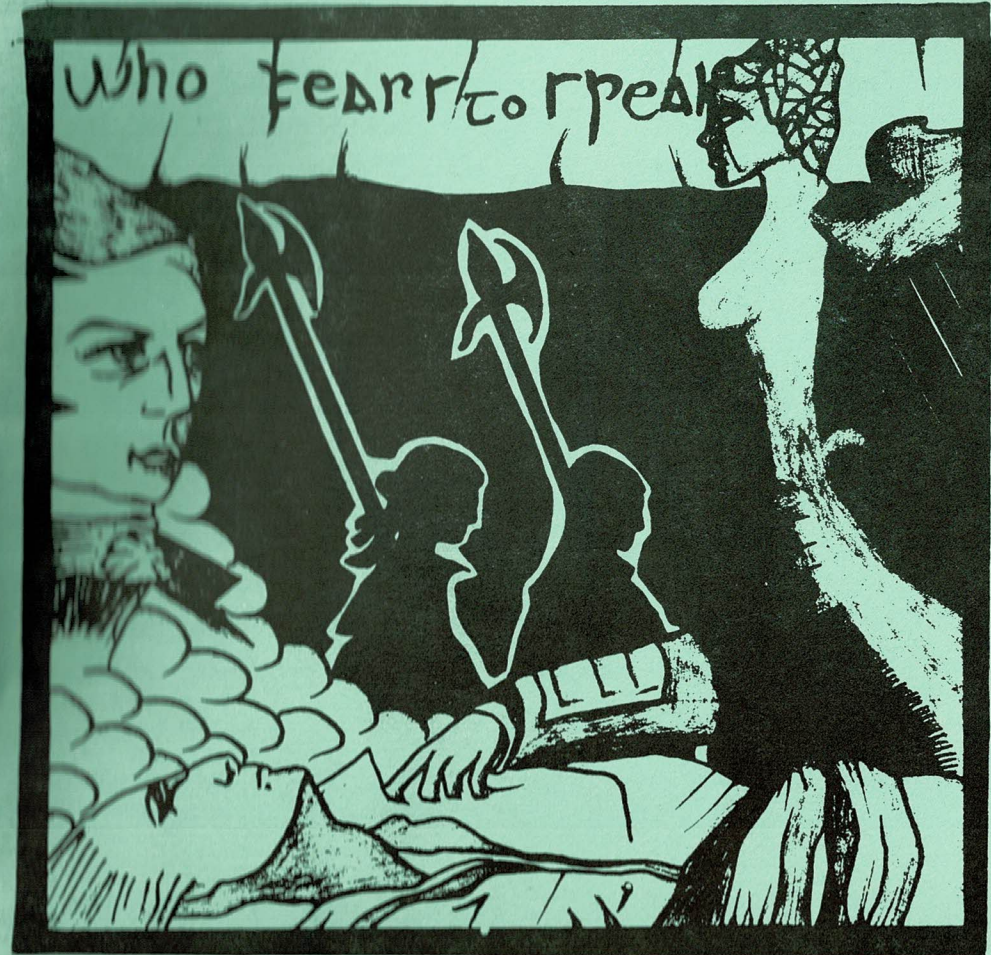


Red Banner

a magazine of socialist ideas



issue 3

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It's now a year since *Red Banner* made its debut. The idea that motivated it was very simple, some might say even naive. Socialist revolution, we believed, was desperately needed in a world suffering every day of every week from the 'blessings' of capitalism. Achieving such a revolution required that the ideas of socialism be spread and developed within the working class. And that need, we felt, had to take precedence over the private short-term interests of any organisation or group. So we put together this magazine, to provide a voice for socialist ideas, independent of all affiliations except the one that really matters—loyalty to our class and the cause of its liberation.

In the meantime, capitalism has continued to serve up its usual diet of crisis and oppression, but there have been welcome signs, both in Ireland and around the world, of a growth in resistance to it. *Red Banner's* intention has always been to do its own little bit in such resistance. While we are flattered that others have followed in our footsteps in the past year, we are still convinced of the need for a socialist magazine that can present views and information unconstrained by the need to adhere to or defend an organisational position. Obviously we are not alone, judging by the fact that our first two issues are all but sold out—forcing us to significantly increase our print run—and that the steady flow of articles continues.

Michael O'Reilly, the Irish Secretary of the ATGWU, has long been a prominent figure in the workers' movement: here, in an interview with Rosanna Flynn, he gives his own opinion of some of the issues facing Irish workers. Kieran Crilly asks who has benefited from the 'prosperity' created in the era of social partnership.

From Good Friday to the referendum, to Drumcree and Omagh, the situation in the North presents new challenges for socialists, which are examined in John Meehan's article.

Two hundred years after Protestant and Catholic, north and south united in revolution, Mary Muldowney looks at the role of the Catholic hierarchy in 1798 and since. Colm de Faoite looks at what this year's commemorations have left unsaid.

The 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto is marked with a critical examination by Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh. One of its authors, Friedrich Engels, is the subject of this issue's 'Revolutionary Lives' article. (Restrictions of space have meant that the second part of Joe Conroy's article will have to wait until issue 4.) More of the hidden Connolly is revealed in this issue's selection.

The only way *Red Banner* has managed to come this far is through the active support of its readers, buying, selling, and writing for the magazine. Only if that support continues can the magazine continue. We need articles in time for the next issue in May. *Red Banner* has no party line to lay down or conform to—all we ask of our contributors is that same fundamental commitment to workers' freedom common to all real socialists. By widening and strengthening that commitment within our class, this magazine can play a small part in the coming struggles that contain the promise of building a proper socialist movement.

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“Socialist trade unionism, not trade union socialism”

Michael O'Reilly interviewed by Rosanna Flynn

What do you think of the possibility of workers' unity in the North?

The North has been pulled asunder by the troubles. The divide between the working class is particularly difficult. But I have to say that the Belfast agreement offers the possibility of some co-operation. One, there has to be some kind of a healing process between the two communities, particularly on the level of the working class; and two, there will be an assembly in the North. Working class people have aspirations in the social field and they will make demands on the Assembly. Those demands will have a social, rather than a sectarian character. If we can find agreement on what constitutes social exclusion, unemployment, and the other things that affect working class people, and argue for the working class in a totality, we can begin to tackle this. In other words, if there are sections of—for want of a better term—the Catholic working class who suffer marginally worse than the Protestant working class, or vice versa, as long as their representatives—like people in the PUP, in Sinn Fein—have a common definition of social exclusion, then it's an argument about sufficient resources to tackle the problem. And in that way you begin to solve the problem, but I think it will take a long time to get a situation where there will be real, meaningful co-operation.

Has what happened in Omagh made the situation worse, better, or is it still in a state of shock?

Well, it's in a state of shock, but it has also made the situation paradoxically—and there are contradictions in this—worse *and* better, in the sense that it's obviously worse, because of what it has done to the people of Omagh. When the public grieving is over, on a private basis and in a town like that, it has probably destroyed the lives of a very, very significant number of people and I don't think there's any public way to heal that or to resolve that. That's a personal trauma for each and every one of them, who've seen their loved ones slaughtered and murdered. But the Omagh tragedy highlights the futility of violence in present circumstances, and I think, paradoxically, it will mean greater support for the Belfast agreement, rather than less support for it. You don't have to believe that the Belfast agreement is the answer to the problems.

What you have to believe is that it lays a structure which has the potential to put aside sectarian violence as the answer to the problem, and it allows for the primacy of politics as the way forward. And I think everybody on the left has an interest in doing that, because elitist, terrorist bombings of this kind, by their nature, exclude the participation of civil society from the debate, and from the idea of advancing the interests of working class people and of people in general. So there's a contradiction in what's happened in Omagh, but in the long term, I believe, it will strengthen the agreement rather than weaken it, and the same is also true in what happened in the aftermath of Portadown.

What do you think about the situation in the south industrially, particularly in relation to Partnership 2000?

I think there isn't a majority for Partnership 2000. I think it's simply the mechanics of how the votes are counted, and how the votes are counted at the ICTU. I think even the last agreement was probably—was *certainly* rejected by a majority of workers in the private sector. And I think actually it's the biggest obstacle to both co-operation and movement on the left. Where the trade union movement sees itself as a three year referendum club, where the members vote on wages and conditions every three years and then do nothing in the interim, I think that turns off the whole trade union movement, and I think it's very, very anti-democratic. We have hundreds of full-time officers, we have thousands of shop stewards who can, because of these agreements, do very little. They can't make claims on their employers, they can't learn the skills, because these are skills which are only learned by doing. You can't learn them in any other way, and like anything else, if you don't practice the art of free collective bargaining, if you don't hone the skills of negotiating with employers, they become rusty on you, they become out of date. We have a whole generation of trade unionists now who have never actually made a claim on their employer. I believe, because of the growth in the economy, there is no possibility of a repetition of an agreement like Partnership 2000, and I think what we need is an agreement which, if you like, reflects the diversity of the circumstances that we face. Certainly—because workers in the public sector have a common employer, the government—there's nothing wrong with them combining to negotiate with their employer. But that should not be at the expense of the private sector, and these agreements have been constructed by the leadership in Congress in such a way that they have given marginal advantages to the public sector at the expense of workers in the private sector, and they have sown the potential seeds of division, which are very, very dangerous in the trade union movement. Now many people are reluctant to speak about this because they feel if you speak about this, you will

be seen to be supporting right wing economists and others who argue about holding down public sector wages. That's not the point I'm making. The point I'm trying to make is this, that the restrictions of these agreements on the private sector are dividing the trade union movement, and the private sector, actually, should be allowed to lead the push for improved wages and conditions, because always, in a period of free collective bargaining, you look to the strong sections of the movement to make a breakthrough, and lead it.

The other thing that's been completely neglected has been the whole question of hours of work, because, with the growth of technology, the biggest challenge facing the trade union movement is the question of the hours of work. The hours of work are something that was referred to in Marx's *Capital*. The hours of work was what the first May Day demonstrations took place about. The hours of work are the biggest thing facing us, because if you make a breakthrough on the hours of work, you cannot take it back—employers have historically never been able to take it back. They have, of course, been able to take back wages, through inflation and taxation, and many other things that affect us. So the hours of work are the big issue that's facing us. We need free collective bargaining and we need to make that a big issue because that's relevant in a society where we have huge levels of unemployment. So the hours of work are, I believe, the biggest issue facing the labour movement in Europe as we go into the next century, and I don't see why we shouldn't have a radical slogan like 'A 30-hour week'. After all, this century, we've moved from probably about 80-90 hours down to less than 40. There's no reason why, if our grandparents did this, we shouldn't have the same ambitions for the working class of today.

What do you think are the chances of left unity?

Well, I'm not sure what the left is any more. There's been, I suppose, a historic breakdown with the collapse of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, and many people have, because of their association or belief in those countries, lost their vision of building an alternative. Now I think the need for left unity is still there. I think it's a difficult situation to build. I think you have to try and build left unity while simultaneously you have to tolerate left competition. I think if you see unity as a basis of wiping out competition, then you won't get unity. So unity has to take place in diversity, and amongst competition, and it seems to me it has to be over a number of very minimum kind of demands. Most people on the left—though not all—would agree that Partnership 2000, for example, is a barrier and it's probably easy to get some kind of a consensus on the left about that. I can't think of any other thing that is so easy to get some kind of a consensus around. And as I say, even on that issue,

there would be some people in the Democratic Left who would favour agreements like that. Now because somebody wants to make an argument over something like that, I don't think they should be excluded from participation in the building of some kind of a broad left. But I think building a broad left both within the trade union movement, and in society generally, is not easy.

I have to say it is made easier by the Belfast agreement, because the great division in Irish politics has been the whole question of the national question. How we address the Protestant working class, what we say to them, how we build an inclusive kind of socialism, do we do that on all of the island or do we ignore the North? I think most people on the left do wish the Belfast agreement well, and I think because of that it would probably be easier to build left unity, though I think left unity will only be built over a minimum kind of demands. And the big thing that's facing us is that there'll never be any advance for the left whilst the trade union movement and the trade union leadership in particular see themselves as a prop to the government of the day, rather than as independent representatives of the membership, and that's the most important thing the left can do. Win—not the trade union movement to socialism, but simply to win the trade union movement to independence from the state, because if that's not done, there'll be no progress in relation to left unity, and no progress in relation to any other matter.

