Ulster Workers Council strike successfully spiked Britain's "power-sharing" initiative at Sunningdale aimed at uniting "moderate" Catholic and Protestant leaders and marginalising the "extremists" on both sides. The NATO-brokered Anglo-Irish accord—designed to cement cooperation between the armed forces of Britain and Ireland and facilitating passage of the extradition treaty—has enraged Protestant opinion by giving a legal right of consultation to the Irish Republic in decisions affecting the six counties, and enraged Catholic opinion in both the North and South, particularly after the Gibraltar SAS murder of three IRA members.

The British bourgeoisie is trapped in Northern Ireland. They are fearful of the consequences of withdrawal—the likelihood of a communal war situation which could not be controlled by the Dublin government—yet anxious to enlist Dublin as a full partner in the anti-Soviet war drive and rid itself of the border which is now anachronistic from the point of view of the general interests of British imperialism. The proliferation of television debates and reams of newsprint devoted to Ireland throughout August illustrated the political bankruptcy of the British ruling class policy on the "troubles" today. An article by Harold Jackson in the *Guardian* (12 August) captured the mood of bourgeois defeatism: "From early in my experience there I thought it one of those situations to which there are no solutions, only answers. That remains my opinion,

founded in the belief that there is simply no political will anywhere to sort out the mess.... The only role for the mainland is to serve as the excuse for the continuation of the tangle, and to pay for its economic consequences."

It is especially criminal that some so-called leftists, particularly those most closely tied to the politics of Labourite reformism, have reneged on even the minimal demand for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army in Northern Ireland. The *Militant* tendency, for example, calls for a trade union militia to replace the British troops. Until such a militia is formed—in *Militant's* case, on the basis of simple economic issues—they argue for the troops to stay. Another deeply Labour Party-entrism grouping, *Socialist Organiser*, uses the spectre of communalist bloodletting to justify maintenance of the repressive status quo. No good has or ever will come from the continued presence of the British army. It is the elementary duty of communists to fight for the removal of Westminster's armed thugs and for a proletarian solution to settle the question of national oppression in an equitable, democratic manner.

The same Socialist Workers Party that applauded the British army's entry into Derry and Belfast in 1969 is now a major participant in Time To Go, a class-collaborationist coalition of liberals and sundry "left" Labour MPs like Clare Short and Ken Livingstone. Time To Go demands not "Troops out now!" but the conditional formula of a "phased withdrawal". Leading SWP spokesman Paul Foot has this to say in his recent pamphlet *Ireland: Why Britain Must Get Out*:

"My proposal is very simple: the British government should declare that it intends to withdraw its troops from Ireland forever; and that it will no longer sustain a separate state in the North of Ireland. It should set an irrevocable date for that withdrawal, and at once convene a constitutional conference at international level to determine how best that withdrawal can be accomplished, and what contribution Britain should make to a new, united Ireland."

This is a shameless call for an imperialist-sponsored "solution" to the Northern Ireland conflict, appealing to the sentiments of a defeatist wing of the British bourgeoisie. Eight years ago Labour "left" Tony Benn, reflecting such sentiments, called for a United Nations "peace-keeping" force to replace British troops. Foot appeals elsewhere in the book "Why, therefore, when it costs much more than it earns for Britain, when it leads all the time to the death of British troops and to the insecurity of British Ministers—why does the British government hang on limpet-like to the excrescence of the Orange state?"

The left critics of Time To Go, notably the centrist Workers Power Group and *Leninist* did, in their separate respective contingents on the London demonstration on 12 August, raise the demand for "Troops out now!" (It is, however, the case that in 1981—as a participant in the H Block hunger strike committees—Workers Power buried the call "Troops out now!" in capitulation to the prevailing Sinn Féin and Labourite pressure to restrict protests to respectable "humanitarianism".) Both of these organisations however link the "Troops out" call to the call for "Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole" or "Self determination for the Irish people". These slogans echo the programme of the petty-bourgeois Green nationalists of Sinn Féin for the forcible reunification of Ireland.

The withdrawal of the army from Northern Ireland will not by itself resolve the conflicting national/communal claims of the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Nor will British imperialism be defeated via the nationalists' "armalite and ballot box" strategy. As we noted in *Workers Hammer* no 103 (December 1988/January 1989, "Derry 1968: how the left failed"): "The underlying truth that there can be no democratic solution to the Irish question without the consent of the Protestants helps explain the craven approach of the Provisionals, who fight not so much to defeat imperialism as to bring it to the negotiating table."

We struggle for a proletarian axis—not Orange against Green but class against class. Integral to this is a programme addressing the oppression of the Catholic minority and appealing to the joint class interests of the Catholic and Protestant workers against the reactionary Orange demagogues, the Green bourgeoisie in the South as well as the Green nationalists in the North. Such a programme would take advantage of situations like the Civil Rights protests in Derry 1968 where joint struggle across communal lines was posed concretely, and would offer a communist solution to unemployment, housing, discrimination and sectarian violence. Thus linked to the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the British Army is the call for programmatically based anti-sectarian workers militias to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage. No forcible reunification! For an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles!

Our Marxist programme is premised on the recognition that there are two communities in Northern Ireland; it is a situation of *interpenetrated peoples*, where under capitalism the self-determination of one people can be carried out only at the expense of the other. Without confronting the national question and defending the right of *both* communities to exist, calls for class unity can only be abstract and empty incantation. Our call for no forcible reunification, for an Irish republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles, consciously leaves open the question of where the Protestants will fall in the course of the struggle for workers revolution in these isles.

Such a Leninist approach to the national and class questions posed in Ireland is counterposed to the capitulation of the reformist and centrist left either to Labourite chauvinism, Green nationalism or both. In 1988 both Workers Power and *Leninist* engaged in vicarious cheer-leading for the IRA, supporting the criminal sectarian bombing at Enniskillen. Ultimately, the "logic" of nationalism leads to such indiscriminate, anti-working-class terror. Unlike defensible republican attacks on symbols of imperialist oppression, Enniskillen targeted Protestant (and Catholic) civilians. At the time Workers Power in England supported the action (defending "the right of the Provisionals to struggle by any means to end Britain's rule"), but their affiliates in the Irish Workers Group (IWG) "unequivocally condemn[ed]" the Enniskillen bombing. We weren't alone in noting this glaring public difference in line; *Leninist* quipped that this was the basis for a split. Recently, Workers Power's international publication, *Trotskyist International* (number 3, Summer 1989), in an IWG polemic against the French Lutte Ouvrière group, offers the following formulation:

"It is for revolutionary communists fighting within Ireland, however, to impose conditions on their support for the IRA, as part of the fight to replace them with a revolutionary communist leadership.

"Our fraternal organisations in other countries, especially Workers' Power in Britain, must subordinate their criticisms of the IRA to the primary duty of winning the unconditional support of British workers for the IRA against their own state."

This is not only wrong, but it is an opportunist formulation designed to justify particular flip-flops over Ireland. In other parts of the world, Workers Power has no such qualms about criticising petty bourgeois nationalists, particularly when they appear in Stalinist clothing. Such was the case in Afghanistan, where Workers Power (and the IWG) refused to take an unequivocal stand in military defence of the forces led by the PDPA, locked in mortal combat with the reactionary Islamic fundamentalists armed to the teeth by American and British imperialism. Blinded by Stalinophobia, WP and the IWG opposed the intervention of the Red Army; proceeding from the same motives, WP organisationally boycotted our campaign to aid the civilian victims of Jalalabad.

Lenin insisted that the workers movement have a consistent programme internationally, while pointing out that in particular countries different aspects of it should be *emphasised*. Thus, he stressed that the proletariat of the oppressor countries had a special duty to combat in words and deeds the chauvinism of its own rulers. Today British revolutionaries have particular responsibility to lead the English, Welsh and Scottish working class to struggle for the withdrawal of the British troops and the blacking of all military goods and transport bound for Northern Ireland.

Lenin was particularly concerned with opportunists who used "criticism" of petty bourgeois nationalism to justify chauvinist capitulation to imperialism. In the context of Ireland, this would apply to groups like *Militant* or *Socialist Organiser*, who refuse to demand the withdrawal of British troops. But Lenin was intransigently opposed to *any political support* to petty bourgeois nationalists like Sinn Féin/IRA, whether it be expressed unconditionally ("sub-

ordinating criticisms" a la WP) or "conditionally", as the IWG claims to do. Lenin stressed: "Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the 'most just,' 'purest,' most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism...." ("Critical Remarks on the National Question," *Collected Works*, Vol. 20).

The IWG, no less than WP, are wedded to politically tailing petty bourgeois nationalism in Northern Ireland. Thus, in the June Euro-elections, the IWG called for a vote to Sinn Féin, that is, they openly campaigned for a bourgeois party. In the South, where Sinn Féin has far less support, the IWG campaigned for the wretched Irish Labour Party—advocates of the Anglo-Irish accord which facilitates the extradition of Republican militants to British jails! Such is the real methodology of centrists like the IWG and WP: capitulating to different, and often contradictory, social forces depending on the national terrain. This is incompatible with proletarian internationalism, which requires the consistent application of a principled Leninist programme.

The differences between the WP and IWG over Enniskillen testify less to principle than to differing opportunist appetites. We have often pointed to the *vicarious* quality of the cheerleading by various British leftists for Green terrorism—the further away it is, the easier it is to applaud. But the Enniskillen atrocity aroused deep revulsion throughout both parts of Ireland. Hence the about face by the IWG. In its own way this points to the impossibility of constructing a revolutionary party in Ireland that subordinates class to sectarian divisions. In the history of the Irish labour movement there have been significant examples of workers' solidarity which have temporarily cut across sectarian divisions, as in the case of the 1919 Belfast engineers' strike and the mass unemployment marches in the 1930s. They have been countered with massive sectarian mobilisations intended to wipe out the fragile proletarian unity. Our task as communists is to intervene, attempting to alter the course of the conflict towards a class determination and proletarian revolution throughout the British Isles. ■

Free abortion on demand!

Irish students fight anti-abortion reaction

Students in the Republic of Ireland have won a partial victory against a reactionary onslaught aimed at stopping their dissemination of information on abortion. The recent crusade by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC)—which works hand in glove with the Catholic church—to gag student organisations has been spiked for now. What this latest round of battle has underlined is the need for a mass, militant mobilisation centred on the working class to break the chains of clerical reaction and win, among others, the elementary right of *free abortion on demand*.

The question of abortion is explosive in Ireland, social tinder. Under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, abortion was already illegal. In an attempt to ensure that women would *never* have access to abortion, the Catholic church and SPUC instigated and won the 1983 referendum campaign to enshrine the “right of life of every unborn child” in the constitution. SPUC and other reactionary outfits have mobilised over the last several years to maintain the constitutional ban on divorce, to severely limit the availability of contraception, to extend censorship and to attack any form of democratic rights for homosexuals (homosexuality for males is banned under the Offences Against the Person Act).

For the past few months, the anti-woman, anti-sex campaign has reached a near frenzied pitch. In October the London-based women’s magazine *Cosmopolitan* was forbidden by the Office of Censorship in Ireland from carrying advertisements for abortion agencies in its Irish edition. At about the same time, a medical symposium on Parkinson’s disease was curtailed because one of the lectures contained information on the use of foetal transplants in the treatment of this disease. In October the Irish Family Planning Association was taken to court charged with selling condoms to an unknown person in a Virgin Record Megastore. This offence carries penalties comparable to those for drug dealing—up to six months in prison with hard labour. (Under present law, medical contraceptives are available on prescription and condoms may be sold to people over 18, but only from a chemist shop or family planning clinic.)

In this climate of stultifying reaction, student unions have made a statement of defiance and simple decency in printing abortion information in their handbooks. Last October, SPUC lost its bid for an injunction against 14 named student leaders. And its recent “referenda” on campuses blew up in SPUC’s face. Overwhelmingly, students voted to retain distribution of abortion information, not only at the Trinity College Dublin campus which had been the scene of political ferment over SPUC’s

campaign but also at the largely working class technical colleges. At one of these, Carlow Regional Technical College, the vote against SPUC was 1000 to six.

The penalty for “facilitating” an abortion—let alone having one—is up to life imprisonment. As Irish Supreme Court justice Walsh declared in December: “when a pregnant woman is intent upon the destruction of the life of her unborn child that all of those who assist her or facilitate her...are acting in violation of the Constitution” (*Irish Times*, 20 December 1989). SPUC secured from Walsh the green light to obtain injunctions against named individuals. That followed the obscene ruling from the same court last July which gave SPUC the role of “guardian” for the “unborn” and the Irish constitution.

The immediate result of SPUC’s campaign was that eleven more colleges in Southern Ireland joined the Union of Students of Ireland (USI), University College Dublin (UCD) and Trinity College in disseminating abortion information. Students in the North from both Catholic and Protestant communities also began to take an active part in the campaign to defend SPUC’s intended victims. That SPUC has been handed a defeat by the students is a good thing. But, SPUC and its allies remain deadly serious in their attempt to suppress any manifestation of social liberalism on the questions of abortion and sex. These strike at the very heart of priest-ridden bourgeois Irish society. As James Connolly put it over 75 years ago, women in Ireland are the slaves of slaves. Their liberation requires the smashing of capitalism and its reactionary institutions by victorious proletarian revolution throughout the British Isles.

Stop “Pro-life” bigots’ offensive!

Each year over 10,000 women from the South as well as from Northern Ireland where abortion is also virtually banned take the “abortion trail” to Britain. As the pamphlet *Abortion in Northern Ireland—The Report of an International Tribunal* says of the women who travel to Britain for their abortions: “They do so quietly; more, given the repressive laws and attitudes in both societies, they do so secretly.” And there are of course those who don’t go, not least because they can’t afford to. In the Ireland of the 1980s, the tragedy of Ann Lovett exemplifies the deep-rooted influence of the Catholic church on the questions of contraception, sex education and abortion. In January 1984, 15-year-old Ann Lovett died alone giving birth to a baby in the winter cold in an open-air grotto with its statue of the Virgin Mary in Granard, Co Longford. Her baby died with her. Her 14-year-old sister

committed suicide three weeks later.