Have you any comments on a European currency?

Well, I'm a sceptic in relation to a single currency. I'm a sceptic in relation to the creation of a single European state. I think the idea that you remove, if you like, the politics and the control from national states to a superstate or a superbank in Europe is, by any definition, anti-democratic. There are, of course, difficulties in relation to the Irish currency standing on its own, but I believe at the end of the day, that's the better thing to do. We can, of course, sack an Irish finance minister. We cannot sack a centralised European bank which we have no control over. And this idea that a single currency is a technically better way of running Europe, I think is disastrous. It has meant and will mean attacks on the welfare state. It is an attempt to try and take the politics out of currency, and I don't think that's possible. And I think there will eventually be a revolt against this kind of thing, because although all the political parties in Ireland seem to favour it, it seems to me that a state has two things which it normally controls: one is an army, and the other is currency. And if you hand over your currency, you're not far away from handing over the state itself. And it's a great paradox, when people are blowing the guts out of Omagh to try and advance the idea of an Irish state, we have an Irish state actually in existence handing over many of the

mechanisms which we need to try and improve the lives of the people. So I am a sceptic. I don't favour the idea of a single currency in Europe. I think it will, in the end, be to the disadvantage of smaller countries, particularly small countries like Ireland.

It's a while ago now, but have you anything to say about Packard?

Well, I suppose it was that kind of business where maybe the closure of Packard was inevitable. The lessons to be learned from it are that there are great difficulties in trying to industrialise an economy like Ireland in situations where you simply make components, and you have no control over the end product. There were possibly 28 plants of General Motors which operated on a European level. I think about 3 or 4 of them were organised in unions. Most of them were not. The Packard work as such, and what happened in Packard, is part of what's happening in the whole of Western Europe. There were about 3 or 4 million people who worked in that business throughout Western Europe, and the Brookings Institute did a study on that industry, and predicted that over half of those jobs would be lost. We were in a very difficult negotiating position in Packard. We had to make very complex judgements about, for example, whether we would defer wage increases; about, for example, whether we would loan the company one extra hour a week's work. Our judgement was that a straightforward simple confrontation of holding everything that we had, was not the way to do it. It's like dancing with a bear: it's a very difficult process. But every agreement that we made with Packard—we made no concessions to them, because every agreement started with the words, 'We are loaning you one hour a week, which you owe us, and you will pay back to us in the event of this situation not working out—the same wages, and so on'. So all the conditions at the end of the day were held up.

But the big lesson of Packard is really about the power of multi-nationals, and I suppose the need to spread trade union organisation; and the trade union movement, although it talks about internationalism, doesn't really invest in it. And there needs to be a dialogue with members about getting more resources, and investing in a better international structure, to try and match, in some measure, the global nature of these multi-national corporations. And of course, again, to make the argument at the level of the state, that we would be much better making components in Ireland for cars, based on our own resources. We have lead, we have zinc, these go into many of the components of cars, yet we export them in the raw, and we end up with these sub-assembly plants where it's very, very difficult what you can do. I'll say one thing about Packard, it's very difficult to live through a closure and lose almost 2,000 jobs and stand at the end of that and be clapped by workers who

would go out and say at the end of the day, the unions did not let them down. And I think we managed to shift the total burden of the closure on to the company, and we managed to give Packard and General Motors a bad name in the media—now that's very difficult when you think what their advertising budget is. And I think all credit to the shop stewards, for the way that they managed that. But at the end of the day, the big lesson in Packard is about the kind of industrialisation you want to go for.

And finally, why are you in the Labour Party?

Well, I suppose ultimately the real reason I'm in the Labour Party is I believe in socialist trade unionism, I don't believe in trade union socialism. And unlike many people who are trade union officials, I came to being active in the trade union movement through politics, not the other way around. I was first active in the Connolly Youth Movement, I was then eleven years in the Communist Party, and I then joined the Labour Party, partly because the union is affiliated to the Labour Party, and the union plays a role in the Labour Party. I may say I have never felt comfortable in the Labour Party. It asks actually very little of its membership, other than that they be a kind of a support machine for the TDs. But at the end of the day, if you want to try and influence events, you have to influence parliament. Parliament is an important place in the Labour Party. It is the largest representative of working class people and trade union opinion in parliament, and you have to try and influence that. There are a lot of people who would be quite happy to see me outside of the Labour Party. And I have no intention of obliging them.

Hard truths after the Good Friday Agreement

John Meehan

This article is an attempt to stimulate debate on the success of the Peace Process. It is based on support for the ceasefires but opposition to the Peace Process. But let us not be under any illusions about the mountain that has to be climbed.

The referendums held on both sides of the Irish border on the 1998 Good Friday Agreement were carried with massive majorities in favour of the package—a 71% Yes vote in the Six Counties was dwarfed by an even bigger 95% Yes vote in the 26 Counties. Support among Northern nationalists was almost unanimous—most of the No vote in the North was hardline Unionist. The tiny 5% No vote in the 26 Counties was mostly anti-partitionist. Commenting on the results as they were announced, the Omagh Councillor Francie Mackey, who left Sinn Féin and joined the 32 County Sovereignty Committee, said on RTÉ 1 that they “reflected a massive desire for peace”.

It has been obvious to this writer for a long time that republican-minded opponents of the Peace Process who tried to carry out a new military campaign were on a road to disaster. The armed struggle was in a cul-de-sac before the August 1994 ceasefire. It had to be ended. It was right to end it, even though it is right to oppose the alternative course advocated by the Republican leadership. It is impossible to have a constructive involvement in the national liberation struggle at the present time without saying this. It is ABC. It appears the Omagh bomb of August 1998, which killed 29 civilians in a mainly nationalist town and injured many more, had to happen before that truth could sink itself into the minds of some Republicans. Things did not have to happen that way.

In order to illustrate the point we should go back a few years to the IRA's Canary Wharf bomb of February 1996, signalling the breakdown of the first (August 1994) IRA ceasefire. At that time the Peace Process was in trouble over decommissioning—an issue that still causes difficulties. The Mitchell Commission Report in January 1996 stated, in effect, that IRA decommissioning was desirable, but should not be a barrier to Sinn Féin joining all-party talks. The British Prime Minister John Major promptly ignored this advice and announced internal elections in the 6 Counties, giving the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) led by David Trimble exactly what they wanted.

Since at least mid December 1995 the attitude of the Republican base was shifting. Illusions in the negotiation process were dissolving. People still felt

the leadership had, in effect, “done its best”, but that the process was dying. Impatience filtered through the Republican ranks, and people were saying something like this to the Republican leadership—“now even you must admit the negotiation process has failed; it is time for the movement to go back on the military road, and you have constantly reassured us this was an option”. Thus, the Faustian bargain was consummated—with predictable terrible results. Bernadette McAliskey was right—her now famous question “If I am right and Plan A fails, what is Plan B?” got an answer in Canary Wharf on February 9 1996.

As I said over two years ago:

it is only a matter of time before a relaunched military campaign is crushed. Furthermore, when (not if) the military option fails those in the Republican ranks who are on the road to capitulating will run even faster—they will be able to say, quite accurately, that the movement finds itself even more isolated than it was.

It is better to call a new ceasefire now, from a position of weakness; later on, it will only be called from a position of even greater weakness. The Republican movement is in immediate danger of going down; indirectly they will bring down every progressive political force on the island with them.

So, why did the IRA decide to end the (August 1994) ceasefire?

A split or growing disillusion and demoralisation among the ranks in the Republican movement was looming before the Canary Wharf bomb. Resuming the IRA campaign was a short-term way of keeping the movement united. If the anti-ceasefire volunteers had not gained the upper hand in the leading circles of the IRA, they would have gone to some other organisation, maybe the INLA, maybe RSF, who knows?

The hard truth is that: A split is preferable to the grim spiral downwards that has now been set in motion. [John Meehan, ‘For a Republican Congress’, March 14 1996.]

People who had doubts about the political direction of the movement's leadership stayed inside because of the Canary Wharf bomb. Some people in the broad Republican milieu probably still harbour the view that Republicans can solve their problems by going back to “what they know best”. They should think again.

We know now that the IRA split towards the end of 1997. Maybe a quarter of the Provisional IRA membership defected to the Real IRA, possibly a third or more. In months or years to come, when immediate passions have cooled, and people on different sides feel under less pressure to make exaggerated

claims, we will have a better idea of the full picture. But in any case, it is a significant split. However, the leadership very easily defeated these opponents of the peace process. Some of the key reasons are clear from an interview secured by Ed Moloney, Northern Editor of *The Sunday Tribune* (see the edition of September 13 1998). A Real IRA spokesperson explained that volunteers were so busy with military operations, they "missed the big picture". The spokesperson continued, "the movement was held together by the Libyan arms shipments and the belief they were there to be used". The spokesperson opposed the Good Friday Agreement for the following reasons: "It has endorsed partition and got Britain off the hook. They can say they are in the North only because the Irish people voted for partition, voted against Articles 2 and 3, while at the same time they are responsible for running the place." All of that is true, but the Real IRA thought they could overcome these setbacks with a military campaign. They noticed during the Peace Process that the leadership "began demilitarising the IRA". But that was not the problem.

A balanced analysis of the current situation includes saying that there were some gains from the process, above all the ending of the Loyalist assassination campaign. Calling a ceasefire was essential if the Loyalists were to be stopped. Of course, other things could have been done but that is no excuse for not welcoming and endorsing the Republican ceasefire. Before the August 1994 ceasefire the IRA (and the entire 6 County nationalist community) was *objectively* subjected to a planned and co-ordinated "dirty tricks" assassination campaign. The terror was carried out by the Loyalist gangs and directed by the British State. Just as night follows day, the British State will again set loose the Loyalist terror gangs if any Republican campaign starts and intensifies.

The Real IRA's decision to call a ceasefire after the Omagh bomb was too late, but better late than never. Make a note for the immediate future: not alone will Republican militarists lose out to the Sinn Féin leadership internally again and again—they will make further retreats by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness from republican objectives much easier. As Patrick Farrelly observed "it can be argued that if the IRA simply ended its campaign, dumped its arms and not bothered with a peace process—like they did after the 1956-62 campaign—the prisoners would have been out earlier. At the end of that campaign, they were freed after 17 months. We might also have hung on to Articles 2 and 3 and not given away the whole constitutional shop to Unionism" (*The Irish Echo* (New York), May 1998).

The meaning of the Good Friday Agreement

Let us bear in mind the substantial damage done by the Omagh bombing. Let us be honest: "the war is over". From these very difficult starting points,

where do socialist and republican opponents of the Good Friday Agreement go?

The Good Friday Agreement means accepting "The Unionist Veto". The new wording in the Irish Constitution says that the "consent of a majority in both jurisdictions in the island" is needed to secure Irish unity. What does this mean practically? Why do the main bourgeois parties in Ireland support this approach? What is wrong with it?

The SDLP has always favoured a bourgeois solution to the national question, which involves accepting the right of self-determination being applied to the 6 County unit. It is suggested that, privately, the SDLP leader John Hume put it to Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams that if the two main Nationalist parties signed up for an unsatisfactory solution now, but tie it into the Unionists accepting any majority decision reached within the 6 County area, the Nationalists will be able to punish the Unionists via an electoral majority anyway within ten years. In the short term they are allying with the moderate Unionist groupings the Alliance Party and Women's Coalition, creating a single bloc worth almost 45% of the vote. If the Alliance Party does not play ball, their (mainly Catholic) voters will defect to the Nationalist bloc. This sort of argument is regularly advocated publicly by the author and Peace Process supporter Tim Pat Coogan, and was expressed at the last Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis by the leading Belfast Republican Martin Meehan.

The scenario is not as implausible as it might have seemed ten or fifteen years ago. All population and electoral surveys suggest there is an increasing Catholic population in the 6 Counties. Considerations like this seem to have inspired some of the Republicans' fancy word play around the issue of "Unionist Consent". In fact "Unity By Consent" equals "Unionist Veto" equals "Sectarian Discrimination Forever".

Unionism is not merely a localised 6 County phenomenon; its origins lie in the maintenance of British sovereignty over Ireland. The distinguishing characteristic of Unionism is sectarian discrimination directed against the Catholic population—it is a reactionary and racist political philosophy. Ireland was partitioned in the 1920s so that the anti-Catholic sectarian structure could be preserved and consolidated. The Unionists ruled the 6 County part of Ireland on behalf of the London government until 1972 when Stormont was prorogued.

The dynamics of this society, faced with the prospect of an internal pro-United Ireland majority, are not difficult to predict—a brutal form of re-partition would be on the cards. In the shorter term, reactionary pressure will be heaped on women to produce extra children for "Ireland" or "Ulster" as the case may be. This is called the "demographic" argument in "polite" circles—it was frightening to this observer how ideas like this were treated

very uncontroversially at the 1998 Sinn Féin Ard-Fheiseanna. Those who say now they only want a United Ireland “by consent” look democratic by contrast with those who favour the “All Ireland Veto”. In such a debate the only honest democratic answer is: Is consent desirable? Yes. Is consent necessary? No.

Partition should be ended

The basic principled reason for fighting to end the partition of Ireland—and on this we can go back to James Connolly—is that it gives us by far the best chance—a revolutionary chance—to destroy the sectarian structures that shackle the Irish working class. For that reason it was right to unconditionally oppose the successful amendment to Articles 2 and 3 of De Valera’s Constitution that incorporated the concept of “Unionist Consent”.

Despite the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis result—a 95% endorsement of the Good Friday Agreement—it is well known that the vast majority of Sinn Féin members in the 26 Counties voted No in the referendum. There are echoes here of 1921. Michael Collins endorsed the Treaty which gave us partition with the argument that it was a “stepping stone” towards the ultimate goal of Irish unity and British withdrawal. We know that, in fact, this settlement was a millstone on our necks. The current Republican leadership cannot use the same language as Collins; Gerry Adams and company are even more nervous about using the Stalinist “stages” terminology of their opponents in the 1969 Republican split, the Officials. So they refer to “transitions”. Nobody should be fooled—the language may have changed but the content is the same.

A correct political strategy involves admitting that the struggle against partition is on the defensive and has suffered a generational defeat. The war that started in 1968/9 is over. At that time, the Republican movement split between dogmatic militarists (who remained revolutionaries, and constitute today’s Provisional leadership) and a left leadership, the Officials, seen as “soft” on the national question, whose conciliation of the Unionist working class (i.e. acceptance of the Unionist veto) helped turn them into social democratic reformists (the Democratic Left led by Proinsias De Rossa, which is on its way into the Irish Labour Party).

In general the social base of the Republican movement is strongest today in the 6 Counties. That base, won through over 25 years of bitter revolutionary struggle, is amongst the most deprived sections of the nationalist population. Sinn Féin defined itself in revolutionary nationalist language. From the late 1970s it shifted to the left. It has a very small base in the 26 Counties, mainly confined to the most deprived working class ghettos. Its political line on coalition with bourgeois parties is dangerously vague, and in general is much worse than that of most far left groups. It is often seen as a ginger

group for Fianna Fáil. The single Sinn Féin TD in the current Dáil voted for the Fianna Fáil nominee for Taoiseach in 1997. Regrettably the tradition publicly represented by people like Matt Merrigan in the 1970s—No Coalition with bourgeois parties on principle—is very weak today. Only the Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins represents it in Dáil Éireann.

The Irish revolutionary nationalist movement, in the various forms it has taken since the early 1920s, has directly addressed the nature of the states created by partition. This has meant that it has tended to play a more progressive role than reformist working class currents. Historically the split in the workers’ movement between reformists and revolutionaries has revolved around the following questions: Was it possible to win greater reforms for the workers under capitalism and ultimately reform it out of existence? Or was it necessary to smash the capitalist state and establish a workers’ state (in Ireland a 32 County Workers’ Republic)? The effect of this, especially when the class struggle reached a high level, was to place the reformist left (in both its social democratic and Stalinist varieties) on the right of the political spectrum so far as the main issue of the class struggle was concerned. The revolutionary nationalists placed the question directly on the agenda, usually by engaging in armed struggle.

Today’s Sinn Féin is falling back into reformism. For example, while most of the far left demonstrated against the visit of the imperialist bomber of Sudan and Afghanistan, President Clinton of the USA, the Sinn Féin leaders welcomed him in Belfast’s luxurious Waterfront Conference Centre. This is probably a signpost for the future: Sinn Féin was absent from the main anti-Clinton protest in Dublin because it was tied so closely to the US administration in the Peace Process.

A more immediate worry is that Sinn Féin will become unofficial police officers of potential dissidents. We know that the Official IRA played this role as they began to politically degenerate in the 1970s. There is now a pattern of incidents indicating the current IRA could go the same way. Two leading dissident Republicans, Kevin McQuillan of the IRSP and Micky Donnelly of RSF say they were badly beaten up by the Provisional IRA. In McQuillan’s case, he lost an eye and is now deaf in one ear. It has to be established that although the Provisionals have a right to disagree with the views and activities of dissident Republicans, they have no right to use physical violence or the threat of it against them. After the Omagh bomb, the Provisionals “visited” about 80 people and read out a statement calling on the Real IRA to disband or face violent consequences.

Regroupment is necessary

Over the coming years the structures of the "Peace Process" will inevitably fail. We already know what happened to the promises of human rights improvements made by both the London and Dublin governments in the Good Friday Agreement. Unless socialist and republican opponents start to think long term now, and begin an elementary process of regroupment in very hostile conditions, this particular "peace agreement" will end up in a very nasty sectarian end game.

A rebuilt mass movement needs to oppose the repressive apparatus of the states in both parts of Ireland. Thought also needs to be given to giving such a political concept an All-Ireland dimension. The question of opposing on principle coalition government with any of the bourgeois parties is decisive. A structure which allows for the affiliation of different political currents needs to be considered. The process leading to the formation of the Scottish Socialist Alliance might be a useful example to consider. There are other good recent examples in Europe that could be studied.

Working with the long term perspective of a rebuilt mass movement, the following outline is suggested:

- The Republican ceasefires should stay in place.
- The British Army must disarm and go.
- There must be an amnesty for political prisoners.
- The Emergency Powers Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act must be repealed.
- The RUC and RIR must be dissolved.
- Bigoted Orange marches should not be allowed march through nationalist areas.
- The Dublin government must dissolve its Special Criminal Courts, repeal its anti-democratic repressive legislation (Offences Against the State Act) and so on.

The list is not intended to be exhaustive. Social, economic and international issues must also be integrated. An alliance formed on a basis like this should be both socialist and republican, not to mention feminist and ecological.

One last word. In place of the new wording in Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution are there any better suggestions than James Connolly's:

Let your motto be that of James Fintan Lalor, the motto which the working class Irish Citizen Army has adopted as its aim and object, viz.: "That the entire ownership of Ireland (all Ireland)—moral and material—is vested of right in the entire people of Ireland".

The crozier and the pike: The Catholic Church hierarchy and 1798

Mary Muldowney

One of the by-products of the bicentenary celebrations of the 1798 rebellion is the huge number of books and articles which have been written on various aspects of the insurrection. The majority of these publications have recognised the extent to which the 'real' history of 1798 was hijacked by sectional interests, both in the immediate aftermath and in succeeding years, and they have based their work on an analysis of the rebellion which attempts to cut away the layers of distortion. This article will look at one aspect of that propaganda, that is the myth created throughout the course of the 19th century by the Irish Catholic Church with the support of middle class Catholic politicians. In *Labour in Irish History*, Connolly recognised that the history of the United Irish movement had great potential as a revolutionary lesson for the working people of Ireland and for this reason, among others, it had been suppressed.

Few movements in history have been more consistently misrepresented by open enemies and professed admirers than that of the United Irishmen. The *suggestio falso* and the *suppressio veri* have been remorselessly used. The middle class "patriotic" historians, orators and journalists of Ireland have ever vied with one another in enthusiastic descriptions of their military exploits on land and sea, their hairbreadth escapes and heroic martyrdom, but have resolutely suppressed or distorted their writings, songs and manifestoes.... Dr. Madden, a most painstaking and conscientious biographer, declared in his volume of "The Literary Remains of the United Irishmen" that he has suppressed many of their productions because of their "trashy" republican and irreligious tendencies.¹

The version of the history of 1798 and its implications which was taught in schools in the Republic of Ireland until very recently was based on an interpretation of that history which justified the Catholic nationalism of the southern Irish state and excluded the possibility of a class-based analysis of the state and its relationship with the Catholic church authorities. The initial reaction of the Catholic bishops in 1798 and immediately afterwards was to disown the ordinary priests who were involved. However, throughout the various phases of their 19th century campaign to institutionalise control of

their "flock" in the face of challenges from such movements as the Young Irelanders and the Fenians, as well as Dublin Castle, they gradually changed their position. This was done to such an extent that by 1898 they were enormously exaggerating the leadership role of such rebel leaders as Father John Murphy in Wexford. The bishops had no hesitation about using the commemorative events in 1898 to justify the conservative, clericalist nationalism which would ensure their influence on Irish society and politics.

The divisions evident in 1898 had faded little by 1948, when the new Irish state adopted the by then orthodox view of 1798 to bolster its self-image during the 150th anniversary commemorations, with the almost total denial of the revolutionary reality of Ireland in the late 18th century. The bicentenary has offered a chance to retrieve something more of the actuality: that ordinary Irish people were influenced in a very fundamental way by the revolutions in America and France and were prepared to lay their lives on the line for the creation of an equal society. While it is true that many of the leaders of the United Irishmen did, as Connolly pointed out, seek "the emasculation of the Irish national movement, the distortion of Irish history, and, above all, the denial of all relation between the social rights of the Irish toilers and the political rights of the Irish nation"², it is also true that they shared Wolfe Tone's belief that Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter should work in common to overthrow their common enemy, the Ascendancy, and that sectarian differences worked only to the advantage of that enemy.

Once the rebellion began the country abounded in tales of widespread sectarian massacre. A bitter propaganda war followed the battles, which obscured the original and true political motivation of the rebellion. Simplistic analysis was presented by both sides in an attempt to advance their argument. The contemporary history of the rebellion, Sir Richard Musgrave's *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* which was produced in 1801, sought to place 1798 within the tradition of the rebellion of 1641 and the wars of the 1690s, which had threatened to destroy Protestant Ireland.³ Musgrave's *Memoirs* were not representative of Protestants in general but rather of an extreme faction within Protestant ranks. Writing at much the same time, both James Gordon and Joseph Stock were Anglican clergymen who consciously sought to defuse sectarianism and focused on the need for political conciliation.

The Catholic hierarchy were deeply embarrassed by the presence of priests among the rebel ranks and they portrayed the active priests as renegades and drunkards. In the aftermath of the insurrection, there was initiated stern ecclesiastical enquiry into the extent of the insurrection in Ireland, particularly in predominantly Catholic Wexford. The exaggerated reports that a Catholic priest was one of the leaders of the insurrection, indeed the cause of

it and its chief general, led to enquiries from the Papal Prefect in Rome, Cardinal Antonelli, who instructed the Irish bishops to make sure there was no further co-operation of Irish Catholics with Presbyterians.⁴ The news of murders of loyalists, priests' open involvement, massacres and burnings was well circulated. Bishop James Caulfield of Wexford denounced the clergy involved as "renegade, abandoned, reprobate priests" although for more than a year and a half he minimised the role of John Murphy, possibly because Murphy was a curate in his own diocese and an immediate source of discomfort to the bishop.⁵

Many of the United Irish leaders also denied the political significance of the rebellion and claimed it was forced on them as the only possible response to persecution by the Castle administration. This allowed them to be banished from Ireland, in return for full but non-incriminating statements, and to escape the death penalty which would have been the inevitable result of pleading guilty to revolutionary designs. The most famous of these statements were delivered by Thomas Addis Emmet, Arthur O'Connor and W. J. MacNeven in August 1798. The depoliticisation of the rebellion continued in the *History of the Insurrection of the County of Wexford*, written by former rebel Edward Hay in 1803. Hay also claimed that the Catholic priests had led their people into the field, although he said they were driven by Protestant oppression to resist the military tools of Orangeism, thereby absolving the lay leaders of responsibility.