Another "option" for poverty-stricken or frightened or unmarried pregnant women is infanticide—to which a blind eye is turned by the state and the entire clericalist cabal. The institutionalised stigma attached to "illegitimacy", the absence of abortion rights and near-absence of contraception combine to ensure that infanticide is not uncommon. Obviously, statistics do not exist. The state's victimisation of a woman wrongly accused of the brutal murder of a baby in Co Kerry in 1984 shed harsh light on this hidden fact of life. Joanne Hayes was picked up by the Gardai and charged with the murder of a baby which had been found stabbed to death with 28 wounds. It was not her child and from the outset it was clear that the "crime" being investigated was not infanticide but sex outside marriage. Joanne Hayes was known to have had a recently concluded affair with a married man and to have already had a daughter by him. Lately she had been pregnant again.

Joanne Hayes tried to tell the cops that she had given birth alone and unassisted in a field and that her baby died shortly afterwards. When the cops were taken back to the place, the body of her baby (with matching blood type, unlike the murdered child) was found. This did not stop the Gardai who then tried to get her for having two babies by different fathers at the same time! Their conduct was so outrageous that a public tribunal of enquiry was called and the charges against Joanne Hayes dropped. Needless to say, the "enquiry" became a trial not of the cops but a sensationalised inquisition and humiliation of Joanne Hayes and her family.

The "pro-life" reactionaries who wink at infanticide and the early deaths of frightened young women like Ann Lovett are no kinder to critically ill women. Nell McCafferty reported in *A Woman to Blame, The Kerry Babies Case* (1985) the following: "In Drogheda, on the east coast, Sheila Hodggers and her baby had just died. Radium treatment for the cancer the mother suffered had been ruled out, as it would harm the foetus. Her husband used to hear her screams as he crossed the hospital yard."

For the separation of church and state!

The church dominates much of social and political life in the Irish Republic. An essay in *Unfinished Revolution* (Belfast, 1989) explains that the 1937 Constitution, drawn up by Eamonn de Valera after "consulting various Papal encyclicals" accorded the church a "special position" in Article 44. Article 41 proscribes divorce and recognises the "Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit of Society". Furthermore "the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved". When the "special position" was removed by constitutional referendum in 1972, the "moral" teachings of the church remained enshrined elsewhere in the constitution.

Abortion was cited by the Bishop of Ferns in his letter to the Taoiseach in 1950 as one of the principal reasons for rejecting Noël Browne's Mother and Child Scheme. This limited reform would have provided the basis for a much needed state funded, free health care system for a large portion of the population. The bishop described health care as the property of the "family": "Education in

regard to motherhood includes instruction in regard to sex relations, chastity and marriage. The State has no competence to give instruction in such matters." He further stresses that "Gynaecological care may be, and in some countries is, interpreted to include provision for birth limitation and abortion. We have no guarantee that State officials will respect Catholic principles" (Noël Browne, *Against the Tide*).

Through its control of the educational system at primary and secondary levels for the vast majority of the population and through its control over major institutions of health care, the church exerts overwhelming social influence. It also shapes "much of the social legislation on the statute books"; family law "is riddled with provisions which deny women an independent legal status" (Ursula Barry, *Lifting the Lid*). It even "gives the legal right to a husband to sue his wife's lover in order to get financial compensation for loss of sexual services"!

While bourgeois politicians have from time to time tried to cosmetically secularise the constitution, as Irish commentator Mary Holland put it in the *New Statesman* (12 November 1982) at the time of the Eighth Amendment Campaign: "Abortion is the one issue on which no politician in the major parties dares be seen to be 'soft'." Fianna Fail and its leader Charles Haughey proposed the final amendment form, while Garrett Fitzgerald and Fine Gael only quibbled with the wording. As for Sinn Féin, it has alternated between outright opposition to abortion to silence on the question. Its track record is abysmal. A motion committing it to oppose the referendum campaign was defeated. In 1977 it issued a leaflet in Belfast which cited the 70,000 "babies killed" following the 1967 British Abortion Act as evidence of "Brit oppression". *An Phoblacht* carries grovelling open letters to the Catholic hierarchy from Gerry Adams begging them to end their "dismal" record of support to British injustice in the North. But a search of *An Phoblacht* reveals no statements on the recent SPUC offensive against Irish students and women's rights.

Organised religion is one of the props of the decaying capitalist system, tying the oppressed to their present plight with the promise of a better life after death. Hand in hand with the capitalists and landlords, the churches of many persuasions serve to enforce bourgeois morality—to maintain the subjugation of women in the family, to relegate them to the home and exclude them from participation in political and social life. The family is the main institution for the oppression of women under capitalism. Protestant fundamentalists in Northern Ireland joined the Catholic church in opposing the extension of the 1967 abortion reform. In the United States, where abortion clinics have been bombed and blockaded, many anti-abortion bigots are Protestant fundamentalists.

The Orange demagogues in Northern Ireland use the existence of a clericalist state in the South to bind the Protestant working masses to their sectarian poison. At the same time, the Green bourgeoisie in the South uses the justified outrage of the population over the brutal oppression of the Catholic minority by the British occupying army, RUC and UDR in the North to divert attention from their own administration of misery in the Irish Republic. And Northern Ireland is far from a bastion of social liberalism: until recently homosexuality was illegal;

abortion is still severely restricted.

It's worth noting that across the Irish Sea in both England and Scotland established churches exist (along with a monarchy and House of Lords). Whether in the Republic of Ireland or in Britain, we Marxists fight for the complete separation of church and state. We oppose religion mobilised as a political programme, as historical materialists we oppose *all* religion from a philosophical point of view, and we oppose religious persecution by the state or by other reactionary forces. The fight for separation of church and state is integral to the struggle for elementary women's rights. Furthermore, a class-centred fight for free abortion on demand, free quality health care, smashing the prohibitions on divorce etc could provide a powerful basis for cutting across the sectarian divide in the North and uniting workers on both sides of the border. The woman question is a key, explosive and strategic question in Ireland requiring fundamental social change in order to secure the most basic rights and equality.

Women's liberation through socialist revolution!

In the Irish Republic real unemployment levels run at 20 per cent and *one third* of the population is dependent on welfare benefit to survive. Women now make up one third of the workforce; the majority of these are single and under 30. Jobs for women are low paid and traditionally in the service sector and health, teaching and clerical occupations. In manufacturing, women earn 60 per cent of a man's wage. The mass of working people live in virtual poverty; the treacherous trade union leadership has shackled the working class to vicious government wage restraint, keeping pay rises below 2.5 per cent while inflation runs at 5 per cent.

It has long been said that Ireland's largest export is people. The annual emigration rate is reaching an average of 46,000. Women and young workers are leaving by the thousands. To put it another way from a population of over 8 million in 1841, one and a half million starved to death in the "great hunger", another million emigrated in that period and today the combined population of both Northern Ireland and the South is five million. Emigration is a safety valve for the Irish bourgeoisie. Faced with the bleak prospects of unemployment and poverty, many don't struggle, but simply leave.

It is starkly clear that to alleviate the poverty and oppression of the working class as a whole and the special grinding oppression of women in Ireland requires an internationalist programme going beyond the present national boundaries. Not only the workers from both Catholic and Protestant communities in the North, but the proletariat of Britain have the material interest and the social power to smash the decaying capitalist system and establish workers rule. The Irish immigrants in Britain have historically been a militant, vanguard sector of the organised labour movement. At the same time, racist victimisation by the British state of Irish people (eg, frame-ups of "suspected Republicans" like the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six) is notorious. The media ban on Sinn Féin is an attack on the elementary democratic rights of everyone in British society. As for women's rights, in addition to the deterioration of the National Health

Service, the increasingly aggressive anti-abortionists in Britain also threaten the option of an "abortion trail" for anyone. There is a powerful basis for the linking of the workers and oppressed in revolutionary struggle throughout the British Isles.

Such a perspective is flatly counterposed to the nationalists, the pro-imperialist Labourites and the fake-left. At Trinity College Dublin for example, the student union bowed to the pressure of SPUC's campaign when just before the referendum it stood on the platform: "Denying Information Does Not Stop Abortions" and claimed that "Ironically in 1989 when the Students Unions right to information was at its peak the number of Irish women having abortions dropped". The Socialist Workers Student Society (co-thinkers of Tony Cliff's virulently anti-Soviet group in Britain) simply said vote "yes" to information.

The Irish Workers Group (IWG), fraternal grouping of the English Workers Power group, refused at the outset of the SPUC offensive to raise the slogan "Free abortion on demand". Rather, it concentrated its efforts on "decriminalising abortion" and for "a woman's right to choose". In response to our exposure of this waffle (see "Smash SPUC offensive against Irish women!" *Workers Hammer* no 110, October 1989) first their English group and then the IWG decided to raise this slogan in their press. (Both the IWG's *Class Struggle* and *Workers Power* ran the nauseating headline: "Is abortion murder?" in a polemic against...SPUC!)

The TCD Women's Group did unambiguously support the right to abortion, not simply "information", to its credit. Another group, including students sympathetic and/or familiar with the Spartacist League put out a leaflet calling for "free abortion on demand" on campus. This demand must be the minimal starting point for revolutionaries! Most women cannot afford the minimum £270 necessary to take the "abortion trail", and when they do have children they cannot afford to give them a decent upbringing: this is the kind of "choice" capitalism offers. The difference between the feminists' and reformists' call for "repeal" of anti-abortion legislation and the demand for *free abortion* linked to free quality health care for all and free 24-hour child care is crucial. As we wrote in *Women and Revolution* (no 22, Spring 1981):

"...reforms can be granted or taken away at the bourgeoisie's whim, depending on which way the political winds are blowing. Abortion reform itself, as an isolated issue, does not threaten the institution of the nuclear family, which remains the main source of women's oppression; thus we have always linked our fight for abortion and contraception rights for all, without cost, to the fight for a socialist, working-class program for women's liberation."

This is especially the case in a country like Ireland! It is a sick joke to think of lasting reforms on such questions short of the overthrow of the bourgeois clericalist state. We are fighting to forge a Bolshevik party to lead the working class in its historic mission to liberate all the oppressed and establish a planned economy based on socialised property forms.

Such a party would call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the British Army from Northern Ireland! Smash the RUC and UDR! Full democratic rights for the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland! For programmatically based anti-sectarian workers militia to

combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage! No forcible reunification! For the separation of church and state—smash the prohibitions on divorce, abortion, homosexuality! For free abortion on demand! For free, universal secular education at all levels! Jobs for all—smash the Programme for National Recovery “social contract”! In Britain, workers revolution will sweep away the monarchy, House of Lords and established churches. Against the pro-NATO, pro-EEC Labour Party tops and the “little Englanders” we stand for a federation of workers republics in the British Isles! For a socialist united

states of Europe!

The victorious socialist revolution will lay the basis for the replacement of the bourgeois family through socialised childcare and housework, thus unshackling women from the chains of capitalist slavery.

Young militants seeking to fight the viciousness of the SPUC spearhead of social reaction and for women's rights should look to the revolutionary programme of the International Communist League. Forward to a revolutionary party in Ireland—section of a reformed Fourth International! ■

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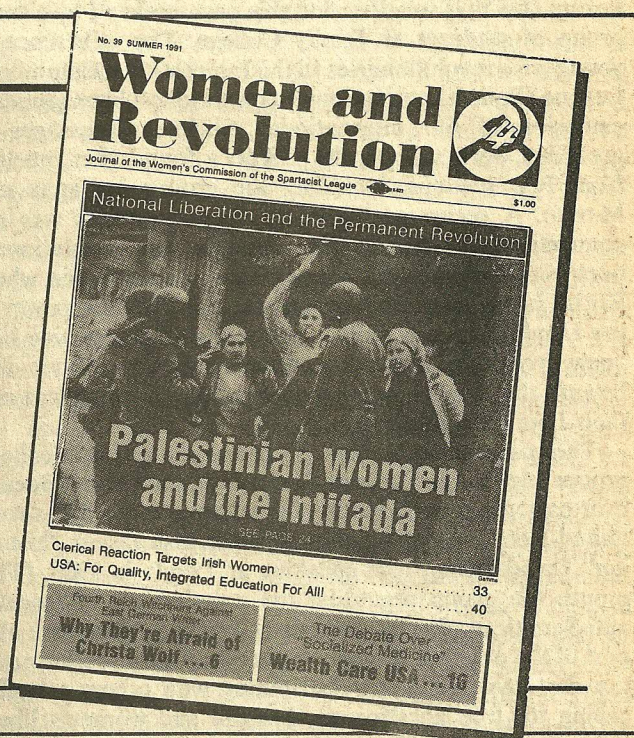
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Dublin Spartacist Youth Group launched

DUBLIN, 10 October—The Dublin Spartacist Youth Group (DSYG) was founded this past weekend by a small group of students at Trinity College. The adherence of young Irish revolutionaries to the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a modest but significant extension of our international tendency. Messages of greetings were sent to the DSYG's foundation meeting from ICL sections, including the groups in Japan and Mexico. A recurrent theme in these greetings was the connection of working-class struggle and revolutionary perspectives within the nations and peoples of the whole British Isles. In the fight against the predominant power of the London-centred British imperialists, the opening of a "new front" in Ireland is a strengthening, above and beyond the need to combat the southern Irish rulers and their bourgeois clerical state.

The comrades of the DSYG have been active in college groups such as the Socialist Society and the Labour Society over past years, participating for example in the 500-strong united-front protest which stopped British fascist "historian" David Irving from speaking at Trinity in 1988. (This month the group organised the painting-out of fascistic anti-Semitic graffiti by students at Trinity.) They were also part of the ongoing struggle to distribute abortion information last year, including distributing with others a leaflet calling for free abortion on demand and women's liberation through socialist revolution.

The work of the ICL in Germany was instrumental in convincing the comrades who formed the DSYG of the correctness and urgency of Spartacist politics, particularly in counterposition to the rightward-moving centrists of the Irish Workers Group/Workers Power. Last February, the IWG put out an 18-page pamphlet: "Sectarianism and Stalinophilia: The Politics of the Spartacists". This was largely a response to our exposure of the IWG's grotesque call on the Irish bourgeois government to expel the Chinese ambassador after the criminal massacre at Tiananmen Square. The introduction to this diatribe contained the shameless lie that in East Germany "Spartacists Tail the Stalinists". Where we fought tooth and nail against imperialist reunification, the IWG/WP were soft-core capitalist restorationists, tailing social democracy, calling for Soviet troops out and hailing anti-Stasi riots in which skinhead fascists were prominent. Their Stalinophobia led them to side, albeit from the "left", with counterrevolution.