Despite the tales of persecution, recent work has made it clear that the story of the Catholic community in the 18th century in Ireland was more one of "endurance and emergence" than of subjugation, as was previously accepted.⁶ By the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, the Catholic revival was well underway. In an increasing emphasis on catechesis, a huge amount of religious and devotional material was printed and there was a spate of chapel building in the last quarter of the 18th century. There were by then 1,800 priests in the country and the renewed vigour of the church gave them a heightened role in the community.⁷ The bishops too were enjoying increased status. However, the progress of "the French disease" (so called by Thomas Hussey, Catholic chaplain to the Spanish ambassador in London) had serious implications for the hierarchy. In France, the Catholic Church had been abolished under the terms of the Civil Constitution, and throughout Europe the spread of the revolution made serious inroads into institutional religion. The bishops were well aware of European events since the Irish church mainly depended on the continental colleges for the supply of priests. As the decade following the French Revolution progressed and Britain declared war on France (whose revolutionary armies were threatening the Papal

possessions), the Irish bishops came under intense pressure from Rome to urge loyalty and obedience to the British crown.

The Convention Act of 1793 had made overt political activity impossible in Ireland, but the United Irishmen found a front for their meetings in the large number of debating societies and political clubs throughout the country. In a similar way, the radicals turned their attention to the Church and took advantage of the many proselytising opportunities offered by its structures. Chapel meetings were a constant feature of both urban and rural radicalism in the 1790s and the level of reports reaching Dublin Castle reflects the anxiety which the meetings generated. The large chapel congregations also provided the radicals with opportunities to disseminate their propaganda; broadsheets were frequently posted to chapel doors and handbills passed out among Mass-goers.⁸ Clerical involvement in the United Irish cause was therefore quite significant, even though the number of priests who were active in the movement was very limited. The extent to which church meetings were used to disseminate United Irish literature and ideas gave a mistaken picture of the connection between the clergy and the revolutionaries, one that the bishops rushed to dispel in the aftermath of the rebellion. On the other hand, it suggested that the Church had more control over its members than may actually have been the case, and both Dublin Castle and the Papacy were anxious to ensure that the bishops would use their putative influence to control their people.

A big problem when it comes to assessing the clergy's role in the rising is the scarcity of contemporary information and the fact that the accounts of the rebellion commissioned by the Church were intended to preserve the interests of the Church and not necessarily to shed light on what was really happening in the late 18th century. What was threatened in 1798 was the Church's prospects of institutional advantage in the form of state support for its new Maynooth college or gaining state subsidisation and maintenance of clergymen, as already secured by the Protestant clergy. The bishops had little in common with lay society and looked to Dublin Castle as their ally in enforcing social control.

For Tone and the reformers, the French Revolution represented the ideal of liberty to which the Irish people should aspire, but for the great majority of the Catholic clergy it was the incarnation of all that was anathema to Christianity. Nevertheless, the revolutionary ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity possessed enormous appeal for the Catholic community which, despite the minor Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782, still felt oppressed by the application of the penal laws, however much they might have been relaxed. Catholic interests had been represented by the Catholic Committee, which was mainly composed of members of the old Catholic aristocracy, but by the 1780s it was

evident that the middle class was beginning to exert an influence on the Committee through such members as John Keogh, James Edward Devereux and other radicals with United Irish associations. Under the influence of French revolutionary ideology, the renewed leadership demanded redress for Catholic grievances as a right, rather than as a reward to be sought with deference, which was the approach favoured by the Catholic bishops.

The United Irishmen believed that historical evolution would inevitably sweep away the existing political situation. They subscribed to the French revolutionary orthodoxy of repudiating the past, and specifically the Irish past, which could undermine their decision to develop a political programme based solely on agreed issues, and tacitly to ignore divisive ones. For the late 18th century disciples of the European Enlightenment in Ireland, reform of the laws and the system of government became the preferred option, rather than reform of the people. Romanticism, at the end of the 18th century, and its political offshoot, cultural nationalism, reversed the emphasis in the process of historical change. If *l'esprit* of the people was nurtured, fortified and stabilised, *les lois* would inevitably yield to the pressure of its insistent presence.

The Defenders, the secret societies of the Catholic lower class, with whom the United Irishmen formed an alliance in the 1790s, to a great extent culturally fitted within the nationalist framework. Defenderism articulated a different world view to that of the United Irishmen, appealing to the legitimacy endowed by their history to support their resistance to the English occupation. Their philosophy was premised on grievances, related to such issues as the payment of tithes and rents to "foreign" clerics and landlords. The Defenders associated the sense of Catholic grievance resulting from the penal laws with the consciousness that the French Revolution had demonstrated the possibilities for throwing off oppression.

The 1790s saw the development of a 'race for the catholic' which involved the United Irishmen in efforts to politicise popular culture, to utilise the lessons learned by the example of revolutionary France.⁹ As in France, the press was the crucial tool for the formation of public opinion and the United Irishmen relied on the power of print to shape the politics of ordinary people. The message needed to be transmitted as widely as possible at ground level. Especially successful were populist, scaled-down versions in pamphlet form of classic Enlightenment authors. In 1795 it was reported from Belfast that William Putnam McCabe, a United Irish organiser, was distributing Paine's *Age of Reason* among mill workers there, following that by discussions in which he answered their objections to any part of it. Whelan records that the United Irishmen had access to well-established printing, publishing and distribution networks. In the 1790s, there were a minimum of 50 Dublin printers

sympathetic to the cause, with 34 provincial presses (especially concentrated in north-east Ulster) and at least 40 newspapers in print throughout the country. They used public readings and printed broadsheets whose reverse side was left blank; these could then be pinned up in public places, such as chapel doors or on trees and in public houses.

As in revolutionary France, the paper flood had two principal effects. One was to diminish the authority of élite cultures by displacing expensive books in favour of cheap pamphlets, newspapers, ballads, songbooks, prints and broadsheets, thereby democratising the printed word itself. The second was to challenge the very style of political discourse, allowing a vernacular discussion of issues and increased accessibility for the radical message. In addition, with the merger of the Defenders and the United Irishmen, the resources of the secret societies were utilised to disseminate a national programme for sweeping political change and the United Irishmen's message was propagated under the cover of sports meetings and communal festivals, events at which the gentry and the clerical hierarchy were notable by their absence.

The high levels of mass politicisation reached during the 1790s were not sustained in the early 19th century. However, the early 1800s did not witness a sudden 'depoliticisation'. What survived from the period in the short term was not a coherent popular ideology, but a sense of grievance and a set of symbols of opposition to the political and social establishment.¹⁰ In the longer term, several features of Defenderism—its secrecy, nationalism and geography, for example—were reproduced by the Ribbonmen of pre-Famine Ireland. In this respect Ribbonism, it has been argued, acted as the link between the militant separatism of the 1790s and the 'physical force' republicans of the Young Ireland movement in the 1840s and the post-Famine Fenian Brotherhood. Ribbonmen, Young Irelanders and Fenians were all inspired by the martyrology and powerful romantic myth of 1798. While militant republicanism was undoubtedly tenacious, its adherents were always a minority in 19th century Ireland. The other legacy of the 1790s, popular sectarianism, proved more pervasive.

The 1820s saw the emergence of the Catholic Emancipation movement, which, as far as the majority of the Irish people were concerned, was one of the great political non-events. Most of the penal laws had been repealed by the Relief Acts in the 1780s and 1790s and before ever O'Connell began his agitation Catholics had freedom of worship and of religious education. Those who were lucky enough to acquire it could hold any sort of property and make any use of it that the law permitted anybody else; and the members of the Catholic middle class and upper class could freely enter and practise the professions. The only remaining issue was one which affected only Catholics with property. They could neither be members of Parliament nor of the Inner

Bar, but then neither could Protestant or Dissenter members of the lower classes who failed to meet the property qualifications for the franchise.

Even after Emancipation the so-called Liberator's small band of Irish MPs gained only occasional concessions from the Liberal Party in return for their support when required. In so far as Emancipation was a real victory at all, it was a victory for a class or a section of a class, i.e. the upper echelons of the Catholic middle classes. Emancipation as an issue was utterly remote from Ireland's systems of land tenure and the methods of agriculture which they encouraged, which was one of the contributory factors to the Great Famine in the 1840s.

The United Irishmen had largely ignored the implications of the fact that the immediate enemies of the rural poor (the landlords and the parsons to whom the hated tithes were paid) and of the urban lower classes were Protestants, and so was the whole establishment behind them, right up to the Dublin Castle ascendancy who controlled the militia and all the apparatus of oppression. There was therefore very little that the ordinary people could do, either in the way of self-defence or attack, that was not in some definition of the word, and in practice if not in specific intention, sectarian. Given the actual circumstances of life among the Catholic masses it was inevitable that some of them, at least, should translate their dreams of liberty and the principles of revolution into sectarian, that is, into religious terms, and the Catholic hierarchy were quick to use that situation for their own benefit.

The 19th century saw major changes in religious attitudes and behaviour. At the beginning of the century the religious practice of a large section of the population fell significantly short of the obligatory minimum prescribed by their Church. Irish Catholics were not indifferent to their religion: virtually all children were baptised and death as far as possible was anointed by the hands of a priest, as were marriages. The decades preceding the Famine saw a mounting attack on the culture of the Catholic poor, reflecting wider social changes. Growing literacy and rising standards of living increased the confidence of the more prosperous sections of the rural population, the group from whose ranks the Catholic priesthood was overwhelmingly recruited. Combined with the influence of O'Connell's Emancipation and Repeal movements to suggest that the traditional culture of the Irish lower classes was irrelevant in the 'new' Ireland, many Irish Catholics were persuaded to adopt the revolution in devotional practices promulgated by Archbishop Cullen and his allies as a substitute for political and economic agitation. As in other areas of Irish life, the inventions of the present were validated by a rewriting of the past. In particular, the real history of Irish Catholicism, with its complex interaction of popular and official traditions, was obscured beneath a legend of long-suffering but unwavering piety for which the bishops' version of 1798

became a useful prop. The overtly Catholic apologists even went so far as to claim that the Presbyterians had misled basically loyal Catholics to achieve their own nefarious ends. The fusion of these two arguments—innocent Catholics duped by Presbyterians and driven into unwilling revolt by brutal repression—soon became axiomatic in conservative Catholic circles, screening a whole decade of conscious political activism, which had eventually assumed a revolutionary course.

As part of this process, in 1825 Daniel O'Connell claimed:

There were scarcely any [Catholics] among the leading United Irishmen, who were almost all Dissenters. In the North, the lower classes of United Irishmen were at first almost exclusively Dissenters. It spread then among the Roman Catholics and as it spread into the southern counties, and took in the population, it increased its number of Catholics. In the county of Wexford, where the greatest part of the rebellion raged, there were no United Irishmen previous to the rebellion and there would have been no rebellion there if they had not been forced forwards by the establishment of Orange lodges and the whippings and torturings and things of that kind.¹¹

By the 1820s, O'Connell's essentially conservative leadership exaggerated the association of Catholics with the Irish nation, thereby alienating the last representatives of Protestant republicanism in Ulster. Unlike the United Irishmen, the O'Connellite campaign allied itself closely with the institutional Catholic Church, thereby paving the way for a socially conservative, nationalist politics, often couched in aggressively orthodox terms.

In 1825 there was one priest to every 3,000 Catholics. By 1870 that ratio had increased to one priest for every 1,476 Catholics. Much of this growth was attributable to the work of Archbishop Paul Cullen, who had a strong commitment to the ideology of Ultramontanism, which dominated the Catholic Church in Europe in the 19th century, particularly the latter half, when Cullen was most active in Ireland. It was distinguished by its political conservatism, its exaltation of Papal authority and its acceptance of a dogmatic, comparative theology. Cullen was an extreme example of a wider trend to religious apartheid.¹² By the mid-19th century Catholicism throughout Europe was reacting to the challenge of an increasingly pluralist and rationalist society by a vigorous assertion of its exclusive claims to truth and authority. The Syllabus of Errors (1864) which was issued as a determined defense of the pope's temporal possessions in the face of the Italian unification movement was a reflection of this mood of intransigent defiance in the face of a hostile world.