Much water has passed under the bridge since the IWG/WP's marked right turn over German events. Only months after the IWG was forced to admit that the call on the Irish bourgeois state to expel the Chinese ambassador was "wrong", Workers Power in England (echoed by the IWG) called on the government of Margaret Thatcher to aid the counterrevolutionary Sajudis secessionists in

Lithuania. Recently, WP's Stalinophobia came home to roost and Workers Power found itself deeply compromised as "unwitting" contributors to the witchhunt against NUM president Arthur Scargill. WP sponsored the tour in Britain of one Yuri Butchenko—a key player in the witchhunt. Not only did Butchenko end up sharing a platform with the scab UDM leader Roy Lynk at the infamous July press conference devoted to denouncing Scargill, but his official invitation to the country had come via the British representative of the Russian fascist NTS, George Miller.

Close on the heels of the Butchenko scandal and confronted with the formation of the DSYG, the IWG has issued another pamphlet titled "The Spartacists: A Poisoned Well", largely devoted to a "defence" of WP over the Butchenko affair. Among the key tasks confronting the newly-formed DSYG is the on-going political struggle against the centrists of the IWG who seek to masquerade (with decreasing credibility) as Trotskyists. In forging the nucleus of a revolutionary party in Ireland, our tasks as a fighting propaganda group also include fighting against the Third Campists of the Socialist Workers Movement (SWM) and the wretched reformists of the Militant. The perspective of revolutionary regroupment is essential to the DSYG's founding.

The newly-formed group discussed the need to participate actively in social struggles, for example the fight to distribute abortion information and to defend the student union leaders facing vast legal costs for their stand on this question. As strikes break out in reaction to three years of "Social Contract"-style austerity enforced by the class-collaborationist trade union leaders and backed by the reformist Labour Party and Workers Party under the "Programme for National Recovery" (PNR) agreement with the capitalist Fianna Fail government, the DSYG looks forward to organising student support for the workers' battles.

At the same time resolutions passed at the founding meeting emphasised the need to deepen our theoretical and historical understanding of Irish society and to further elaborate the programmatic bases already firmly established by the key Spartacist document "Theses on Ireland", which has stood well the test of time since its adoption in 1977. Against Labourite chauvinism and Green nationalism, the DSYG is committed to raising the banner of proletarian internationalism, not least in the context of Northern Ireland. As stated in the "Theses" the key components of a revolutionary working-class perspective include: For the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the British Army! Smash the RUC and the UDR! Down with the Prevention of Terrorism Act and all other special powers acts in Britain and Ireland! Full democratic

rights for the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland! No discrimination in hiring and housing! For a sliding scale of wages and hours! For a programmatically based anti-sectarian workers militia to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage! For a British Isles-wide trade union federation! Forward to the Irish section of the reborn Fourth International! No forcible reunification! For an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles!

The DSYG adopted positions on several key questions of special oppression in Ireland. The fraternal greetings of the ICL's German section, the Spartakist Arbeiter Partei Deutschlands (SpAD) underlined the vital need for the DSYG to reach out to and recruit those whom James Connolly referred to as "the slaves of slaves"—Irish women. There was much discussion at the foundation meeting of the centrality of the fight for women's liberation to the struggle for socialist revolution in a country where social policy and education basically remain in the grip of the Catholic church hierarchy. It was also noted that, as we wrote in *Women and Revolution* (Spring 1990): "Northern Ireland is far from a bastion of social liberalism: until recently homosexuality was illegal; abortion is still severely restricted. Protestant fundamentalists in Northern Ireland joined the Catholic church in opposing the extension of the 1967 abortion reform."

The denial of legal rights to abortion and divorce, and the severe restrictions on the availability of contraception hugely exacerbate the double oppression of working-class women. In this context the demand for free abortion on demand, which much of the Irish left shrinks from raising, has great importance. The hundreds of pounds required to obtain an abortion in England are simply out of reach for low-paid women workers and housewives lacking any financial independence whatsoever. The DSYG points out that this demand, coupled with the call for a free quality health service and 24-hour child care to permit the full integration of women into social production are both mandatory to obtain genuine social equality for women and unachievable without the overthrow of capitalism. An Irish workers republic, part of the socialist federation of the British Isles and the Socialist United States of Europe would benefit from internationally coordinated planning to end the poverty and backwardness which have forced millions to migrate, and driven many into the ranks of the most downtrodden sections of labour in Britain itself.

The fight for full democratic rights for gays and lesbians is also integral to the fight against the main instrument for the oppression of women under capitalism, the nuclear family. As what Lenin described as "the tribune of the people" it is the duty of a Marxist revolutionary party to combat all oppression and inequality produced by capitalist society.

The DSYG also adopted a resolution underlining the defence of the horribly oppressed Travellers' community as an acid test of Irish revolutionaries. The Travellers are a minority grouping treated similarly to Gypsies in Britain. Their treatment echoes the vile British chauvinism directed against the Irish. They are subjected to periodic evictions and reactionary hate campaigns, denied decent sites and forced onto waste land in dangerous locations (eg railway embankments) without elementary sanitation or other facilities. They fill Irish jails in disproportionate numbers,

and are the butt of derision and contempt, displayed often without even a figleaf of liberal public hypocrisy. The DSYG committed itself to finding ways of publicly making a stand in their defence, determined to expose the idyllic myth of "tolerant" and "racism-free" Ireland.

Unlike much of the rest of the Irish left, the DSYG does not see anything inevitable about voting for the Labour Party. The Irish Labour Party (ILP) is a particularly miserable specimen of parliamentary reformism, whose basic loyalties were established in the period of the fight for Irish independence, when they refused to stand candidates against the bourgeois-nationalist Sinn Féin in 1918 and 1921. Since then the ILP has usually been a rag-tag and bobtail of some of the most right-wing forces in Irish politics, finding its customary home in coalition cabinets with Fine Gael. Not surprisingly therefore it receives only about ten per cent of votes at general elections. Thus, the ILP has nothing resembling the hegemonic position in the working class that the British Labour Party has had.

Despite its nominal rejection of coalitionism over recent years (which is widely understood will last exactly the time it takes until someone offers Dick Spring the Tanaiste's [Deputy Prime Minister] seat in a future cabinet), the Labour Party's support for the PNR has been a major prop of the Charles Haughey government. This backing for an openly capitalist administration and for imposing austerity on the whole working class means that a vote for Labour and Workers Party-backed candidate Mary Robinson in the current presidential elections would in no way draw even a distorted class line against the capitalist parties. Robinson's refusal at the first breath of criticism to stand by her claim that she would open an illegal contraceptive stall in Dublin's Virgin Megastore is one indicator of this. Likewise, the disappearance from her campaign literature of all mention of divorce, contraception and abortion information, or the fact that she was a lawyer for the Well Woman Clinic and the USI leaders in their fight against SPUC. Robinson even went so far as to say, "But I don't support abortion...I'm against abortion" (*Sunday Tribune*, 14 October).

A major question facing revolutionaries throughout the world today is the imperialist war build-up in the Persian Gulf. Although Ireland is a very small, weak capitalist country, nevertheless its position at the western Atlantic approaches to Britain and continental Europe gives it strategic military significance. For this reason the US and British bourgeoisies have long sought to work their way around the sham "neutrality" of the Republic. The Anglo-Irish accord was not just an attempt to join hands against the IRA, but was also seen in Whitehall as a bridge to closer Irish involvement with NATO. For years NATO forces have used Irish airspace for military operations; today the Irish ruling class is happily giving refuelling facilities to US military transport planes at the Shannon International Airport in the west of the country.

This very concrete aid to the Gulf war drive has to be broken by the mobilisation of the Irish workers movement, who perhaps better than many others should appreciate what it means to fight a war against capitalist colonialism and imperialism. The DSYG adopted two slogans on this question: "Stop the refuelling of US warplanes at Shannon! Trade unions must black imperialist war preparations!"

which cut against the illusory notion of forcing the southern *bourgeoisie* "to make neutrality real". Instead the DSYG emphasises the need for working-class political strikes to block the imperialist war effort, alongside the basic anti-imperialist demands of Britain, the US and other imperialist forces out of the Gulf, and for breaking the blockade of Iraq.

Of course blacking action at Shannon would almost certainly lead to the Irish army being brought in to break the action. Such a move could only be countered by a country-wide trade-union mobilisation to support strike or occupation action at Shannon itself, and would pose the need for forming workers defence guards. One participant in the foundation meeting noted the recent statement of the Fianna Fail defence minister to the effect that the role of the Irish Army is twofold: to "aid the civil power" and participate in the United Nations military forces—a timely reminder of Ireland's very concrete support in the Middle East for the UN imperialist den of thieves which was a lever for the disarmament of the PLO in Lebanon in 1982 (thereby exposing the Palestinian refugees to the Zionist/Phalange massacre of Sabra and Shatila). And today the UN is the vehicle for imperialist war mobilisation in the Gulf.

After the DSYG's foundation meeting the comrades

organised a short ceremony at the grave of James Connolly in Arbour Hill cemetery. Connolly was executed by the British after the failed Easter Rising in 1916. As the greetings sent by the SL/US Political Bureau noted: "James Connolly and John MacLean were not finished Bolsheviks but their spirit of working class intransigence had better march along side of us." In his address honouring the memory of Connolly, the DSYG speaker pointed out: "Though we have modest beginnings, our hopes are great that we will be the nucleus of a Trotskyist party, Irish section of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution—a party that can make the dream of Connolly's life a reality, in an international brotherhood of peoples, in a world without hunger, want and war." The comrade also recalled the legacy of Connolly's work for working-class unity across and transcending the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland as part of the tradition upon which we will build. The ceremony was concluded with a spirited rendering of the Internationale.

As the comrades from the Grupo Espartaquista de Mexico wrote: "Today our international needs young people in all countries who want to fight for the program of Lenin and Trotsky, against the bourgeoisie's lies about the 'death of communism' and for a socialist future." We warmly welcome the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group to the ranks of the International Communist League. ■

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Irish presidential elections

Robinson's popular front: trap for workers and women

On 7 November Mary Robinson was voted in as the first woman President of the Irish Republic. In a campaign masterminded by the reformist Labour Party, Robinson — a liberal constitutional lawyer with a strong civil libertarian and “modernising” reputation — made it clear that she is “not a socialist”, and declared “I’m against abortion”. Yet her win over discredited Fianna Fail candidate Brian Lenihan has been hailed by a vast spectrum of commentators both in Ireland and in Britain as a famous victory for progress — including by many self-styled socialists and “revolutionaries”. William Rees-Mogg, former editor of the London *Times* and perpetual grand old bore of English letters, greeted the news of her election under the headline “The gates open to an enlightened Ireland”. *Socialist Worker* (17 November) drooled “Irish elections — a blow against establishment”.

In Ireland itself the Robinson campaign pulled together a veritable “rainbow coalition” in opposition to the governing capitalist party Fianna Fail (FF). Directly backed by the Labour Party and the equally reformist Workers Party, as well as the ecologists of the Green Party, Mary Robinson drew the official support of bourgeois Fine Gael in a second preference vote transfer pact. The right-wing Progressive Democrats (PDs — the coalition partners of Fianna Fail in the government) were also rooting for Robinson: as a spokesman put it “Her agenda of change, realism and common sense is the PD agenda” (*Irish Times*, 16 November).

Mary Robinson’s electoral triumph is indeed a symptom of the disgruntlement of wide sections of Irish society with the ossified conservatism symbolised by the notoriously corrupt Fianna Fail. Robinson’s candidacy struck strong chords among women, who suffer most from the stultification and social backwardness of the bourgeois-clerical state. Attempts by Lenihan and his supporters to drape themselves in the mantle of “national Christian Irish views” and blatant anti-women outbursts fell flat. It is a measure of repressive Irish society that the election of a woman who stands for the simple rights of divorce and contraception, and who has defended in court the right of student leaders to distribute information about abortion is viewed as a watershed, a “breaking of the mould”. But by the standards of what is objectively *needed* by working people and the oppressed, Mary Robinson’s election will change nothing.

The manner of Brian Lenihan’s undoing also demonstrates the discontent of certain bourgeois circles with the “old order”. In the middle of the election campaign a highly contrived “constitutional scandal” was created by

Fine Gael and the *Irish Times* over the very old news that in 1982 Haughey, Lenihan & Co tried to pressure then-President Hillery to let them form a government without an election. They proved Lenihan to be a liar and Haughey to have the ethics of a cornered ferret. These are two facts that no-one found in the least surprising. The PDs demanded Lenihan go as the price of their support for a vote of confidence in the government, and the Taoiseach [Prime Minister] Haughey obliged by sacking him. The brouhaha over “phone calls to the Park”, with the PDs delivering the coup de grace to Lenihan’s electoral hopes, shows that a good part of the Irish bourgeoisie, while lacking viable governmental alternatives to Charlie Haughey right now, certainly want Robinson’s modernising popular front politics in order to turn a fresher face towards the “Europe of the 1990s” and to top up the reservoir of reformist illusions for the depression Ireland of the 1990s.

But the working class and women don’t need a glossy image: they need a social revolution which will expropriate the bourgeoisie, destroy the stranglehold of the Catholic church on social policy and education, and provide the possibility of a just resolution of the national question in Northern Ireland. From this standpoint Mary Robinson’s anti-Haughey coalition is an illusion-filled trap. Furthermore it is nothing new, recycling a traditional politics as old as Fianna Fail’s — coalitionism between the not-very-reformist workers parties and the Fine Gael conservatives.

No vote to the Robinson popular front!