The 19th century had brought a change of status for the Catholic Church in Ireland. By mid-century, the bishops were regularly invited to Dublin Castle, although they seem to have consistently declined the invitations. The Castle recognised them as a powerful interest group but the bishops were constrained in their dealings with the state by the need to avoid being seen by their flock as establishing too close a relationship with the oppressor. The main use the Catholic church authorities made of their enhanced status was to press their claims in educational matters. Throughout the 19th century, the consistent demand of the Catholic church authorities was for the consolidation of denominational education, from primary to third level, under the control of the hierarchy. In 1850, the Synod of Thurles anticipated the *Ne Temere* decree of nearly half a century later.¹³

It has been argued that the Catholic Church played a crucial role in the development of Irish nationalist politics in the later 19th century.¹⁴ This may be true of the bishops and priests active in the Catholic Emancipation movement and the agitation for repeal of the Act of Union in the 1840s, as the expansion of the Catholic middle class made the assistance of priests less necessary. Basically, it seems that the priests could lead people only where they wanted to go. This was particularly clear in the case of political violence, to which the Church was obdurately opposed. The Defenders and United Irishmen in the 1790s, the Ribbonmen and agrarian secret societies in the early and mid-19th century, and the Fenians in the 1860s and after, were all denounced in pastorals and sermons and their members excluded from the sacraments or declared excommunicate. Yet neither condemnations or spiritual sanctions appear to have been particularly effective in deterring Catholics from joining the movements concerned.

When a former rebel, Thomas Cloney, produced his *Personal Narrative* in 1832, he was extremely coy about his personal involvement and ignored the political dimensions of the rebellion. It was a Carmelite Brother, Luke Cullen, who decided to collect recollections from or about participants in the rebellion, in which political involvement was taken for granted. Cullen's manuscripts provided source material for Dr R. R. Madden, a Young Irelander, whose seven-volume history presented the rebels as politically conscious fighters for freedom from foreign oppression, although as Connolly pointed out, without reference to their republicanism. The Young Irelanders romanticised the United Irishmen and identified themselves quite explicitly with the politics of the leaders of 1798. This was anathema to O'Connell, whose emphasis on parliamentary politics was threatened by the physical force solutions propounded by the Young Irelanders.

As to '98, we leave the weak and wicked men who considered force and sanguinary violence as part of their resources for ameliorating our institutions, and the equally wicked and villainously designing wretches who fomented the rebellion and made it explode... We leave both these classes of miscreants to the contempt and indignations of mankind.¹⁵

In post-Famine Ireland the Catholic Church extended its control into Irish social as well as religious life. However, the first signs of a revival of Irish politics in the 1850s was aimed at identifying class rather than religious interests as the basis of political organisation. The Irish Franchise Act of 1850 settled the vote on the occupiers of property valued at £12 in the counties and £8 in the boroughs. The Tenants' Right struggle dominated the late 1840s and 1850s, although the Irish Tenant League (founded in August 1850) was dogged by 'nationalist' divisions. Archbishop Cullen worked hard to restrain priestly support of the Tenant League and to warn his flock to beware of candidates hostile to the church.¹⁶ Tenants' Right lost its appeal for Protestants in the early 1850s when it began to take on a distinctly Catholic line. This was in turn tied into a kind of Catholic counter-reformation, which was intended to win back the ground lost in the 1830s and 1840s.

Cullen and his partisans quite simply knew that the Catholic Church belonged in Ireland and that Ireland belonged to the Catholic Church. Even if this was not 'nationalism' in a formal and political sense, it still represented a potent force for political mobilisation. The outward and visible sign of the Ireland of the future was the building of new churches, Victorian Gothic in style, a style that almost became synonymous with Roman Catholicism in Ireland and expressed its essential character: solid, large, enduring and above all respectable. The 1861 official census of Ireland put beyond any remaining doubt the realisation that Catholics—despite the ravages of the Famine and emigration—were the firm and indisputable majority in Ireland, comprising some three quarters of the population and forming a minority only in certain defined areas in the north-eastern parts of Ulster.

The reconstruction of the political impetus of the United Irish memory received a further boost in 1863 with the publication in Paris of the *Memoirs* of Miles Byrne, the Wexford rebel who had been active in both 1798 and Emmet's rising in 1803. The *Memoirs* insisted on a political interpretation of the rebellion and made a sustained effort to defend the few clergymen who had broken ranks with the Catholic hierarchy by supporting the rebels. The timing of the *Memoirs* was intentionally embarrassing for the Catholic hierarchy, who were bitterly opposed to the Fenian movement, members of which were subsequently excommunicated. Instead of continuing to disown the rebel priests, the Church adopted them and used them to point to the leadership

role of the clergy. Father Patrick Kavanagh's *Popular History of the Insurrection of 1798*, produced in 1870, relied largely on local oral tradition to support his thesis that the rebellion was principally a spontaneous popular response to Orange terror and persecution. According to Kavanagh, Father John Murphy, curate of Kilcormick near Boolavogue, had actually opposed the United Irishmen because they were a secret society (like the Fenians), but had raised "the standard of revolt" when the people "were roused to madness by an oppressive reign of terror by the Orange Society".

Kavanagh's history of the rebellion, which ran to nine editions, salvaged the reputation of the Catholic clergy and created a new, orthodox interpretation of the rebellion which completely overturned the role of the bishops, both during the rebellion and in the aftermath. Fenianism, which in life had divided Irish Catholics, united them in death—or at least in that twilight zone reserved for defeated but popular rebels.¹⁷ The Manchester martyrs opened the way for reconciliation between the Catholic hierarchy and the Fenians, with the saying of Masses for the souls of the dead rebels. In all of this, the role of the northern Presbyterians was almost forgotten, especially in Ulster itself where the centenary was hardly marked at all. The Kavanagh version of 1798 allowed those in Ulster who did not want to remember the time when Protestants had been divided over issues of loyalty and democracy to bury inconvenient memories.

The Kavanagh interpretation also suited the leadership of the constitutional Irish Parliamentary Party in the run-up to the centenary of the rebellion in 1898, when they were still suffering from the after-effects of the Parnellite split. In the months before the jubilee, various activists with links to the Irish Republican Brotherhood (the latest manifestation of the United Irishmen's republicanism) began setting up commemoration committees to organise activities. Their plans included organising demonstrations and erecting monuments to the heroes of 1798. A large part of their work was educational: Maud Gonne, Alice Milligan, Anna Johnston and others travelled the country, lecturing on the United Irishmen and publicising their ideal of an independent Irish republic uniting all its people regardless of their religion. The *Shan Van Vocht* in Belfast and Maud Gonne's *L'Irlande Libre* in Paris gave extensive coverage to the various activities. The commemoration movement gained so much support that the constitutional nationalists, fearing the growing influence of the separatist IRB, moved into the main committee in Dublin and took it over. Right-wing Catholics, including William Martin Murphy, Dublin's biggest capitalist and a fervent royalist, publicly supported the new organisation.

Despite rivalry between different factions of the Home Rule camp, Catholic Ireland presented a united front when over 100,000 people gathered in St.

Stephen's Green in August 1898 at the laying of a plinth for a proposed Wolfe Tone monument.¹⁸ Speakers included John O'Leary (Fenian), W. B. Yeats, John Redmond (Home Rule), John Dillon (Land League) and William Rooney (Gaelic League). Among the unionist community in Ulster, opposition to the nationalist triumphalism was closely related to their fear of imminent Home Rule.

Connolly managed to produce the first issue of the *Workers' Republic* in time for the demonstration, where it was on sale in the streets. It included the following statement:

We are Socialists because we see in Socialism not only the modern application of the social principle which underlay the Brehon Laws of our ancestors, but because we recognise in it the only principle by means of which the working class can in their turn emerge into the dignity of FREEMEN, with a right to live as MEN and not as mere profit-making machines for the service of another.

The Catholic bishops feared that the radicalism of the United Irish movement would damage the process of gradual Catholic relief that they felt their moderation had won. They feared even more the militant anti-Catholicism of the French Revolution, which was so admired by the Irish radicals. For this reason, they gave their support to the Act of Union of 1801, which became the focus of Irish rebel activity throughout the 19th century. In turn, the memory of 1798 became sacred to Irish nationalists, whether parliamentary or revolutionary, barely crediting or deliberately ignoring the non-sectarian republicanism of the United Irish ideologues. Catholic clergy became very much involved in the centenary commemorations, an ironic twist given the attitude of the original United Irishmen to sectarianism and of the Catholic Church to them. The independence movement of 1916-1921, although different in its approach and its values from the United Irish movement, ensured that 1798 would remain sacred in the Ireland of the twentieth century, although shorn of all elements of its political message which might threaten the Catholic Church's control of the new state. In 1948, at the 150th anniversary commemorations, the tone of the commemorations clearly underlined the association of the new republic's bourgeois masters with a Catholic identity. The clerically-approved Kavanagh interpretation of 1798 was still the accepted viewpoint.

The opinion that the main body of the Irish clergy were in sympathy with the national movement of the time has been based on local tradition, on

official reports and on secret governmental documents in the Irish State Paper Office.

Thus Dr. Richard Hayes, a Catholic theologian and historian, wrote in 1945 in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, which was subtitled *A Monthly Journal under Episcopal Sanction*, produced under the auspices of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid.¹⁹ The "official reports" and the "secret governmental documents" to which Hayes referred were the reports of the notorious informers Leonard McNally, Francis Higgins, William Corbet and Samuel Turer. The bulk of Dr. Hayes's paper comprised a list of 58 Catholic clerics who had "suffered death, imprisonment, banishment or proscription" in the aftermath of 1798, the majority of them described as being motivated by outrage at the persecution inflicted on their parishioners by the Orange-led militia.

There has been no such attempt by the Catholic hierarchy to manipulate the bicentenary commemorations of the 1798 Rising and the achievements and failures of the United Irishmen are left to speak for themselves. The rising may have had limited revolutionary impetus but it cannot be denied that it arose out of an international revolutionary consciousness and that most of its impact was due to the significant involvement of ordinary men and women who were politically motivated. The Catholic hierarchy was not alone in rewriting the history of the 1798 Rebellion to promote narrow self-interest but it was the most successful. This was mainly because the suggestion that most of the rebels of 1798 were a flock of sheep who had to be led by their priests also suited the self-interest of the middle class would-be leaders who dominated Irish politics for most of the 19th century. Their control of the independent Irish state in the 20th century has been bolstered by the same Catholic hierarchy whose fear of the "French disease" continued to outweigh any other concern. The Catholic bishops were just as acute as Connolly in recognising the extent to which class-interest has dominated Irish history and their response to 1798 and everything it represents placed them firmly on the side of the exploiters of Irish working people.

Notes

1. James Connolly, *Labour in Irish History* (New Books edition, 1967), pp 61-2.
2. *Labour in Irish History*, p 3.
3. Some of the cultural icons which were bequeathed by the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland and the triumph of William of Orange over the Catholic James I are still used to divide the Irish people.
4. Daire Keogh, 'Archbishop Troy, the Catholic Church and Irish Radicalism' in Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds), *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion* (Lilliput Press, 1993).
5. Bishop Caulfield produced a pamphlet in 1799 entitled *A Vindication of the Roman Catholic Clergy of the town of Wexford during the late unhappy rebellion*.
6. Liam Swords (ed), *Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter: The Clergy and 1798* (Columba Press, 1997).

7. Daire Keogh, 'Christian Citizens: The Catholic Church and Radical Politics 1790-1800' in *Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter*.
8. Keogh, 'Christian Citizens...'
9. Kevin Whelan, 'The United Irishmen, the Enlightenment and Popular Culture' in *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion*.
10. Jim Smyth, *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the late Eighteenth Century* (Gill and Macmillan, 1992).
11. Evidence before a parliamentary inquiry into the state of Ireland.
12. Sean Connolly, *Religion and Society in 19th Century Ireland*, Studies in Irish Economic and Social History 3.
13. This was the Papal ruling that children of so-called 'mixed' marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics had to be brought up as members of the Catholic Church.
14. Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Creation of the Modern Irish State 1878-86* (American Philosophical Society/Gill and Macmillan, 1975) and *The Roman Catholic Church and the Emergence of the Modern Irish Political System 1874-78* (Four Courts Press, 1996).
15. Daniel O'Connell writing in the *Freeman's Journal*, 22 May 1841.
16. Connolly, *Labour in Irish History*.
17. *Labour in Irish History*, p 12.
18. The monument was never erected.
19. 'Priests in the Independence Movement of '98' in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol LXVI, July-December 1945, pp 258-270.