Leave aside the fact that the presidency is essentially a figurehead position. Marxists sometimes give critical electoral support to a workers movement candidate standing independently of the bourgeois parties, as a tactic to win the proletarian base away from pro-capitalist leaderships and to the communist vanguard. But Robinson was the candidate of a class-collaborationist popular front alliance. It would have been unprincipled to advocate a vote for her. Moreover her popular-frontist programme is the programme of Irish Labourism.

The Labour Party leadership’s support for Haughey’s Programme of National Recovery (PNR — a Social Contract-style austerity pact which has delivered lower wages and higher profits over the last three years) has been a critical prop for the FF/PD government. By tying the unions, which organise a major proportion of the labour force, into permanent class-collaborationist betrayal, Labour and the Workers Party have served their capitalist

masters well. The enthusiastic students who laboured night and day to turn out the Robinson vote have, whatever their subjective intentions, helped bolster the flagging support for these pro-capitalist parties and strengthened their hand for the future austerity policies that the Irish rulers will demand as world recession squeezes the vulnerable Southern economy. In the closing days of the election campaign FF leaders launched a ludicrous anti-red smear, falsely accusing De Rossa's Stalinoid/social-democratic/former-Republican Workers Party of being "Marxist-Leninist Communist" (a little rich given that Haughey happily used De Rossa's support to remain in power in 1982). Mary Robinson's response was to announce: "I am not a socialist". She spoke the truth, not just about herself but about her reformist backers.

On the social questions which played such a role in Mary Robinson's win, her supporters have also been warned, if they are prepared to read the signs so clearly displayed in the course of the campaign. Robinson says she is for the wider availability of contraception. In an early interview with music paper *Hot Press* she concurred with the suggestion that if she became president she would open an illegal stall selling condoms in Virgin Megastore. The moment Lenihan attacked this reply Robinson pulled back like a startled cat, denying she would ever do anything "illegal". A Lenihan cohort went on to accuse her of planning to run an abortion referral clinic in Aras an Uachtaráin (the presidential palace in Phoenix Park). The justified derision with which this accusation was greeted spoke volumes: why would anyone think that a politician who over and over underlined her opposition to abortion (and whose Labour Party campaign minders insisted never even mention the fact she was the lawyer of the USI student leaders and the Well Woman Centre) do such a thing?

Accommodating the Unionist Ascendancy in the North

A noteworthy aspect of Robinson's own politics is her desire to "modify" Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution, which declare the whole of the island to be the territory of the Republic and claim the right of jurisdiction over that territory. She resigned from the Labour Party in 1985 over the Anglo-Irish Agreement. As a member from 1973-80 of the Executive Committee of the infamous Trilateral Commission (a Cold War cabal whose other alumni include David Owen, Henry Kissinger and George Bush) Robinson not surprisingly had no criticism of the Agreement's twin goals of drawing Ireland closer to NATO and strengthening British/Irish collaboration in repression of the Republicans. Her objection was that the Agreement was too great a "culture-shock" for Unionists in Northern Ireland. Robinson's stance typifies a wing of the Southern bourgeoisie which seeks an accommodation with the Ascendancy politicians of the North at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority, in pursuit of the chimera of a "peaceful" bourgeois co-existence North and South. Notably Robinson's election was favourably received by Northern Orange politicians. The Rev Ian Paisley's deputy Peter Robinson called her "not the sort of individual one would slight by passing in the street" (*Irish Times*, 9 November). Coming from that Unionist bigot this

is praise indeed! Not a peep of opposition to the extradition of Dessie Ellis was heard from the new president before or after her election; indeed Sinn Féin report that "she has written in favour of extradition".

If the figurehead presidency has changed hands in past weeks, another appointment has been made, this time to a real seat of power. Dr Cahal Daly has been elevated to the archbishopric of Armagh and Primacy of All-Ireland, thereby taking over as Ireland's top Catholic cleric. Described by the old splutterer Rees-Mogg as "the saintly bishop", Daly is a hard-line reactionary. One hundred per cent anti-IRA, one of his acolytes in the North, Father Denis Faul, welcomed his appointment with the following chilling words: "he will tackle the sort of liberated Catholicism which has got loose in Ireland in the last 20 years. Abortion and contraception are now called family planning, and are considered to be helping the family and preventing hunger and destitution in the world" (*Irish Times*, 7 November).

No amount of enlightened Robinsonism in the Park will dent the real power of the Church in Irish social life; a power rooted not principally in the religious ideas in peoples' heads, but in the possession or control of virtually all schools and hospitals, not to mention great amounts of real estate. *For the separation of church and state! For universally available, free, secular education at all levels! For a state-owned and run national health service, providing free, quality health care to all, capable of providing contraception and abortion free on demand!* These vital measures cannot be realised this side of the overthrow of backward Irish capitalism.

Fake left on the Robinson bandwagon

Much of the Irish left has joined the Robinson bandwagon, confirming that they are obstacles to the building of a genuine revolutionary workers party in Ireland. In the October issue of the *Irish Socialist Worker* Eamonn McCann penned a scathing attack on Robinson which would leave any intelligent reader wondering "why should I vote for her?" However, as the pressure and hype of the campaign mounted the Socialist Workers Movement, true to type, happily cast its ballots for the popular front, while the British SWP whinge gently that "the result...was not a clear cut victory for socialists". Naturally the Labourites of Militant were in the same camp, although significantly the Republicans of Sinn Féin were more equivocal.

The centrists of the Irish Workers Group, evidently afflicted by agonies of indecision, failed to come out with a position for or against Robinson until *two days* before the election. Having thereby avoided any conflict with the Labourite camp until it was basically all over, the IWG, doubtless cognisant of the position of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group on its left flank, popped out a leaflet headed "Don't vote! Organise!" Dismissing the election as an irrelevance, they call on voters to "abstain", without any mention of the popular-frontist character of the Robinson campaign or of the corridor coalition represented by Labour's support for the PNR. The IWG writes that:

"Had she decided to use the election to really mobilise workers, women, students, the oppressed, in a campaign around even one major issue of importance today, there might have been a case for supporting her as a labour

movement candidate of struggle against the Irish ruling class. That would probably have meant *not* getting elected to this parasitic sinecure in the Park, but it might have yielded real gains for the struggles of working class women and men in the long run."

Talk about fostering illusions in parliamentary reformism! Not that surprising, however, when we remember that the IWG habitually gives electoral support to the coalition-crazy Labour Party in the South and calls for votes to the petty-bourgeois nationalists of Sinn Fein in the North. And of course Workers Power in Britain are prepared to sign as many blank cheques as Judas Kinnock's election campaigns demand.

The IWG's statement on the elections was moreover tailored to the social-democratic sensibilities and parochialism of the pro-Robinson milieu. Thus they advocate campaigns against extradition of Republicans and over women's rights, but these foremost experts on the "anti-imperialist united front" omit any mention of Northern Ireland, not even the elementary call for British troops out. And once again the IWG drops the call for free abortion on demand.

British troops out of Northern Ireland now!

It is necessary to oppose all pro-imperialist schemes for Northern Ireland and to raise the demand for the immediate unconditional withdrawal of the British Army in both Britain and Ireland. At the same time we are opposed to the nationalist irredentist view that the Protestants in the North should be forced into a unified Ireland. Our call for an Irish workers republic in a federation of workers republics in the British Isles deliberately leaves open the question of where the distinct Protestant community will fall in the context of the proletarian dictatorship that can alone resolve the conflict of the interpenetrated Irish Catholic nation and the Northern Irish Protestant people. And beside that, the question of the Irish revolution is enmeshed with those in England,

Scotland and Wales, not least because of the role that workers of Irish descent play in the workers movement throughout these isles.

When the votes were counted at the Royal Dublin Society hall on Dublin's southside, the *Irish Times* observed that "A lot of faces in the crowd went back to the radical Sixties," celebrating that "at last there was something to smile about" after all the years of disappointment. If the absence of a real Trotskyist organisation during the seventies and eighties helped those radicalised 20 years ago to end up humming "Here's to you Mrs Robinson", the task of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group is to ensure that youth looking towards revolutionary socialism today end up as Bolshevik fighters singing the *Internationale*. Commentator Fintan O'Toole expressed a widespread reaction to Robinson's victory when he urged the formation of a new social-democratic reformist party, "a merger of the two old left-wing parties" and a "home" for all those who share "their basic values" (*Irish Times*, 8 November). The politics of social democracy will never liberate Ireland from the scourges of unemployment and emigration, never eradicate the abject poverty of the country and the city slums, never lift the pall of clerical obscurantism which shades above all the lives of women.

Yes, the sclerotic and atrophied divisions of the Partition and Civil War period must be transcended. The venal and weak Irish bourgeoisie might only dream of being more like their Italian class brothers, urbane and prosperous Europeans in nice parts of Dublin, while the rest of the country suffers in priest-ridden poverty and oppression, like southern Italy. The growth of the Irish working class in recent decades strengthens the possibility of revolutionary class struggle. This can come, not by the workers red flag being dipped before the tricolour, as Labour has done since its earliest years, nor by dipping it before the stars on blue of the EC bosses' club, but by the fight for the interests of the proletariat separate from all its class enemies and false friends. Forward to an Irish Trotskyist party, section of a reformed Fourth International. ■

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For free contraception and abortion on demand

Ireland: Church hierarchy weighs in against condoms

In early March the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey announced government proposals to lower the age for the availability of condoms from 18 to 16, and lift restrictions on their sale. Instantly the powerful Catholic Church launched a virulent attack on these plans, and within a week the government was in penitent retreat. And while many of the working masses, women and youth of Ireland have a healthy disdain for the pronouncements of the Church hierarchy, particularly when it comes to sex and contraception, the threat posed by this reactionary outcry is deadly dangerous.

Haughey's Fianna Fáil split over the question, with many leading figures, including Senator Des Hanafin, and Minister for Labour, Bertie "heir apparent" Ahern, coming out in opposition to the proposal. At the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis (National Conference) on 9-10 March one delegate complained: "Wait till we go to Mass tomorrow. Then we'll see the croziers swinging in every direction." Other members at the conference distributed a leaflet attacking Haughey's proposals asking "Has our party sunk so low?" calling on delegates to "protect our children and our party" from "lax laws" (*Irish Times*, 11 March). Haughey's coalition partners, the supposedly secular "Progressive" Democrats, who split from Fianna Fáil in 1985 because of its social backwardness, are in complete disarray over the issue, with two of their six TDs openly opposing the proposal. The opposition bourgeois Fine Gael labelled the government as "aging hillbillies in a desperate attempt to seem trendy" (*Irish Times*, 12 March), and then, after some mealy-mouthed evasion, also came out against lowering the age restriction on condoms.

And what about President Mary Robinson, touted by the Labour Party and the Workers Party, and in the words of one enthusiast "a kind of equivalent secular miracle" (*Guardian*, 27 February), an answer to the moving statues of the Virgin Mary. Since her election we have witnessed the imperialist carnage in the Gulf, SPUC's continuing fight against abortion, and now this latest assault by the Church on contraception. But the symbol of modernising, secular, right-up-to-date-with-Europe progressive change seems to have lost her voice. Her only action of public note has been to sack the entire staff at her Presidential palace.

In fact Robinson has always kept her liberalism within safe, respectable limits; thus she has opposed abortion rights in Ireland itself. She resigned from the Labour Party in 1985 because she regarded the Anglo-Irish Agreement as too harsh on the Unionists in Northern Ireland. Today

there are renewed efforts, represented by the Brooke initiative, to bring an imperialist brokered settlement, including even the perspective of bourgeois reunification. A recent *Economist* (30 March) asserts that "the emergence of a strong, secular republic in the south could do much to encourage a better neighbourliness in the north". Robinson's stance typifies a wing of the southern bourgeoisie which wants some refurbishment and is willing to make a deal with the Ascendancy politicians of the North and the British imperialists—a fact acknowledged by various Protestant leaders in their favourable reactions to her election.

The Catholic hierarchy came out in force on this issue, in defence of its "moral leadership". Archbishops, bishops, local priests vied with each other in a chorus of denunciation. It "could destroy the Irish family as we have known it" (the Bishop of Limerick, *Irish Times*, 11 March) and attacked the "fundamental values of family life" (the Archbishop of Dublin, *Irish Times*, 12 March). Speaking on an RTE national radio station, the Primate of All Ireland, Dr Cahal Daly, stated that, "it is not really a question of Church versus State, but a question of the legislators respecting the moral convictions to which people adhere and which are influenced by their membership of the Church" (*Irish Times*, 14 March). In fact opinion polls indicate that a majority of Irish people favour lifting restrictions on the sale of condoms.

Haughey's proposals came in the wake of a circuit court decision to increase the fine against the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) to £500 for selling condoms inside the Dublin Virgin Megastore. At present condoms can only be sold by chemists, and since more than a quarter of the Republic's 1100 pharmacies refuse to stock them, condoms are not available in many, mainly rural, areas. Moreover since the 1985 Family Planning Act amendment prohibits advertising the availability of condoms, and many chemists keep their stocks hidden under the counter, this is not an insignificant issue in a climate of social and sexual repressiveness. Haughey's minimal dispensations were also the result of public pressure to deal with the AIDS epidemic, after the government's miniscule advertising campaign telling people to stop having sex. In fact the Irish government, true to form, has entirely ignored this disease, and there has been no research funding, serious education at schools, or adequate compensation for haemophiliacs. Their attitude reflects that of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick, Dr Newman, who grossly declared:

"The AIDS issue is a red herring of the first order Those countries of Europe where condoms are to be got here, there, and everywhere are infested with the disease."

— *Irish Times*, 11 March

And his colleague, the Bishop of Meath, Dr Smith, even tried to suggest that condoms were responsible for the spread of AIDS.

The Irish Church hierarchy's reaction is part of a general assertion, from promoting capitalist counterrevolution in Eastern Europe to excoriating "liberation theology" in Latin America, of the Holy Church of Rome's reactionary and authoritarian teachings, that has taken place under Polish Solidarność' godfather, Pope Wojtyla. In Ireland the Church establishment is also reacting to the perception that Mary Robinson's election heralds a period of secular and liberal change. With the politicians of Fianna Fáil—old style operators hitherto attuned to the faithful's obligation to have quiet chats with the bishops before making any proposals on the social terrain—seemingly infected with this liberal mood and talking of legislation and white papers on contraception, divorce and homosexuality, the Church wants to call a halt. The bishops' spokesman, Dr Duffy, insisted upon their right and duty "to proclaim the moral law" and they expected convinced Catholics, including legislators, to take account of this (*Irish Times*, 14 March). Historically the Church has played a key role in the consolidation of a reactionary bourgeois state in the Republic. With the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the Catholic Church consolidated a leading role in both social and political life, taking upon itself the control of health, education and the "moral well-being" of Irish society. De Valera's constitution of 1937 was written in close collaboration with leading elements of the Church and codified the clerical nature of the state. Though the Church failed to get the Canon law incorporated in the Constitution, Article 44 recognised its "special position", and the influence of the Church was strong, particularly as regards the role of women, the family and so-called "moral" issues. According to Edward Cahill, a Jesuit and one drafter of the 1937 Constitution:

"Women are not suited for certain occupations, a woman is by nature fitted for home work; and it is this which is best adapted to preserve her modesty and promote the good upbringing of Children and the well-being of the family."

— Quoted in C Curtin et al, *Gender in Irish Society*, 1987

Though a referendum in 1972 removed Article 44 from the Constitution, the influence of the Church in the state remains strong and pervasive.

The Church owns and controls 88 per cent of all secondary schools, most of the hospitals, and huge plots of real estate. Their stranglehold on the health service, and the desire to keep Irish women "in their place", led to the biggest church/state row in 1950-51 when the then Minister for Health, Dr Noel Browne, attempted to introduce the Mother and Child Scheme, a limited free health programme for pregnant mothers and young children. Within months the Church crushed the scheme and had the government brought down. Prior to this the Church played a key role in the Cold War purges of the workers movement, getting the Labour Party to expel its left wing on charges of "Bolshevism" and to drop its constitutional aim of a "Workers Republic". In the 1970s when the govern-

ment made its only "serious" attempt to introduce non-denominational schools, the Church bitterly and successfully opposed the proposal. In Northern Ireland it openly opposes integrated education.

Though not as openly, the Presbyterian churches there are also committed to segregated education. On social issues they vie with the Catholic Church in reaction. It was their pressure which halted the extension of the British 1967 Act decriminalising abortion to Northern Ireland, forcing thousands of Northern women to join the thousands from the south to travel to Britain for expensive abortions. In the 1980s when prominent southern gay activist, Senator David Norris, took the Irish state to the European Courts over its laws against homosexuality, Ian Paisley and his Free Presbyterian Church campaigned around the slogan "Save Ulster from Sodomy". Protestant sectarians in the North ostensibly base themselves on 18th century liberalism, which seems quite enlightened compared to 17th century Catholicism. But in fact their organisations are more akin to 20th century fascism and are merely masquerading as 18th century liberalism. Clerical reaction is deeply embedded, both north and south, and only confirms James Connolly's prediction that imperialist, communal partition would bring a "carnival of reaction".

In recent years the Church's grip on society has been eroded by urbanisation and partial industrialisation. A third of the population now lives in the Dublin metropolitan area, undercutting the old rural bastions of religiosity and priestly control. A recent survey shows that 82 per cent of the population still attends weekly mass, but in Dublin and Cork city the figure is much lower at 64 per cent. And in the heavily unemployed and working class area of Tallaght in Dublin only one in ten attend mass weekly. Still the Catholic Church and its reactionary allies have won every major "moral" battle of the eighties. They forced and won the 1983 referendum to make abortion constitutionally illegal. In 1986 a campaign of fear squashed divorce reforms. Abortion counselling and information services have been under repeated attack. These "crusades" left Anne Lovett, a frightened pregnant teenager dead in a grotto trying to give birth in secrecy, and meant the gross victimisation of Joanne Hayes in the Kerry babies case. And today, with recession, mounting unemployment, and the stopping-off of the traditional safety valves of migration, the Catholic Church and Irish capitalist bosses alike want to see that the working class, and its specially oppressed women and youth, accept their misery and poverty as "the will of God", that there is no "flying in the face of God" such as strikes and social struggle.

The pressure of bourgeois and Catholic order extends beyond the servile reformist Labour and Workers parties. The republicans of Sinn Féin, in keeping with their nationalism, have repeatedly refused to approach any social issue that might alienate Catholic reaction. The fake left of the Socialist Workers Movement and Militant are happy to keep the present abortion information campaign simply to that, information. The working-class women of this island need free abortion on demand, rather than expensive clinics somewhere in Britain. But this elementary demand is conveniently relegated to the centrist confession boxes of its more "theoretical" publications by the Irish Workers Group. The IWG's capitulation is not narrowly or

in the first instance to clerical reaction. Rather like the other fake leftists they wallow in the Labour Party and popular frontist milieu. Thus their omissions around the woman question are of a piece with neglecting to mention Northern Ireland and the elementary demand for British troops out in their statement for the November presidential elections.

This country doesn't need faint hearted "leftists" but a revolutionary party. Religious reaction and communal division are integral to the maintenance of capitalist exploitation and immiseration in Ireland. Without mobilising the working class to overthrow capitalism there will be no escape from the imperialist oppression, sectarian bloodletting and grinding poverty that have been the island's plight

for so long. The glaring democratic demands arising in relation to the oppression of women and the role of the Catholic Church can only be won in the context of an organised working-class struggle for socialist revolution. That is what the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group is fighting for. *For free quality secular education at all levels, a free secular health service, free abortion on demand, free availability of contraceptives, decriminalisation of homosexuality, the complete separation of church and state. For women's liberation through socialist revolution! For the immediate unconditional withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland! Not Orange against Green but class against class! No to forcible reunification! For an Irish workers republic part of a socialist federation of the British Isles!* ■

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Connolly's legacy and the struggle for a revolutionary party

PART ONE

This is the first part of an edited version of the 14 March talk in Dublin by comrade Tom Cread of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group.

Connolly is best known as the Dublin commander of the Easter 1916 Rising, subsequently executed by the British imperialists for his leading role in that rebellion. But it must be remembered that this man who is the greatest figure in the history of the Irish socialist movement—and alongside Larkin one of the two greatest figures in the history of the Irish labour movement—does not belong simply to Irish history or the history of the Irish proletariat. The first seven years of his political career were actually spent in Scotland. And from 1903 to 1910 he was in the United States where he went through some of his most important political experiences and played an important role in the Socialist Labor Party, the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party led by Eugene Debs.

Unlike the school of thought whose members for various reasons want to paint Connolly in Green nationalist colours, a task admittedly facilitated by the way he subordinated his socialist politics in the run-up to Easter week, we see Connolly's career as first and foremost one of dedicated service to the international working class. We also view Connolly in the context of the Second International in which he was part of the left wing. Many of the weaknesses of pre-World War I left social democracy and syndicalism were weaknesses he shared. The real tragedy is that he did not live to see the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 and to confront the politics of the Communist or Third International, particularly on the national question and the necessity for a party of professional revolutionaries to carry that through. But more of this anon.

Connolly was born in 1868 in Edinburgh in Scotland into a very poor Irish Catholic working-class family. James' father was a dung-carter (which literally meant taking out human refuse) as was James in his youth. Despite some periods when he was slightly better off, Connolly remained quite poor throughout his entire life. Samuel Levinson tells a story in his biography that Connolly always had a love for the Shakespearean theatre but he was never able to actually afford the money to go and see a play. In 1882 Connolly joined the First Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment. This was not at all uncommon for Irish unemployed men to do at that time, and was not in many

respects so unlike the economic draft that one sees in the United States today of black and Hispanic youth. During much of the next seven years Connolly was stationed in Ireland though it is possible he may have spent some time in India. This was his first time in Ireland and it was in Dublin that he met Lillie Reynolds who was from a good Protestant family. He deserted in February 1889 which is why we knew so little about his life until Desmond Greaves' biography. He wasn't particularly keen on letting the authorities know where he had come from.

He and Lillie were married in April 1889 in Perth. Back in Edinburgh, Connolly was almost immediately recruited to the Scottish Socialist Federation, following in the footsteps of his older brother John who had already become a socialist. The newly formed SSF combined Scottish supporters of the Socialist League and the Social Democratic Federation of Henry Hyndman. Hyndman had started out as a Tory radical and carried his virulent chauvinism and pro-imperialism into the SDF. The Socialist League, led by William Morris, had been a split from the SDF which advocated a very sterile form of socialist purism. But at least it represented some form of left opposition to Hyndman.

Connolly rapidly proved to be an extremely capable speaker and organiser and by 1892 he was secretary of the Scottish Socialist Federation. In 1894 and again in 1895 he ran on the socialist ticket for local office.

In assessing this first period in Connolly's political career, it is important to remember just how distorted the version of Marxism expounded by the British left at that time actually was. I've already mentioned Hyndman who was the worst expression of this. But it must also be remembered that British Marxists had very few texts of basic Marx translated into English and available to them. They had the Communist Manifesto and they had the first volume of Capital and the main text they actually used was Engel's work *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. It is also worth noting that British leftists like Belfort Bax came to see the Marxist analysis as applicable only to economic questions and that other matters including religion, democratic rights and so forth were outside the scope of scientific socialism.

One of Connolly's mentors in these years was the Reverend John Glasse, an explicit "Christian socialist". Given all these things it is perhaps not so surprising that Connolly came to believe that the Second International's position that religion was a "private" matter meant that socialists could offer no opinion on matters beyond this life. Socialism and religion exist in mutually exclusive spheres and leave each other alone. Unfortunately for Connolly, in the real world—especially in Ireland—the church would not leave the socialists alone.

By the mid-1890s, in spite of or more accurately because of his success as a socialist agitator, Connolly had fallen on very hard times economically. He was unable to find work because of his views. When an offer came in 1896 to be the paid organiser of the Dublin Socialist Club, he jumped at the offer. This was the start of Connolly's second stint in Ireland, this time in the army of the proletariat. And he was to remain in Ireland until 1903.

Within a year of his arrival in Dublin, he was able to found the Irish Socialist Republican Party. The party had an irregular paper, the *Workers Republic* and never numbered more than a hundred members in Dublin, Cork and Belfast. It was nonetheless a very visible group, leading militant demonstrations on Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and other occasions. A sense of its politics can be gained from looking at the programme that it adopted. Among the demands that are raised in this programme are the nationalisation of the railways and canals, abolition of private banks, legislative restriction of hours of labour to 48 per week, establishment of a minimum wage, public control and management of national schools by boards elected by popular ballot for that purpose alone — a demand that obviously would come into conflict with the Catholic Church, whose central priority in the late 19th century was getting its hands on and keeping control of education in this country.

When he printed this programme he added another statement saying that the struggle for Irish freedom has two aspects: "it is national and it is social. The national ideal can never be realised until Ireland stands before the world as a nation, free and independent. It is social and economic because no matter what the form of government may be, as long as one class owns as private property the land and instruments of labour, from which mankind derive their substance, that class will always have it in their power to plunder and enslave the remainder of their fellow creatures."

So from the beginning, this is 1896, Connolly's general approach to the fight for socialism in Ireland was: the cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. Nationalism and socialism in this perspective are not contradictory, because the Irish bourgeoisie is beholden to England. You can see how this approach was actually carried through in his political work at that time. In 1898 you had a Commemoration Movement for the hundredth anniversary of Wolfe Tone's Rebellion. Connolly's group intervened into this, and put forward the view that Wolfe Tone as an internationalist and a consistent democrat was arguing ultimately a socialist position, that when he said that if the worst came to the worst, they would have to rely on "the men of no property", this was actually an early call for some sort of proletarian upheaval. Now, that's a very problematic point of view because in fact Wolfe Tone was very clearly linked with the French Revolution and with basically bourgeois nationalism, which was certainly progressive at that point in time in Ireland and represented the best hope for a united Ireland, which would have been, if it had succeeded, a much better thing than the subsequent development. Nevertheless, the way Connolly was posing it was basically to say again that nationalism in its most consistent form equals socialism.

The strength of his approach at the time could be seen

in his intervention against the Irish Parliamentary Party led by John Redmond which became quickly involved in the Commemoration Movement and took it over. So on the one hand, while there was this kind of confusion present in his politics at the same time there was absolutely no sense in which he was giving an inch to Redmond's bourgeois nationalism.

Another case perhaps even more egregious showing where this approach could lead was in relation to Arthur Griffith who is probably well known to you as the founder of Sinn Féin. Arthur Griffith spent a good deal of time in South Africa. He came to Ireland and Connolly and he were on the same side of the Boer War. That is when they first came into contact as far as I know. This was around 1900 and they were both for the defeat of the British. Fair enough. The problem with Arthur Griffith was that he was an absolute racist, a raving anti-Semite. In 1904 when there was a pogrom in Limerick, he hailed it or alibied it anyway. Now Connolly was in no sense a racist and there is no evidence for any such statement in anything that he said or did. At the same time faced with Griffith's utterly reactionary politics he dropped a lot of the disagreements in favour of trying to emphasise whatever points of agreement he could find. And this again came from the perspective of trying to cajole nationalists, push them step by step to the left in the belief that consistent nationalism was going to be socialist.

Another aspect which I have already alluded to and a consequence of this approach, to some degree, was soft-peddling criticism of religion, fighting shy of religion as someone put it. This is from Kieran Allen's [a leader of the Irish Cliffite SWM] book. A couple of interesting examples of how this actually was practised:

"In so far as the clergy involved themselves in politics they should be attacked as politicians. Otherwise the question of religion should be avoided entirely. This is why Connolly stated that the ISRP 'prohibits the discussion of theological or anti-theological questions at meetings, public or private'....

"The result was that the ISRP was always on the defensive. Its idealistic attempt to exclude religion from the realm of socialist debate collapsed time after time. It was dragged into making more concessions to Catholicism. During the local election campaign of 1900 Connolly proposed a resolution at the ISRP branch meeting instructing all members to attend Mass!"

— *The Politics of James Connolly*, Kieran Allen, p28

These pressures that exist in our society eventually really took their toll on the ISRP. They became expressed in one particularly notorious sub-political fight which was over the putting in of a cash bar in the office which was done while Connolly was out of town because I don't think he would have tolerated it if he wasn't out of town. So he came back, found the cash bar there. He was a lifelong teetotaler. The thing that really got him was that the cash bar lost money. And that was intolerable. This led to big eruptions but I think that if you could isolate that it doesn't really mean so much. It was the pressures that they were under.