Miotais, bundúin agus '98

Colm de Faoite

Fiafraíodh de Mao Tse Tung tráth cén toradh a bhí ar Réabhlóid na Fraince. Ba é a fhreagra go raibh sé róluath a rá. Is amhlaidh do ghluaiseacht na nÉireannach Aontaithe.

Bhí múchadh na nÉireannach Aontaithe agus a ghabh leis chomh barbartha sin nach bhféadfaí bratach an phoblachtachais a ardú arís go ceann na mblianta fada. Lean an sceimhlitheoireacht stáit ar an mórchoír níos mó ná 20 bliain.

Ba thaca leis an stát i gcónaí an imeagla Oráisteach. Ní sa tuaisceart amháin a bhíodh sé sin. Bhíodh paráid bhliantúil ag dílseoirí san aois seo caite go barr Chnoc Fhíodh na gCaor le treascairt an Éirí Amach a chomóradh. Dhóití "crann na saoirse" san áit a rinneadh léirscrios ar na fórsaí poblachtacha agus ba é críoch an chomórtha go hiondúil go ndéantaí damáiste agus go ndoirtí fuil i mbaile Inis Chóorthaidh.

Tosaíodh ar '98 a chomóradh sna 1840í. Thaisteal an Dr R. R. Madden an tír ag bailiú eolais—díreach in am ach ar éigean—uathusan a tháinig slán ón ár. Dúirt an sóisialaí Sasanach Raymond Postgate faoi Madden: "his honest personality chimed through his work and his zeal had rescued the memory of the United Irishmen..." Orthu siúd a chuidigh le Madden bhí Robert Simms, Mary McCracken agus "an old man called Hope." Ba é sin Jemmy Hope, dlúthchomrádaí le Robert Emmet, Henry Joy McCracken agus Thomas Russell, agus fear ar féidir é a áireamh ar eite chlé na nÉireannach Aontaithe.

Chuir *The Nation* scarúntachas agus neamhsheicteachas na nÉireannach Aontaithe araon faoi bhráid glúine úire. Bhí Tomás Dáibhis chun tosaigh san obair sin. Chuir sé Baile Uí Bhuadháin faoi bhráid an phobail mar ionad oilithreachta (cé nár seoladh an slógadh bliantúil ansin go dtí tús an chéid seo).

Rinneadh beagán de chomóradh ar '98 in 1848, i bhfoirm liteartha den chuid ba mhó. Luigh oidhreacht na nÉireannach Aontaithe ar intinn an chuid ba radacaí de na hÉireannaigh Óga agus thiomáin tionchar réabhlóidí na mór-roinne in 1848 an Chónaidhm Éireannach i dtreo an phoblachtachais.

Leathchéad bliain níos déanaí bhí athrú as cuimse ar an tír. Ba é an IRB a thionscain comóradh an chéid in 1898 ach ghlac fórsaí eile seilbh air cuid mhór. Bhí aicme nua tagtha ar an saol ar fud na tuaithe. B'iad siúd na feirm-coirí a bhí tar éis na tiarnaí talún a chloí agus a bhí ag teacht i seilbh a ngabháltas.

Ar nós gach aicme nuasheolta bhí muinín as cuimse acu astu féin agus bhí idir radacacht agus choimeádacht iontu, an radacacht á dtiomáint leis an réabhlóid in úinéireacht na talún a thiontú isteach in earnáil na polaitíochta agus cumhacht a bhaint d'aicme na dtiarnaí talún, agus an choimeádacht ag tabhairt orthu gan torthaí Chogadh na Talún a roinnt le haon aicme eile.

D'oír an náisiúnachas Caitliceach mar idé-eolaíocht don aicme sin. Bhí athrú an-mhór ar an Eaglais Chaitliceach idir 1848 agus 1898. Bhí tionchar na heaglaise méadaithe go mór agus, ar bhealach, ba gheall le heaglais nua í. Dónall Ó Conaill a chothaigh an náisiúnachas Caitliceach sna pobalghluaiseachtaí a bhí faoina cheannas le haghaidh "fhuascailt" na gCaitliceach agus Reipéil. Rinne an dá ghluaiseacht sin dochar as cuimse mar gur chuir siad coimhthíos idir tromlach na bProtastúnach agus an náisiúnachas.

Ba mhór an tionchar a bhí ag an Athair Patrick Kavanagh OSF aimsir chomórach an chéid, 1898. Ba é téis an Chaomhánaigh gur tharla éirí amach 1798 i Loch Garman—níor spéis leis an t-éirí amach i gCúige Uladh, is cosúil—mar chosaint ar an gcreideamh Caitliceach. Sin an fáth go bhfuil leachtanna comórtha fós le feiceáil sa chontae sin a mhaíonn gur throid an pobal "for Faith and Fatherland." Rinneadh scéal mór i leagan Kavanagh de ghaiscí na sagart a ghlac taobh na ndaoine agus tugadh le fios go raibh páirt i bhfad níos tábhachtaí acu san éirí amach ná mar a bhí.

Ba é firinne an scéil go raibh an eaglais institiúideach agus tromlach na sagart go nimhneach in aghaidh na nÉireannach Aontaithe agus an éirí amach. Go deimhin, ba í an Eaglais Chaitliceach Rómhánach ceann de na fórsaí ba dhiongbháilte a sheas in aghaidh réabhlóid na Fraince. Bhí sí naimhdeach ó bhonn don stát saolta a thug an réabhlóid i gcrích. Go deimhin chomh déanach le 1864 d'éiligh an Phápacht ceannas ar gach cineál údaráis shibhialta. (Éilíonn dornán bunúsóirí Caitliceacha amhlaidh i gcónaí.)

Bhí cúiseanna ar leith le naimhdeas na heaglaise d'éirí amach '98. Ó lár na 18ú haoise ar aghaidh—go háirithe tar éis Chath Chúil Odar—ba léir don Róimh go raibh port an tSeacaibídeachais seinnte—bhí siad níos géarchúisí ná na filí Gaeilge!—nach mbeadh muintir Stiúart ar ais i gcoróin go deo agus b'fhacthas dóibh nach mbeadh todhchaí ag an Eaglais Chaitliceach mar fhórsa polaitiúil sna hoileáin seo mura nglacfaidís le réimeas Hanover, le monarcacht Phrotastúnach agus forlámhas Shasana in Éirinn.

Feasta chuaigh na heaspaig agus tromlach na cléire thar fóir ag umhlú don bhunaíocht in Éirinn agus sa Bhreatain. Níor dhilseoirí go dtí iad. Ba iad ba dhiograisí ag tacú le hAcht na hAontachta. (Bhí tromlach na nOráisteach in aghaidh an achta chéanna mar b'fhacthas dóibh go raibh sé ag baint cumhachta den aicme a bhí i gceannas ar an ord ag an am, an seanchinseal Anglacánach a raibh an pharlaimint i bhFaiche an Choláiste faoina smacht.)

Ach 100 bliain níos déanaí bhí cineál náisiúnachais i réim san Eaglais Chaitliceach in Éirinn. Bhí Caitlicigh tar éis dul chun cinn a dhéanamh i measc lucht gnó ó lár na 18ú haoise. Ansin tar éis an Acht um Fhaoiseamh na gCaitliceach 1793 (a bhí níos tábhachtaí go firinneach ná acht 1829) thosaigh Caitlicigh ag teacht ar aghaidh sna gairmeacha.

In 1898 bhí bunaíocht nua Chaitliceach ann nach raibh cumhacht pholaitiúil acu fós a bheadh ag teacht lena dtábhacht sa gheilleagar agus sa sochaí. Dá mbeadh parlaimint in Éirinn feasta bheadh tromlach Caitliceach inti agus ag cur an cineál cultúir reiligiúnaigh a bhí in uachtar ag an am san áireamh bheadh deiseanna thar na bearta comhshaol a chruthú in Éirinn a chuirfeadh an Caitliceachas Ultramhóntánach i réim.

Mar sin bhí an eaglais Chaitliceach báiuil le náisiúnachas ag deireadh na 19ú haoise fad is gur náisiúnachas Caitliceach a bhí ann. Ag an am céanna sheas sí go daingean in éadan réabhlóide sóisialta, na bhFíníní agus an phoblachtachais. Ba é an toradh áiféiseach ar an gcodarsnacht sin go raibh sagairt ag suí ar choistí le héirí amach '98 a chomórach agus san am céanna ag damnú Fíníní "aindiacha" ón altóir.

D'fhéadfá a rá gurbh é an leagan de scéal '98 a cruthaíodh in 1898 a mhair go dtí le déanaí.

Bhí sé sin le feiceáil in *Iris Teoin*, bliainiris mhórhíonchair a d'fhoilsíodh Brian Ó hUiginn, sár-Chaitliceach simplí, idir 1932 agus 1962. Meascán an-aisteach de phoblachtachas agus náisiúnachas Caitliceach a bhíodh inti, meascán a bhíodh forleathan ar fud na tíre agus a mhaireann go fóill in áiteanna ó thuaidh mar a dtéann go leor náisiúnaithe i muinín an Chaitliceachais bhunúsáioch le féiniúlacht ar leith a chruthú. Tá sé ar nós na mban óg de bhunadh Ioslamach i Sasana a ghlacann an yasmak chucu féin mar chomhartha dá ndúchas, an yasmak céanna a chaith a máithreacha i dtraipisí.

Pé ar bith, shílfeá ó *Iris Teoin* gur cineál neas-Chaitlicigh nó Pápaire oinigh a bhí i Wolfe Tone (nó, ar a laghad, gur dhuine é a ghlacadh leis an ola dhéanach agus é ar leaba a bháis ach gur gearradh a scornach sula raibh an deis aige).

Ba den bhuirgíseacht Anglacánach é Tone a bhí ina dhiasaí (deist) i ndeireadh a shaoil. Ní raibh bá dá laghad aige le Caitliceachas (nó le Críostaíocht ag deireadh). Mar dhaonlathaí agus mar phoblachtach, bhí sé go hiomlán ar son chearta na gCaitliceach, agus nuair a chuir sé aithne orthu réitigh sé leo mar dhaoine, ach sin scéal eile.

Nuair a bhí comórach 150 bliain Éirí Amach '98 á cheiliúradh bhí tuiscint Bhrian Uí Uiginn ar Wolfe Tone coitianta. Bhí páirt lárnach ag aifrinntí agus sagairt agus easpaig i gcomórach na bliana sin, rud a bhí míchuí i suile duine ar bith a bhí ar an eolas i gceart faoi na hÉireannaigh Aontaithe.

Tá cuimhne bharrúil ag Edwina Stewart ar an gcomóradh sin i mBéal Feirste:

I remember in 1948 my father and the East Belfast branch of the Communist Party marched on the 150th anniversary of the United Irishmen. The republicans wouldn't allow them to be attached to the march, as it were, because they were communists! They had to walk so far behind the rest of the march. I think there was also an element of "the Prods are coming"! I remember a member of the organising committee telling us how he had been very happy at organising the anniversary but had been driven to despair when a Catholic girl from the Markets declared she was giving up her Protestant boyfriend in honour of Wolfe Tone!

[Arna insint do Marilyn Hyndman in *Further Afield: journey from a Protestant past*, leabhar a luaitear i gciorcail áirithe mar "the book of the dodgy Prods."]

Rinneadh méid áirithe tarrthála ar Tone bocht i 1963, le comóradh ar a bhreith 200 bliain roimhe sin. B'in an chéad uair a chuir go leor daoine eolas ar Wolfe Tone, an poblachtach. Bhí Jack Bennett, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Hubert Butler agus Roy Johnston orthusan a bhí páirteach i sraith cruinnithe i dTeach an Ardmeára i mBaile Atha Cliath. As an gcomóradh sin tháinig ann do Chumainn Wolfe Tone i mBaile Atha Cliath agus i mBéal Feirste.