Connolly at this stage was a supporter of the American Marxist Daniel De Leon and in 1902 he did a speaking tour of the US on behalf of the Socialist Labor Party, De Leon's party. Later that year in Britain he was chairman of the founding conference of the British Socialist Labour

Party which was a left split from the aforementioned Social Democratic Federation of Hyndman. And this was a good split. This Socialist Labour Party was founded on a number of things which weren't so bad—certainly within the context of the British left at that time—including a very clear opposition to what was called Millerandism. Millerand had been a leading French socialist who actually entered a bourgeois cabinet in France which created all kinds of debate in the Second International. The left wing clearly opposed this. It was really the first case of what we have come to characterise in the later 20th century as the popular front. That is the alliance of working-class parties with bourgeois parties which inevitably means the subordination of working-class politics.

So in 1903 with relationships with his Irish comrades deteriorating and his support for De Leon's SLP, Connolly packed his bags and left for the United States, for good or so he thought. Now he came of course to participate in the SLP. De Leon, on the one hand was America's only original Marxist theoretician, having in some respects foreshadowed the idea of soviets and in fact was given some credit for that by Lenin. He was nevertheless in 1903 at the head of an organisation in the process of degeneration and was soon to be eclipsed by Debs' Socialist Party. What basically happened was that in the American trade union movement you had the domination of the AFL (the American Federation of Labor), which was a very craft union organisation led by Samuel Gompers who had a lot of the same views as Arthur Griffith did, except that he was a trade union leader. In order to combat craft unionism, the Socialist Labor Party built up a parallel union structure, which they called the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. While this did all right at the start—I think they had well over ten thousand members and 70 trade unions represented in the New York Council of Unions—it quickly began to collapse. What really took the wind out of it was the formation in 1905 of the Industrial Workers of the World, known as the Wobblies, who put forward the idea of one big union for all the workers and advocated the general strike to shut down the system.

So Connolly came to the US. He went first to Troy, New York. Then he was in New York City and he finally settled down in Newark for a period of time where he worked in a Singer factory where he intersected a number of Italian workers. And far from being a pure and simple nationalist only interested in staying with his own kind, he set about trying to learn Italian in order to intersect these workers and win them over to the Socialist Labor Party. At another factory he set about learning German to intersect German workers.

Of course he was a member of the SLP but he began to have a number of differences with De Leon which eventually led to an irreparable split between the two. Several theoretical issues were at stake. One was De Leon's adherence to the theory of the so-called iron law of wages which states that it is useless for workers to fight for higher wages because any such increase will be immediately offset by an increase in prices. Any improvement at all in the workers' standard of living would have to wait for the overthrow of capitalism. De Leon claimed that this was an orthodox Marxist position but Connolly correctly pointed out that it was in fact the position of Ferdinand Lassalle and Marx had polemicised against it.

Another dispute arose when Connolly declared his belief in monogamy. As he put it in the 9 April 1904 issue of the *Weekly People*, which was an SLP paper: "When touring this country in 1902, I met in Indianapolis an esteemed comrade who almost lost his temper with me because I expressed my belief in monogamic marriage, and because I said, as I still hold, that the tendency of civilisation is towards its perfection and completion, instead of its destruction.... The abolition of the capitalist system will, undoubtedly, solve the economic side of the Woman Question but it will solve that alone...men and women would still be unfaithful to their vows and questions of the intellectual equality of the sexes would still be as much in dispute as they are today." De Leon was on much firmer ground in pointing to for example Bebel's book *Women and Socialism* which in the immediate context provoked Connolly's statement. There are certain things you can say of Connolly that are due to the Second International and to the deforming kind of political environments and some of the tendencies in which he first came to political consciousness. But there are other things that he should have known better about and this was simply his social conservatism as a Catholic coming through. He was opposed to divorce and unfortunately I don't think he would have been with the DSYG in calling for free abortion on demand. Which is not to say that within the context of the Irish society at the time his position, which was certainly for women's right to vote and for organising them into trade unions, was not enormously progressive. But still within the Marxist movement at the time there were better positions that he knew of and he consciously rejected them so that's something that we very clearly disagree with him on.

In spite of these disagreements, Connolly might well have remained with the SLP had it not been for his utter distaste for De Leon's method of running the party and the change in the political situation in the US. By the end of 1907 Connolly and his supporters had resigned from the SLP. De Leon's party was not a Bolshevik party. They weren't seeking as Lenin did to create a party of professional revolutionaries, a cadre organisation. Nevertheless they were a disciplined party and Connolly's conclusion coming out of this was that this type of party building was better left aside and was much less of an emphasis in his later work. He came out of this much more syndicalist in his political activity, emphasising building revolutionary trade unions—the one big union—as the essential answer politically. At the same time he was interested in the organisation of the Socialist Party in the US which was broad and included all sorts of tendencies from reformist to revolutionary and he saw the development of the British Labour Party as very positive and sought to emulate that within Ireland. He was able to get at least a motion passed at the Irish Trade Union Congress in 1912 to that effect.

In 1910 after having been one of the six organisers of the Socialist Party for a year Connolly decided to come back to Ireland. He had been trying to get back for a long time but he had been waiting for the right kind of offer, and it finally came in the form of being the organiser for the newly formed Socialist Party of Ireland.

He came back with a manuscript in hand which was published shortly thereafter and which is actually his key statement of his political standpoint and that was *Labour in Irish History* which he had been working on for a

number of years. It was his attempt at writing the history of Ireland from a socialist perspective. His main theme in this work was that first the Irish aristocracy and later the Irish bourgeoisie have always betrayed the cause of Irish national independence:

"The result of the long drawnout struggle of Ireland has been, so far, that the old chieftainry has disappeared or, through its degenerate descendants, has made terms with iniquity and become part and parcel of the supporters of the established order; the middle class, growing up in the midst of the national struggle, and at one time, as in 1798, through the stress of the economic rivalry of England almost forced into the position of revolutionary leaders against the political despotism of their industrial competitors, have now also bowed the knee to Baal and have a thousand economic strings in the shape of investments binding them to English capitalism as against every sentimental or historical attachment drawing them towards Irish patriotism; only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland."

—*Labour in Irish History*, pp8-9

Taking this idea to its extreme Connolly argues that the bourgeoisie are not really part of the nation because they are completely beholden to England. The true people of Ireland are therefore the workers and the agrarian toilers. What programme was in their interest? Socialism. Therefore Connolly concludes that what was posed was a "social and national revolution each resting upon the other" (*Labour in Irish History*, p132). Connolly spends a great many pages detailing various revolts in modern Irish history and the betrayal of these revolts by aristocratic and bourgeois leaderships. But while explicitly rejecting bourgeois nationalism he also attempted to trace a different strain of Irish nationalist thinking which emphasises the social question. He sees this type of nationalism logically culminating in the socialist proletarian movement. I have already mentioned how Connolly and the ISRP tried to fuse the tradition of Wolfe Tone with that of socialism. In *Labour in Irish History* Connolly also praises James Fintan Lalor, the 19th century advocate of Irish national independence and land nationalisation, as an "Irish apostle of revolutionary socialism". And this fails again for the same reasons as the analysis of Wolfe Tone does, because while he may have made statements that are somewhat socialistic really his politics were focused on the peasantry not the overthrow of capitalism. They were a form of populism.

So after his return, he tried to make a go of it as being Socialist Party of Ireland organiser but ran into an old problem that had beset him before which was that the money that he was promised was not forthcoming for this position. He was finally able to obtain a job as an organiser for the Irish Transport and General Workers Union led by Jim Larkin in Belfast. The Transport Union came out of a process which began in 1907 when Larkin came over as an organiser for the National Union of Dock Labourers to Belfast and led a strike which was an extremely dramatic event uniting the Catholic and Protestant workers in shutting down the port for several months and which eventually necessitated the intervention of British troops. The British ruling class had come to the conclusion that the strike was of that seriousness. Now it was eventually defeated, sectarian appeals being made by Orange and Catholic reactionaries resulting in riots. Never-

theless it stood out as really the best example of what a class-struggle perspective could achieve. The problem was that there was no revolutionary party in Belfast at the time which could go beyond simply raising the common economic interests of the class and pointing to the necessity for resolving the terrible conditions which existed in Belfast at that time through socialism.

In 1911 Connolly and his family moved north. As I said he had taken a job with the ITGWU. An opportunity soon presented itself for Connolly to reorganise the docks where things remained in a very bad condition as a result of the defeat of the 1907 strike. In the middle of 1911 there was a strike by the Seamen's and Firemen's Union which began to paralyse the Irish ports. Dockers on the Belfast cross-channel docks, still mostly Protestants, then came out on strike in sympathy with the seamen in late June. Connolly saw this as a prime opportunity to unite the workers by bringing out the mostly Catholic deep-sea dockers. Connolly's methods were reminiscent of Larkin's in 1907: "He went down to the lower docks, and introduced himself during the lunchtime break. A docker called Clarke found him a conveniently placed barrel from which he addressed the men. The Head Line [shipping bosses] was then holding out against the seamen's settlement. On July 19 he brought out three hundred dockers in sympathy and marched with them to meetings at Garmoyle Street and the Custom Hall steps. There, arrangements were made for picketing the cross-channel boats" (*The Life and Times of James Connolly*, C Desmond Greaves, p265).

The newly organised ITGWU men then made their own set of demands. Conditions on the docks were virtually as bad as they had been in 1907, the dockers earning no more than 15 shillings a week, at work that was so gruelling that no dock worker could stand it for more than three days at a stretch. The employers were of course very quick to rise to the challenge thrown at them by Connolly and the ITGWU. They threatened the men with complete lock-out if those on strike did not return to work immediately, but the response by the dockers was one of complete solidarity. Connolly formed the "Non-Sectarian Labour Band", an idea he took from his Wobbly experience, which led union processions through working-class neighbourhoods to raise money. There was tremendous support from these areas and in the docks meanwhile scabcarters were being attacked and overturned by union pickets. But Connolly did not feel prepared to deal with another 1907 type situation and readily accepted the compromise offer by the capitalists for an average increase of three shillings a week which was in fact fairly substantial. The strike had lasted only a few weeks but it achieved a measure of working-class solidarity across sectarian lines which, albeit modest, was still impressive by the standards of the previous few years.

Connolly's organising successes did not end there: "on October 4, 1911...a number of mill girls striking spontaneously against speed-up introduced by the masters to evade an agreement to restrict output, approached Connolly for advice" (Greaves, p271). There was already a textile operatives' society in existence led by Mary Galway but it was composed mostly of women in the better paid and heavily Protestant making-up section. The overwhelming majority of textile workers were unorganised. Connolly decided to organise them. At the end of November 1911, a textile workers section of the ITGWU was established.

Galway immediately accused Connolly of poaching and appealed to the Belfast Trades Council, but he could justly answer that Galway's union had shown no interest in organising the bulk of the women. In the end the Trades Council accepted the validity of Connolly's union and he and Galway even managed to cooperate later on. In his manifesto entitled "To the Linen Slaves of Belfast" Connolly called on all the women workers to stand together:

"Especially do we appeal to the spinners, piecers, layers and doffers. The slavery of the Spinning-room is the worst and least excusable of all. Spinning is a skilled trade requiring a long apprenticeship, alert brains and nimble fingers. Yet for all this skill, for all those weary years of learning, for all this toil in a super-heated atmosphere, with clothes drenched with water, and hands torn and lacerated as a consequence of the speeding up of the machinery, a qualified spinner in Belfast receives a wage less than some of our pious mill-owners would spend weekly on a dog.

— *Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table*, Cork Workers Club, 1975

Now, these were modest successes. Unfortunately, this was not a good time to be in Belfast for socialists. In 1912 with Home Rule looking more and more imminent you had the rise of Carsonism, huge demonstrations and then in 1912 as well Loyalist attacks in the shipyard with the approval of the owners, driving out hundreds of Catholic workers and leftists. Then 1914 with Home Rule looking

imminent but also with the formation of the Ulster Volunteers, a conflict of enormous proportions was brewing—it was the greatest constitutional crisis that the British bourgeoisie has ever faced. Basically the Asquith Liberal government backed down and accepted the compromise and we know what that compromise was. This was in the face of the Curragh Mutiny in the same year where the officer corps let it be known it was not prepared to go north to enforce Home Rule. Connolly made it very clear that he was opposed to partition. He predicted quite correctly that it would be a "carnival of reaction" and I will also read what he had to say at that point; this is in 1914.

"The effect of such exclusion [that is of Ulster] upon Labour in Ireland will be at least equally, and probably more, disastrous. All hopes of uniting the workers, irrespective of religion or old political battle cries will be shattered, and through North and South the issue of Home Rule will be still used to cover the iniquities of the capitalist and landlord class. I am not speaking without due knowledge of the sentiments of the organised Labour movement in Ireland when I say that we would much rather see the Home Rule Bill defeated than see it carried with Ulster or any part of Ulster left out."

— "The Exclusion of Ulster", *Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table*, p60

[END OF PART I]

International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Correspondence for:

Spartacist League of Australia

Address to:

Spartacist League
GPO Box 3473
Sydney, NSW, 2001
Australia

Spartacist League/Britain

Spartacist Publications
PO Box 1041
London NW5 3EU
England

Trotskyist League of Canada

Trotskyist League
Box 7198, Station A
Toronto, Ontario
M5W 1X8, Canada

Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands

SpAD
Postfach 51 06 55
1000 Berlin 51
Germany
Verlag Avantgarde
Postfach 11 02 31
2000 Hamburg 11
Germany

Ligue Trotskyiste de France

Le Bolchéviek, BP 135-10
75463 Paris Cedex 10
France

Spartacist Group India/Lanka

write to Spartacist,
New York

Correspondence for:

Dublin Spartacist Youth Group

Address to:

PO Box 2944, Dublin 1
Republic of Ireland

Lega Trotskista d'Italia

Walter Fidacaro
C.P. 1591
20101 Milano, Italy

Spartacist Group Japan

Spartacist Group Japan
PO Box 18
Chitose-Yubinkyoku
Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 156
Japan

Grupo Espartaquista de Mexico

P. Linares
Apdo. Postal 453
06002 México 1, D.F.
Mexico

Spartakusowska Grupa Polski

Platforma
Spartakusowków
SKR 741
50-950 Wrocław 2, Poland

Spartacist League/U.S.

Spartacist League
Box 1377 GPO
New York, NY 10116
USA

Spartacist/USSR

USSR
121019 Moscow, g-19
A/Ya 19

In honour of the 1916 Easter Rising

Seventy-five years ago, on 24 April 1916, a group of less than one thousand insurgents took to the streets of Dublin, in the teeth of a British Empire at war, with the aim of creating an independent Irish republic. The main contingent was that of the Irish Volunteers, a petty-bourgeois nationalist force which had come under the influence of the old Fenian conspirators of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). The other component of what came to be known as the "Easter Rising" were the 150 or so members of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) whose commander was the revolutionary socialist, James Connolly. The ICA had originally been formed in 1913 as a workers defence guard against scabs during the Dublin Lockout by the city's employers. At that time, Connolly stood alongside Jim Larkin at the head of the heroic Irish Transport and General Workers Union.

Within five days the rebellion had been crushed and, during the next two weeks, captured leaders were executed by the British military authorities. When fourteen had been killed, it was widely thought that would be the end, but the *Independent* newspaper, mouthpiece of William Martin Murphy, leader of the bosses in 1913, howled for Connolly's blood and on 12 May he was shot in Kilmainham Gaol.

Lenin's reaction to the Easter Rising which he declared "must be the touchstone of our theoretical views" on the national question was to defend it as a legitimate anti-imperialist rebellion. He firmly rejected Karl Radek's description of it as a "putsch":

"We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are 'opposed' to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a 'putsch', we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites."

— Lenin, "The discussion on self-determination summed up"

For Lenin then, the events in Dublin were part of the revolutionary process unleashed by the imperialist war. Any socialist worth his salt had to defend the Rising and this obviously drew a hard line against all the various social-democratic apologists for imperialism.

Though the enormous outpouring of anti-imperialist sentiment in Ireland after 1916 is often attributed to outrage over the executions, it is clear that the threat to extend conscription to Ireland in 1918, as well as the continually deferred promise of Home Rule and mooted partition, would have caused a profound political shift even had there been no Rising. Nor were the leaders of the Rising simply crazed nationalists intent on a "blood

sacrifice" as they have been portrayed by latter-day detractors. They had a serious plan for a national uprising which, through various shortcomings, blunders and betrayals, went seriously awry. Centrally, they were counting on a shipment of German guns which was captured by the British off the coast of County Kerry. Of course, the chances of the rebellion succeeding even if all had gone according to plan are another matter. They were not helped by the utterly conspiratorial methods of the IRB which precluded any mass agitation and facilitated the inactivity of other parts of its organisation. The Easter Rising can well be compared to John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859 as a giant historic landmark of the struggles about to break loose. The soldiers who destroyed slavery in the course of the second American revolution — the Civil War — marched to the tune "John Brown's body", and the Easter Rising provided the inspiration of anti-imperialist insurrection. And it is the same forces of bourgeois reaction and their reformist lackeys that seek to disappear the examples of John Brown and Easter 1916.

The Easter Rising and Connolly's role in it have been the subject of considerable comment in the bourgeois and left press in Ireland during the past couple of months. A whole slew of "revisionist" historians have come forth to tell the world that Pearse, Connolly et al were deluded romantic nationalists who willingly and even "criminally" undertook a hopeless venture. By implication they are made centrally responsible for the hundreds of civilian casualties and the damage done by the British artillery. One of the prime exponents of this point of view is Kevin Myers, who writes an "Irishman's Diary" on the editorial page of the *Irish Times*. Myers is famous (infamous) for his obsession with showing in column after column how the leaders of the Rising were filled with bloodlust and retailing all the crimes of the IRA during the War of Independence while writing about the virtuous nature of this or that British officer.

And who are the "revisionists" of today? As much as anything they are the ideological voice of the neo-Redmondite wing of the Irish bourgeoisie. John Redmond was the leader of the constitutional nationalist and pro-imperialist Irish Parliamentary Party which had brokered Home Rule in alliance with Asquith's Liberals. Redmond and his ilk worked overtime as recruiting sergeants for British imperialism in the world war. Connolly correctly and vociferously opposed this pro-imperialist treachery.

The neo-Redmondites would like us to believe that if it wasn't for those crazy bastards in 1916, everything could have gone peacefully and step by step "independence" would have been achieved except without the "tradition of violence" to which they attribute all the trouble in Northern Ireland. The neo-Redmondites include everyone from Fine Gael and Conor Cruise O'Brien on the right to Mary Robinson and the Workers Party on the "left". These are the people hankering to give the bourgeois clericalist state

in southern Ireland a "European" facelift. They want a "new relationship" with the Unionist bourgeoisie in the North based on bashing Republicans even harder and exploiting the workers more intensively.

Other elements of the Irish bourgeois establishment, centred in Fianna Fáil, fretted that unless some gesture of commemoration was made, the Rising as the "foundation of the state" would "by default" become a tradition monopolised by the "men of violence" in Sinn Féin. Nonetheless Charlie Haughey gave a very "European" speech at this year's Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis, filling many neo-Redmondites with glee. He and President Robinson then held a perfunctory 15-minute ceremony at the GPO on Easter Sunday.

Meanwhile, Republicans sought to "Reclaim the Spirit of 1916", culminating in a 10,000 strong march through Dublin on 6 April. The keynote speech was given by artist Robert Ballaght who commented: "It has been a revealing experience to witness the serried ranks of the southern establishment squirm in the face of their own history" (*An Phoblacht*, 11 April). Ballaght asked: "Is the Fourth of July irrelevant to the people of the United States? Is Bastille Day irrelevant to the French?" But the question is better put: what does the "Spirit of 1916" mean today? For Republicans it means the nationalist perspective of a "united Ireland".

Connolly predicted that partition would mean a "carnival of reaction", and the tragic truth of that no one knows better than the oppressed Catholic minority in the North. However, the forcible reunification of Ireland, implicit in the slogan of a "united Ireland" is a recipe for the reversal of the terms of oppression and to ensure that the carnival of reaction continues.

What is the left's reaction to all this? *Militant*, *Socialist Worker* and *Class Struggle* have all recently produced long historical pieces on the Easter Rising. The latter, organ of the Irish Workers Group, co-thinkers of the British Workers Power, draws the following balance sheet:

"Firstly, we say that Connolly was wrong to lower the red flag to the green, to subordinate the working class programme to that of the revolutionary democratic petty bourgeoisie.... Secondly, we hold that, even had Connolly openly made propaganda for independent action by the working class, he still would have been wrong to organise an insurrection against British rule in the conditions of 1916 where by no stretch of the imagination were any significant working class forces prepared for revolutionary struggle."

— *Class Struggle*, no 24, April 1991

The IWG is undoubtedly correct to criticise Connolly for dipping "the red flag to the green" during the Rising. The Declaration of the Irish Republic, which Connolly signed, is simply a bourgeois nationalist document. Connolly issued no manifesto to the working class because he did not expect much response. Having observed the prostration of the Second International and the trail of Irishmen going off to die in the trenches, he was desperate to act. His early avowals of internationalist solidarity with Liebknecht were followed by later statements which viewed the victory of German imperialism as a lesser evil.

The implications of his writings giving the Irish national struggle an inherent socialist character became more pronounced in the direction of lapsing into nationalism. If we had been there, with the benefit of hindsight and above all of the experience of the Russian Revolution, we would have wanted to argue strenuously with him to wait for more propitious circumstances, which did in fact arise within two years. By then the October Revolution would have happened and the Irish working class was on the move. Lenin too had seen the collapse of the Second International, and initiated an uncompromising struggle to build a new Third International and to turn the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war. The key political task was to bring proletarian leadership to the struggle for national liberation and Connolly's enormous political abilities could have been brought to bear in the work of forging a Bolshevik-type party that alone can provide such leadership.

But though the IWG and the Cliffites of the Socialist Workers Movement can produce interesting and often correct comment about the events of 75 years ago, their politics today are, protestations notwithstanding, a constant exercise in dipping the red flag before the green, not to mention the yellow of social democracy. What is really indicative in the IWG's four page supplement on "James Connolly and the Easter Rising", is that they do not once mention Connolly's efforts to unite the working class, Protestant and Catholic. Ditto for their book on Connolly — no discussion of the 1907 Belfast dockers strike or the engineering workers strike of 1919.

Elsewhere the IWG have argued explicitly that a united bourgeois state in Ireland is "all but impossible" (*Trotskyist International* no 3, p54). The SWM also mock Sinn Féin's goal of a united bourgeois Ireland because the Catholic bourgeoisie has supposedly lost all interest in such a project. The point of all this is to invest the slogan "Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole" with a necessarily progressive, even "socialist" character, to deny the reactionary possibilities of unification, and justify capitulation to Republican nationalism.

The prospect of a peaceful bourgeois reunification may indeed be a chimera. But this ignores the reality of what bourgeois, nationalist reunification *would* mean: the reversal of the terms of oppression in the context of escalating communal slaughter and forced population transfers. Moreover, a possible alternative reactionary outcome, so long as the issue is posed along communal/national lines, is the repartition of Ireland with Protestant reaction intensifying, consolidating and even seeking to expand its domain.

The Irish left after Connolly has either repeated his mistakes or fallen into the wake of neo-Redmondites. We, on the other hand, see Connolly as comparable to John Maclean in Scotland and Eugene Debs in the United States, ie, fighters who despite all their flaws were thoroughly committed to the proletariat's struggle for emancipation. We stand on their shoulders but we seek to use the Bolshevik method of Lenin and Trotsky to finally achieve the socialist society to which they devoted their lives. ■

Connolly's legacy and the struggle for a revolutionary party

PART TWO

We print below the second and concluding part of an edited version of the 14 March presentation given in Dublin by comrade Tom Crean of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group. Part I was published in *Workers Hammer* no 123 (May/June 1991). An accompanying piece entitled "In honour of the 1916 Easter Rising" addressed the importance for Marxists of this anti-imperialist rebellion in which Connolly made the last political intervention of his life.

Part I, which contained the bulk of the main presentation, described Connolly's work up to 1914 and his attempt to address Irish history from a Marxist standpoint, particularly in *Labour in Irish History*. Connolly was eventually led to equate the fight for national independence with the fight for socialism. As a result, Connolly — while fighting tooth and nail against the bourgeois nationalists of John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party — also made various political concessions to the Fenian Republican tradition in the belief that consistent Republicanism would lead to socialism. Connolly was trying to grapple with the national question in the context of the Second International which was characterised in the main by rotten, pro-imperialist chauvinism (as confirmed in August 1914). He was unaware of Lenin's debates with Rosa Luxemburg on the question of self-determination; executed after the 1916 Rising, Connolly did not live to see the Comintern deal with these issues.

For us, as for Lenin, Marxism and nationalism are fundamentally counterposed. As we wrote in *Theses on Ireland* (Spartacist no 24):

"Thus, while revolutionists struggle against all forms of national oppression, they are also opposed to all forms of nationalist ideology. It is a revision of Leninism to claim that the 'nationalism of the oppressed' is progressive and can be supported by communist internationalists."

Whatever weaknesses there were in Connolly's theoretical understanding of the national question, his unquestionable strength was his determined, lifelong battle for the interests of the working class. In Part I, we dealt with his attempts to unite Protestant and Catholic workers in Belfast between 1911 and 1914.

Part II takes up the many differences between our analysis and programme and those of our opponents on the left. The discussion period at the Dublin meeting was in fact dominated by a debate between Emmett Farrell of the Militant tendency and the DSYG. Militant is known for its loyalty to Labourism in Ireland as well as in Britain,

combined with a tepid economism which it claims has something to do with Trotskyism. To understand Militant's position on Ireland, it is important to remember that it was the Labour Party which sent the troops to Northern Ireland in 1969. Militant calls for a trade-union militia in the North as a *precondition* for the withdrawal of the British troops. While its position is sometimes confused with our call for programmatically-based anti-sectarian workers militias to combat Orange and Green terror *and imperialist rampage*, Militant fails the acid test of demanding the *immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland*. To take just one example: in a recent editorial (*Militant*, 24 May) and accompanying article on the Brooke talks, they not only don't raise the call for "troops out" but don't even mention the presence of the British occupying forces!

Militant's Farrell tried to argue on the basis that we were small and "sectarian". Militant "is sold in both East Belfast and West Belfast, something which I think is unlikely to be the fate of the *Workers Hammer*". But, back to programme, a DSYG comrade responded:

"Militant as an organisation failed to raise the demand on virtually every occasion for the British troops to leave immediately and unconditionally.... Another example of Militant's 'anti-imperialism' was their call during the 1982 Falklands War for a democratic socialist Labour Government to pursue the same war with a socialist face...."

Another Spartacist spokesman from the SL/B explained:

"When we are talking about building a revolutionary party and a revolutionary movement, then we are not talking about building a party like the British Militant tendency which has said explicitly ever since 1975 that you can get socialism in Britain through an Enabling Act in the British Parliament. That is the policy of the left-wing social democrats, going back to the 1930s...."

"And I tell you one newspaper where you will certainly never read about British troops out of Ireland, that is the newspaper of the *British Militant*. In fact, if there is a responsibility it is for *British* revolutionaries above all to fight against the presence of British troops in the North...."

"For example the Irish Militant called at one point to defend Iraq in the recent war, whereas the British Militant would never have said that, because of course the British Militant was up against one of the governments that was highly supportive of that war, was actually prosecuting that war. So it is a lot easier to say that here than it is to say it in London...."

"The point I want to finish on is that there is a guy in Britain called Sean Matgamna who is a leader of a group called Socialist Organiser. And he had made this observation at the time of the election of Mary Robinson as the Irish President.