Ní móide go n-aithneodh na hÉireannaigh Aontaithe a dteagasc i leagan amach an stáit Éireannaigh ó 1922 i leith. Chuir na haicmí a tháinig in innhe agus i gcumhacht leis an stát nua an náisiúnachas Caitliceach in uachtar. Bhí an cultúr sin i gcodarsnacht le gnéithe eile de bhunreachtaí an stáit (1922 agus 1937) ach níor chuir sé sin as do thromlach an phobail.

Tá athrú as cuimse tagtha ar an sochaí sna 26 Contae le 30 bliain anuas. Is féidir a rá go bhfuil sí geall le bheith ina sochaí shaolta anois. Tá léargas na nOráisteach ar an saol ó dheas go mór as dáta agus, go deimhin, níl an *Irish Times* rófhada chun tosaigh orthu. Níl an reiligiún de dhíth mar mhaide croise ón mbuirgéseacht a thuilleadh agus tá an ghlúin óg den aicme shaothair sna 26 Contae tar éis an eaglais a thréigint ar an mórchóir.

Maireann iarsmaí tábhachtacha den seanreacht. Is é an sampla is measa an smacht eaglaise ar scoileanna, bíodh is go bhfuil sé sin á chreimeadh le fada. Faoi mar a tharlaíonn tá na polaiteoirí i bhfad níos coimeádaí ná an pobal trí chéile ná, íorónta go leor, cuid mhaith den chléir. Níl de mhisneach ag páirtithe polaitiúla na bunaíochta gníomhú san earnáil sin.

Glacfaidh sé misneach i bhfad níos mó fós tabhairt faoin gceist seo ó thuaidh mar a bhfuil an chléir sna heaglaisí uile, tríd is tríd, i bhfad níos coimeádaí ná a mbráithre ó dheas. Tá troid fhada romhainn le deireadh a

chur leis an deighilt chreidimh sna scoileanna ó thuaidh ach ní mór do dhream ar bith ar mian leo bratach na nÉireannach Aontaithe a ghlacadh chucu féin aghaidh a thabhairt ar an dúshlán.

Bhí difríocht an-bhunúsach idir comóradh '98 i mbliana agus comórthaí 1898 agus 1948. Buaileadh go leor de na miotais sheanchaite agus bhí firinne an phoblachtachais ag brúctail anuas sa chuid is mó de na foilseacháin a ghabh leis an gcomóradh. Tuairiscíodh gur éirigh thar chionn le himeachtaí comórtha ceartbhunaithe ar fud na tíre, ar an dá thaobh den teorainn.

Ní raibh aon duine i mbliana ag iarraidh a thabhairt le fios gur crypto-Pháipaire a bhí i Wolfe Tone! Bhí scríbhneoirí Oráisteacha agus Kevin Myers ar a ndícheall le seicteachas agus doirteadh fola thar fóir a chur i leith lucht an éirí amach ach bhí orthu dul i muinín bolscaireachta a scríobh dílseoirí ag tús na haoise seo caite.

Chuala mé seafóid de chineál eile ón Aire Stáit Séamas Brennan TD agus é ag rá go poiblí gurbh é 1798 an ócáid dheireanach inar throid náisiúnaithe agus aontachtaithe taobh le taobh!

Bhí go leor cainte ann faoi Chaitlicigh agus Protastúnaigh a thabhairt le chéile ach, amanta, bheadh an tuairim ag duine gur éiciúiméiní mór a bhí i Wolfe Tone. Ba éard a theastaigh uaidh pobal de shaoránaigh Éireannacha a chur in áit sainaicmí de Chaitlicigh agus Protastúnaigh. Chuir daonlathaithe na 1790í rompu sochaí shibhialta a chur i réim in Éirinn ina mbeadh an reiligiún ruaigthe go dtí an earnáil phríobháideach.

Agus ar ndóigh, bhí imeachtaí comórtha ann i mbliana a rinne neamhshuim den cheist ba mhó a chuir Wolfe Tone chun tosaigh, an cheist ba mhó a bhí i phaidrín na nÉireannach Aontaithe (más ceadmhach dom an nath a úsáid): an ceangal le Sasana a bhriseadh, ar cuspóir daonlathach forásach i gcónaí é. Aon dream a shúleann go bhfuil siad ag leanacht lorg na nÉireannach Aontaithe agus a fhágann an cuspóir sin as an áireamh tá siad ina ndiúra dheabhra.

REVOLUTIONARY LIVES Friedrich Engels (part one)

Joe Conroy

Friedrich Engels has suffered a curious fate in the century since his death. Some have consigned him to the role of Karl Marx's other half, fashioned from one of the ribs that surrounded Marx's dodgy liver. According to this view, he had imbibed Marx's ideas by symbiosis and was to spend his days repeating them, never daring to have an independent thought of his own. The phrase "Marx 'n' Engels" trips off the tongue like "rock 'n' roll", but the second word is only there to make up the numbers when necessary.

The estranged twin brother of this conception paints Engels as Marx's evil genius, engaged for forty years in corrupting that nice young man and his nice young ideas with his own infernally unpleasant politics. It usually turns out that the pedlars of this view are rejecting Marxism, not Engels, and are only using him as a scapegoat upon which to heap any element of Marxism they find distasteful. Both versions miss the point altogether—the point being that Engels was a great revolutionary in his own right, and a revolutionary whose independent contribution plays a vital part in Marxist theory and practice.

The making of a communist

Friedrich Engels was born on 28 November 1820 in Barmen in Germany to a family of textile manufacturers. As a result his upbringing was economically secure but spiritually stifling. His family were intensely conservative in politics and puritan in religion, and Engels had to fight to gradually emancipate himself from this atmosphere. This area, the Wupper valley, was at the heart of Germany's weak industrial revolution, and Engels's break with religious and political tradition coincided with a recognition of the injustices that capitalism was bringing with it.

After leaving school he went to work as a clerk in his father's office, but also developed a talent as a journalist. A series of anonymous articles scandalised the local establishment, mercilessly satirising the narrow-minded tyranny prevailing in the region. Going to Berlin to do his year's military service, he soon became a leading light amongst the Young Hegelians, the radical philosophers of the capital's intellectual world.

On returning, in 1842, he was sent to England to work in the family firm's mill in Manchester. He went willingly, because by now he was becoming convinced of the need for a revolution to establish common ownership of wealth, and in industrial England he would see the conditions of such a revolution growing. He established contact with the workers' movement in Manchester and reported on it for German radical papers, while at the same time spreading German communist ideas in British working-class papers.

An article on the 'Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy' attacked capitalist economics and its law of supply and demand, a law which could operate only through regular economic slumps:

If the producers themselves knew how much the consumers needed, organised production, shared amongst themselves, the fluctuations of competition and its tendency towards crisis would be impossible. Produce consciously, as people, not as splintered atoms without consciousness of our kind, and you throw out all these artificial and indefensible contradictions.... The community will have to work out what it can produce with the means available and, in the light of the relation of this productive power to the number of consumers, determine how far to raise or lower production, how far it allows luxury or has to restrict it.

Engels's experience of the English working class led to his first book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (published in 1845). The book relentlessly catalogues the oppression of the workers: the overworking, the toll of industrial injury and death, the slum housing, the desperate poverty and demoralisation of the early working class. The book is marred by a romanticised picture of life before the industrial revolution, and by its acceptance of racist portrayals of Irish immigrants, but its indictment of the capitalist class is unparalleled. Engels didn't waste his time trying to remain 'objective' about the misery he saw, but put the blame where it lay. He openly sided with those "condemned to work":

As voluntary productive activity is the highest enjoyment known to us, so is compulsory toil the most cruel, degrading punishment. Nothing is more terrible than being constrained to do some one thing every day from morning until night against one's will. And the more a human being the worker feels himself, the more hateful must his work be to him, because he feels the constraint, the uselessness of it for himself. Why does he work? For love of work? From a natural impulse? Not at all! He works for money...

In such a society the workers “can maintain their consciousness of humanity only by cherishing the most glowing hatred, the most unbroken inward rebellion against the bourgeoisie”.

The Condition of the Working Class stands out from the literature of social problems in nineteenth-century England because it not only describes the suffering of the workers, not only sympathises with them, but recognises the power that this new class had to end its suffering:

The workers begin to feel as a class, as a whole; they begin to perceive that, though feeble as individuals, they form a power united; their separation from the bourgeoisie, the development of views peculiar to the workers and corresponding to their position in life, is fostered, the consciousness of oppression as workers, and the workers attain social and political importance. The great cities are the birthplaces of labour movements; in them the workers first began to reflect upon their own condition, and to struggle against it; in them the opposition between proletariat and bourgeoisie first made itself manifest; from them proceeded the Trade Unions, Chartism, and Socialism.

Engels dedicated the book “To the Working Classes of Great Britain”, and forecasted their victory in “the war of the poor against the rich”.

Enter Marx

Engels left Manchester in August 1844 but stopped off in Paris on his way home, where he met Karl Marx. They had met two years earlier—in the offices of a paper which Marx edited and Engels wrote for—but Marx was distant, taking Engels for one of the Young Hegelian dilettantes he’d had cause to row with. But he continued to publish Engels’s articles from England, and published his ‘Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy’ earlier in 1844 in a journal he co-edited in Paris. This article made a big impression on Marx and launched his own researches in economics. The two found themselves in agreement politically and agreed to work together. The collaboration would last until Marx’s death in 1883.

They decided to write a pamphlet criticising the Young Hegelians. Engels wrote his own twenty-odd pages, attacking amongst other things their deification of History: “*History does nothing*, it ‘possesses *no* immense wealth’, it ‘fights *no* battles’! On the contrary, it is *humanity*, real, living humanity, that does all that, that possesses and fights; it is not that ‘history’, using people as a means, works for *its* aims—as if it were a separate person; no, it is *nothing* but the activity of people pursuing their own aims.” Much to Engels’s

surprise, Marx’s contribution had grown on his hands, and when *The Holy Family* was published in 1845 it was a hefty enough work.

The French government expelled Marx a few months later, and Engels—his relationship with his father becoming more strained by the day—joined him in Brussels. The pair got down to writing a more comprehensive criticism of the Hegelians, *The German Ideology*—but this book would also contain a more positive statement of their own views.

The understanding of history, they wrote, begins with “the real individuals, their action and their material conditions of life”—people as they actually are, not imaginary beings existing all on their own. People produce their means of existence in a certain way, and the way they produce influences the way they think. “People are the producers of their conceptions, ideas etc, but real, active people as they are conditioned by a certain development of their productive forces and the intercourse that corresponds to it”—people’s conceptions can’t be understood without understanding the way they live and work:

In complete contrast with German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. I.e., we don’t set out from what people say, imagine, conceive, nor from people as described, thought of, imagined, conceived, going from there until living people are reached; we set out from real, active people and from their real life process demonstrate the development of the ideological reflections and echoes of this life process.

So religion, morality, ideology in general have no independent history of their own: people change the way they work and, along with it, the way they think. “It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness.”

The most basic condition of history is “that people must be in a position to live in order to ‘make history’”—they have to eat, drink, clothe and shelter themselves, reproduce, and they have to co-operate in one way or another to do so: “a certain mode of production or industrial stage is always combined with a certain mode of working together or social stage”. People’s consciousness is formed by these economic relations.

When these relations take the form of a fixed division of labour, of classes,

a person’s own act becomes an alien power standing against him, enslaving him instead of being controlled by him.... each person has a certain exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him, which he cannot escape from; he is a hunter, fisherman or shepherd or critical critic and

has to remain so if he isn't to lose his means of existence—whilst in communist society, where no one has an exclusive sphere of activity, but can train himself in any branch he likes, society regulates the general production and therefore makes it possible for me to do this today, that tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, drive cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I please, without becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.

In class society the state pretends to look after the common interest, but in reality it serves the interests of the dominant class. "It follows from this that all struggles within the state, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, the struggle for the right to vote etc, etc, are only the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the various classes with each other are fought out".

As people's productive forces expand they outgrow the old economic relations, and this conflict leads to ideological and political battles, to revolutions. "So all collisions in history have their origin, according to our view, in the contradiction between the productive forces and the form of intercourse."

Those who deny such a basis for history "have to *share the illusion of the epoch*"—if people fought in a religious guise, these historians tell us it was a religious epoch, instead of investigating the real roots of the conflict: "Whilst in everyday life every shopkeeper knows well how to tell between what a man claims to be and what he is in reality, our historiography still hasn't reached this trivial insight. It takes every epoch at its word".