He says there are basically (the way he put it) two souls of Irish socialism, one of which is the Republican tradition and the other the social democratic standpoint which capitulates to British imperialism and Unionism in the North. And in fact one of the most important things about Mary Robinson's election (which the Militant hails as some kind of famous advance and forming a critical turning point apparently), is her pro-imperialism. The fact that she wants to see the continuation of the British role in the North, that she is very strongly pro-NATO. That represents the real sort of politics of Irish social democracy which is a capitulation to British imperialism and to Unionism...."

Farrell retorted that:

"In 1971 we did change our position in terms of our public material addressed to a particular area of the working class.... In 1970 and 1971 and 1972, when we first published the paper as a regular monthly paper, on our masthead we had 'for a united socialist Ireland'.... That was a time when you could get an echo for that even in Protestant working-class areas, when you had ten thousand people approaching the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA to become members after the killings in Derry and after internment.... Three years later, in 1975, there was mass killings in the North on a daily basis of Catholics by Protestants and of Protestants by Catholics and the idea that you would get into East Belfast where there were Protestant thugs from the UDA at the entrances to all the parts of East Belfast with clubs and masks on and sell the paper saying that you were for a socialist united Ireland was just a joke, you just wouldn't do it, you wouldn't get in and that remains the case in parts of East Belfast today. And the comrades would say you must preserve your programme. Of course you must preserve your programme.... On the other hand, the [Spartacist] comrades will want to...have in their paper a headline saying 'troops out' and say that the Militant should be held in contempt because we don't have it."

Clearly, Militant's "change of position" was motivated by an opportunist adaptation. But we must also point out that the call for a "united socialist Ireland" can be a left-sounding version of the nationalist programme for the forcible unification of Ireland, ignoring at best the question of the Protestants. Our demand for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles leaves open the question of where the Protestants fall. It is counterposed to the Militant's (now defunct) call and to its replacement, "For a Socialist Federation of Ireland and Britain". With their old slogan Militant leaned towards Green nationalism; their current slogan walks both southern and northern sides of the street, leaving the door open to the Unionist notion of an indivisible "United Kingdom" (particularly given the failure to call for British troops out of the North). Unlike our call for a "federation of workers republics in the British Isles", it suggests both islands are fixed national entities, without internal and unresolved national questions which must be addressed by revolutionaries. (The need for the abolition of the monarchy is neatly avoided, too.) And this leaves out completely the question of the democratic right of self-determination for Scotland and Wales. We by contrast advocate these national *rights*, though not currently their exercise. We make it clear that victorious workers revolution will in no way be committed to the current state boundaries that contain or divide the nations and peoples of this archipelago.

From the Militant's failure to raise the elementary

demand for unconditional withdrawal of the British troops from Northern Ireland, to its social chauvinism over the Falklands war to its abject failure to work for the defeat of US/British imperialism in the Gulf War, this Labourite tendency overtly capitulates to the British imperialists and their Labour lackeys.

We print below the final part of Crean's presentation and his summary following the discussion period and debate and believe that this material will prove educational for those who seek, as Connolly did, revolutionary answers to the miserable, decaying capitalism of these islands.

Now I want to raise some points that are made by our political opponents, because there have been a couple of books published in the last year, purporting to deal with Connolly from a Marxist standpoint. The first was by the Irish Workers Group and the second was by Kieran Allen of the SWM. These books do contribute to our understanding of Connolly and a number of things have been raised in these books which are certainly useful and helpful for Marxists. At the same time particularly over this question of partition and Connolly's work in the North, I would take real issue with what the Irish Workers Group has to say. They criticise Connolly for underestimating Orangeism. On the one hand it is certainly true that Connolly, in the same way as Irish nationalists in general, had a continuous underestimation of Loyalism but at the same time if you are thinking back to that period it was very hard to see that this was going to be the inevitable outcome. It was very easy to think that Home Rule was an inevitability.

In the entire chapter that the IWG devoted to Connolly's work and to Connolly's understanding of the Protestants they do not at any point mention the actual attempts that were made between 1911 and 1914 to bring Catholic and Protestant workers together, some of them partially successful. Nor do they mention 1907, nor do they mention the 1919 engineering strike. So basically what they criticise Connolly for doing is having some sort of utopian perspective that he could possibly expect to really unite the working class at this point against the bosses.

While one would not want to underestimate the dangers, our point of view is that in fact even in these small struggles, and in fact in some of the larger ones, while economic struggles by themselves are not going to lead in some linear fashion to socialism, at the same time the intervention of a revolutionary party no matter how small has potential to gain the kind of cadre that can lead a revolution at a later point. So for us these struggles are enormously important and these points of unity are of enormous importance and the necessity is to intervene into them. For the IWG this is basically dismissed.

In this country in the wake of partition you have two analyses on the left. The first analysis which is held by a number of groups is that there is one nation and the solution is simply the removal of the external factor, that is the British troops in Northern Ireland and that will then lead to a peaceful and just resolution or maybe a bloody but just resolution. The other point of view which is put forward for example by Militant is that the class must come together on economic issues and that will lead to the

national question disappearing relatively of its own accord and therefore there is no need particularly to raise slogans or to put forward the perspective of fighting imperialism as it exists in Northern Ireland.

You either have capitulation to Green nationalism in some form or another or capitulation to Orangeism. Now that of course goes from the Militant all the way to even more egregious forms such as the Workers Party or the British and Irish Communist Organisation. Our programme sees Northern Ireland as a classic situation of interpenetrated peoples. As I laid it out here we think that Connolly was absolutely right to fight against partition as it was being posed, as it was being posed first of all within the working class. For partition to be actually carried through it first of all meant that the working class had to be split asunder. Catholic and leftist workers had to be driven out of the shipyards in 1912 and out of the engineering plants in 1919. It required a bloody partition of the working class first of all. So of course it was absolutely correct to fight against that.

There is no just resolution to the national question under capitalism. The forcible reunification of Ireland which as you probably saw in the leaflet, we stand opposed to, under the hegemony of the Irish Catholic nation could simply mean the reversal of the terms of oppression. And in fact if history teaches anything probably that is what it would mean, the reversal of the terms of oppression. So we say clearly that the British troops should get out. We say no to forcible reunification and we say what's needed is a federation of workers republics in the British Isles. We also call for an anti-sectarian and programmatically-based workers militia to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage in the North. This is a perspective which doesn't underestimate the difficulties but sees the way forward as the intervention even of a small number of revolutionaries into the actual points of class unity in the North that can lay the basis for building a Bolshevik party. And that is the only way out.

There are various bad solutions and the current status quo is certainly rotten to the core. The only way out is by building that kind of a Bolshevik party. And in saying these things what we are looking to are the traditions of Lenin's Comintern which put forward an internationalist perspective and which unlike the Second International did not see the national question simply in chauvinist terms. In fact in large part the Second International even had *pro-imperialist* politics and this became clearly expressed in 1914 when the German social democracy, the French, the British Labour Party all supported their own bourgeoisie in the war. So in counterposition to this the Third International was built for internationalism. It was built in support of the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination. And it was built in the understanding that only through building revolutionary parties could the working class move forward.

I concentrated a good deal on the North in describing Connolly's work there but before World War I there was also an enormous struggle in Dublin and that was in 1913 when 25,000 workers were locked out by William Martin Murphy and the bosses of Dublin. Connolly and Larkin in that struggle spent more of their time in Britain seeking solidarity strikes by British workers of which there were actually a fair number. In fact there was so much pressure

from the rank and file in Britain that the Trade Union Congress officialdom felt compelled to call a special conference which was simply their way of putting a safety valve on the thing. So it was notable that £150,000 was raised in Britain, a pretty enormous sum at the time, in solidarity with Dublin workers. This was a conjuncture which posed in a way that the British miners strike of a year before also had; which posed the possibility again of united class action throughout these islands. Connolly and Larkin certainly had the right perspective which was to bring British workers out in solidarity.

World War I broke out not long after the defeat of the workers in Dublin in early 1914 in spite of enormous heroism. Connolly's initial response to war was not very different in many ways from Lenin's or Liebknecht's. He said, talking about the measures that were necessary in Ireland by the labour movement:

"Starting thus, Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord."

— *Irish Worker* 8 August 1914, *Collected Works*, Vol 1, p196

Not a bad way of putting it. A year later in the context of his increasing bitterness at the spectacle of Irish workers being sent out by Redmond, by the Irish Parliamentary Party to die in Europe for the cause of the Empire, he said, (now he is back in Belfast at this point and referring to a man who is known as Wee Joe Devlin, the leader of the Parliamentary Party in Belfast): "The present writer cannot ride up the Falls Road in his own motor car, the penny tram has to do him. But thank God there are no fresh-made graves in Flanders or the Dardanelles built by the mangled corpses of men whom he coaxed or bullied into leaving their homes and families" (*Workers Republic* 28 August 1915, *Collected Works*, Vol I, p365).

There was a shift in Connolly's position from the internationalist position I quoted. The context of this has to be understood because on the one hand you had the defeat of the strike in 1913-14 in Dublin, the defeat of the working class. Then you had the collapse of the Second International in front of the war, the support of all these parties for their own ruling class. So Connolly suddenly felt himself quite isolated, and in that isolation he turned away or began to turn away from an internationalist perspective. Which isn't to say that he had adopted a nationalist perspective in any definitive way. Nevertheless this nationalist bent obviously came to inform his thinking leading up to the Easter Rising. I would also point out though that while in itself with the signing of the Proclamation you had the dipping of the red banner in front of the green, that at the very end of his life he was not simply the commander of the Irish Citizens Army but also the general secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union and Connolly did fairly stalwart work in bringing that union back into financial solvency in that period. Certainly it was his perspective that that union should see itself through to another day. What he didn't have was Lenin's understanding that war is the mother of revolution. As Lenin said it, not knowing Connolly's politics and what Connolly was about, the tragedy of the Irish was that they went too soon. If we were there we would have argued with Connolly about the perspective that he was taking and fought

against it. But we would certainly agree with Lenin in defending the Easter Rising and defending all the rebellions that came subsequently against the colonial and imperialist rulers.

So on that note I will conclude. Our perspective is internationalist and we think that James Connolly and his life work was basically that of a fighter for the international working class. In spite of all the flaws and all the problems, we think that his work is really the starting point for revolutionaries in this country but not the sole starting point by any means. It is the politics of Lenin and Trotsky, the politics of the early Communist International and the Fourth International which really provides the way forward in the current context. So far from, as many groups do, seeking to use Connolly to justify one form or another of opportunism or capitulation in this society, we look to the most advanced conceptions of modern scientific socialism as the way forward for workers revolution. Thank you.

Summary

I'll come back to the question that wasn't answered, a question about what was the actual form that bourgeois nationalism took in Connolly's time and I think also the corollary to that was if there was such a thing as bourgeois nationalism how could Connolly be for nationalism? Essentially what you are talking about is the Irish Parliamentary Party and Connolly's view didn't deny the existence of an Irish bourgeoisie, but he said that their nationalism was false. That was his own way of addressing it. And that class is beholden to England completely and thoroughly and therefore would never seek independence in any fundamental way.

Now, I think Connolly was at his best when he spoke in 1897 of what an independent capitalist Ireland might look like. He said: "If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic, your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers" (*Shan Van Vocht* January 1897, *Collected Works*, Vol 1, p307). And in another passage in *Socialism Made Easy* he says:

"After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch Socialism, we will protect all classes, and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party, under the command of the sheriff, will wear green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic.

"Now isn't that worth fighting for?

"And when you cannot find employment, and giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the Poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the Poorhouse door to the tune of 'St Patrick's Day'.

"Oh, it will be nice to live in those days!

" 'With the Green Flag floating o'er us' and an ever-increasing army of unemployed workers walking about under the Green Flag, wishing they had something to eat. Same as now.

"Whoop it up for liberty!" (*Socialism Made Easy*, p32)

I think he managed to capture a lot of what has happened, what the reality of life in the so-called Irish Republic is today.

So our perspective in relation to the national question is not to ignore it, is not to say that in Ireland it's going to be easily resolved, nor is it to say that there is any just resolution under capitalism. We take our starting point from Lenin and he was very clear in stating that the right of self-determination means nothing except the right of existence as a separate state. He actually quotes Kautsky who in his earlier days was capable of saying very intelligent things. "The national state is the form *most suited* to present-day conditions [i.e., capitalist, civilised, economically progressive conditions, as distinguished from medieval, pre-capitalist, etc.]; it is the form in which the state can best fulfill its tasks" (VI Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", p9). So for Lenin and Kautsky the *advocacy* by socialists of the use of the right of self-determination as opposed to the right in general in any particular situation was conditional on whether this would advance the development of the forces of production and the class struggle. Solving the national question in any particular situation clears an obstacle on the path of forging a class-conscious proletariat. As Lenin put it: "While recognising equality and equal rights to a national state, it [the proletariat] values above all and places foremost the alliance of the proletarians of all nations, and assesses any national demand, any national separation, *from the angle* of the workers' class struggle" (VI Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", p23). So for Lenin the proletariat while fighting resolutely for the right of small nations against imperialism must not in any way champion nationalism. Lenin's position is in fact a consistent extension of Marx's dictum that the workers have no country.

That's our starting point. The starting point of the Militant tendency as an international which is based in Britain—and the point that Emmett did not bother to respond to—is that it very explicitly sees socialism as being brought by an Enabling Clause in a peaceful transformation of society; it is a tendency which has basically made its peace with the British Labour Party. Kinnock's party in turn clearly expresses the interest, as has been self-evident in the most recent period, of one wing of British imperialism, and went along gladly and enthusiastically with the slaughter of the Iraqi masses. Our position is rather different and our tendency has stood out in the last 25 years of its existence against the popular front, for the defence of the gains of the October Revolution, against all counterrevolutionary movements, as today perhaps most clearly exemplified by Sajudis in the Soviet Union, though I dare say that the various wings of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union share in common their complete preparation to betray the working class to the imperialists as they have done numerous times in the recent past.

We are not pretending that we are in fact a group of a hundred people with a sizable contingent in the working class movement. We are a group of students, but we seek to become more than that. We seek, on the basis of a programme which opposes nationalism clearly and opposes imperialism, to gain the cadre to build a revolutionary party which can see the day when Connolly's vision of a socialist federation can actually be achieved. ■