The class which controls production controls the production of ideas as well, and so "The ideas of the ruling class are in each epoch the ruling ideas". These ideas are challenged, but "The existence of revolutionary ideas in a certain epoch presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class".

To overthrow class society requires a huge development of productive forces: "without it *privation* is only made general, and so with *need* the struggle for necessities begins again and all the old shite has to come about". A class has to exist "which has all the burdens of society to bear, without reaping its advantages". This has to happen internationally, "making each revolution dependent on the others", otherwise communism would be no more than a local, short-term phenomenon: "Communism is only empirically possible as the act of the dominant peoples 'all at once' and at the same time". Finally, those making the revolution would have to revolutionise themselves: "the revolution is therefore not only necessary because the *ruling* class can't be overthrown any other way, but because the *overthrowing* class can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the old rubbish and become fit to establish society anew".

Instead of setting up a new division of labour, this communist revolution would abolish classes, and for the first time bring humanity's products under the common control of society. But "Communism for us is not a *situation* which should be established, an *ideal* according to which reality is to be corrected. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of affairs."

Despite Marx's and Engels's best efforts, however, *The German Ideology* found no publisher, and they had to abandon the manuscript, as Marx later wrote, "to the gnawing criticism of the mice". But they spread their ideas amongst the German workers in Brussels and in Paris, to where Engels moved in 1846, setting up Communist Correspondence Committees.

They began to win over the League of the Just, an organisation of emigrant German workers in various European countries. Engels attended their conference in London in June 1847, where the League dropped most of its conspiratorial and utopian trappings and renamed itself the League of Communists. He and Marx travelled to London at the end of the year when, at another conference, the League adopted their outlook and appointed them to write a manifesto. This, of course, took final shape as the Communist Manifesto, completed by Marx in early 1848. But Engels had written the first draft, and his influence is clear in the finished product.

Revolution

1848 saw revolution spread throughout Europe: beginning in France, the old ruling classes from one end of the continent to the other faced a serious challenge to their rule. Germany's turn came in March, when the king of Prussia was forced to concede democratic rights in the face of popular unrest. Engels and Marx reached Cologne, the centre of the democratic movement, at the end of April and began to publish the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (New Rhenish Gazette). Engels's attack in the first issue on the weak-kneed deputies of the National Assembly frightened away half the paper's shareholders—an event which prefigured in microcosm the middle class's reluctance to fight the aristocratic regime throughout the revolution.

In September Cologne was put under a state of siege: the paper closed down, and Engels fled from a warrant the authorities had out on him. Although the paper reappeared the following month, it wasn't safe for Engels to return from hiding in France until January 1849.

It was he, for the most part, who dealt with international affairs in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, including the various national movements that sprang up in 1848. The only nationalities within the Austrian empire, he wrote, that were capable of independence were the Germans, the Poles, and the Hungarians, because they had sided with the revolution. The other Slav

peoples were counter-revolutionary, condemned to extinction as "*national refuse*" ('The Magyar Struggle'). When some proclaimed independence for the Slav nationalities while supporting the revolution, Engels described them as "Peoples which have never had a history of their own". The Croats, for example, were "a naturally counter-revolutionary nation", and historical development couldn't take place "without forcibly crushing the occasional sensitive specimen of national plant life" ('Democratic Pan-Slavism').

Engels was motivated by the fact that the national claims of these peoples were being exploited by Tsarist Russia, the heart of the counter-revolution, and he saw opposition to Russia as paramount. And of course, no nationality's right to self-determination should be conceded when doing so would strengthen the forces of reaction in general. But Engels's mistake was that he didn't address the question in such a tactical manner, and instead set up a historically false division between viable great nations and petty nationalities doomed to extinction. As well as having little historical basis, this failed to take account of the shifting nature of national politics, which often leaves established nationalities behind and awakens those that once seemed gone, and which often transform yesterday's enemies of the revolution into tomorrow's friends. This led him (and Marx)—despite their constant support for particular national movements, such as the Poles and the Irish—to underestimate the role that national movements in general could play in weakening the capitalist system.

The initiative in the German revolution had already passed to the old governments, but the revolution gave its last kick in May when uprisings in support of a democratic constitution broke out. Engels took part in Elberfeld, in his own neck of the woods, where he was in charge of the town's defences. But when the local middle classes, although full of praise for his military expertise, expressed the fear "that Engels might proclaim the red republic at any time", he decided to give way to them and leave, despite the workers supporting him. He had the chance to fight, however, in the revolution's last stand, playing a leading part in the Baden insurrectionary force, which held out until late July before retreating to Switzerland.

In November Engels moved to London, where Marx had gone after his expulsion from Germany, and the two planned to rally the communist forces for the imminent return of the revolutionary opportunity. In March 1850 they wrote a circular to the League of Communists on behalf of its central board. Individually, they wrote, the League's members were to the fore throughout the revolution, but the League's organisation had weakened considerably. "An end must be put to this situation, the independence of the workers must be restored."

In the next outbreak of the revolution the middle classes, the petty bourgeoisie, would play the same treacherous role that the capitalists played in 1848-9. The communists' position in relation to them was: "they stand together with them against the faction whose overthrow they aim for; they stand against them in every case where they seek to establish themselves". These middle-class democrats want only to modify society, in their own interests: to lessen the pressure of big capital, to set up parliamentary democracy, to grant wage rises to the workers.

Whilst the democratic petty bourgeois want to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible, carrying out the above demands at most, it is our interest and our job to make the revolution permanent until all more or less possessing classes are ousted from their rule, the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of the proletarians—not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the entire world—has progressed so far that the competition of the proletarians in these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. For us it cannot be a question of altering private property, but of destroying it; not of hushing up class antagonisms, but of abolishing classes; not of improving existing society, but of establishing a new one.

The workers will be told they should unite with the middle classes against the common enemy, instead of putting forward their own divisive demands. "It comes out in the end that all such phrases mean that the proletariat is to be swindled." The workers must organise their own clubs and councils alongside the official ones, they must stand their own candidates in elections to affirm their independence, they must always be pushing the revolution forward instead of being satisfied with what has been achieved. They have to prepare for their victory "by clarifying their class interests for themselves, by taking up their independent party position as soon as possible, by not letting the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie mislead them for a moment from the independent organisation of the party of the proletariat. Their battle cry must be: The revolution in permanence."

But within a few months it became obvious to Engels and Marx that revolution would have to wait, that capitalism had survived the revolutions of 1848 and could look forward to a period of sustained development. In October they wrote: "In the light of this general prosperity, in which the productive forces of bourgeois society develop as exuberantly as is possible within bourgeois relations in general, there can be no question of a real revolution.... A

new revolution is only possible in the wake of a new crisis. But it is as certain as this crisis."

"Responsible only for ourselves"

The League of Communists split at the end of 1850 and led only a shadow existence until being formally wound up two years later. Engels, in spite of himself, went to Manchester to work in his father's mill again. This sacrifice meant that he would be able to keep the Marx family's head above water financially while Marx continued to study and write. They had no connection with any organisation at all, and Marx wrote to Engels that they were well rid of all the petty squabbles that went with all that. Engels agreed (13 February 1851):

We now finally have again—for the first time in ages—an opportunity to show that we need no popularity, no support from any party of any country and that our position is totally independent of such shabby tricks. Henceforth we are responsible only for ourselves, and when the moment comes that the gentlemen have need of us we will be in a position to dictate our own terms.... How do people like us, who run from official positions like the plague, fit into a "party"? What do we, who spit on popularity, who get mad whenever we start to become popular, want with a "party"... ? Truly, it's no loss...

The fifties and sixties were the quietest period of Engels's career, busy as he was playing the role of respectable businessman. He helped, advised and encouraged Marx, writing articles for him when Marx's grasp of English, or grasp of the question at hand, was wanting. It wasn't until 1869, when he sold out his interest in the family firm, moving to London the following year, that Engels could take an active part in the workers' movement again.

He joined the general council of the International Working Men's Association, and was especially involved in spreading the International in southern Europe. When the workers of Paris took power for a couple of months in 1871 Engels was active in supporting the Paris Commune before and after its suppression, a suppression that dragged the International itself down with it.

In 1874 a group of exiles of the Commune published a programme for the revolution they believed to be just around the corner. They proclaimed themselves atheists—which, wrote Engels, was meaningless posturing. For most class-conscious workers, "it can be said that atheism has already outlived its usefulness for them... *they are simply through with God*" and had no need to waste time proclaiming his non-existence. The plan of the exiles to ban

religion would do nothing to remove the causes that gave rise to it—on the contrary, it would probably be the best way to strengthen it.

They were communists, they declared, because they refused to stop at intermediate stations or enter into compromises. But, replied Engels, it was historical development that created such stops and compromises on the way: the thing was to work through them towards socialism. These exiles, however, "imagine that as soon as *they* have the goodwill to jump over intermediate stations and compromises everything is assured... What childish naïveté to advance impatience as a convincing theoretical argument!"

The exiles' manifesto not only stood by the Paris Commune, but expressly claimed responsibility for every single act of violence carried out by the Commune. Engels was not so uncritical:

A lot of mistakes are unavoidably made in every revolution, as they are indeed at all other times, and when at last people calm down sufficiently to be able to review events critically, they inevitably draw the following conclusion: we have done many things which it would have been better to leave undone, and have failed to do many things which it would have been better to do, and that is why things took a bad turn. But what a lack of critical attitude is needed to declare the Commune impeccable and to assert that every time a house was burned down or a hostage shot, this was a case of retributive justice, down to the dot on the "i". Is this not tantamount to asserting that during the week in May [the Commune's last stand] the people shot exactly those persons that it was necessary to shoot, and no more, that exactly those buildings were burned down that had to be burned down, and no more?... Such childish patter results when essentially quite good-natured people give in to the urge to appear savagely brutal ['Programme of the Blanquist Commune Emigrants'].

The German socialist party stood its ground best of all in the wave of reaction after the Commune's defeat, and it naturally claimed much of Engels's and Marx's attention. But when it merged with another socialist group in 1875 to form the SPD (the Social Democratic Party of Germany—socialists at the time had picked up the habit of calling themselves social democrats) they were by no means satisfied with the basis of unity. Engels had thought anyway that the best way was "not to entice away a few individuals and local groups here and there from one's opponent, but to work on the great mass which is not yet taking part in the movement" (letter to August Bebel, 20 June 1873). But the actual draft programme for the united SPD exasperated him further.

The programme declared everyone but the working class to be a single reactionary mass, cutting off the workers from their potential allies. It watered down the principle of internationalism. It proclaimed that it was impossible to raise wages above a bare minimum, and said nothing about the unions—"the real class organisation of the proletariat, in which it wages its daily struggles with capital, in which it trains itself". The demands for democratic rights were weak, and its main social demand was for the state to set up workers' co-ops. One of its aims was "a free state":

Taken in its grammatical sense, a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens, hence a state with a despotic government. The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word.... Since the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, during the revolution, to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is pure nonsense to talk of a free people's state: so long as the proletariat still *uses* the state, it does not use it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. We would therefore propose to replace *state* everywhere by *Gemeinwesen*, a good old German word which can very well convey the meaning of the French word "*commune*" [letter to Bebel, 18-28 March 1875].

First fiddle

A year and a half after Marx's death Engels wrote to a comrade of theirs:

All my life I have done what I was cut out to do—I played second fiddle—and I think that I did it fairly well. I was glad to have so splendid a first violin as Marx. And now that I am unexpectedly called upon to replace Marx in theoretical matters and play first fiddle, I cannot do so without making slips of which nobody is more keenly aware than I [to Johann Becker, 15 October 1884].

But effectively Engels took up this role a few years before Marx's death. Marx's worsening health meant that, from the mid-1870s on, it largely fell to Engels to defend and advance their political standpoint, so that he took up the first fiddle before 1883 as well as after. For the last twenty years of his life, Friedrich Engels became the senior partner in the Marx-Engels business.

This article will be concluded in the next issue of Red Banner.

Prosperity such as they speak of

Kieran Crilly

We might, if we choose, make a point against our political historians by pointing out that prosperity such as they speak of is purely capitalistic prosperity—that is to say, prosperity gauged merely by the *volume* of wealth produced, and entirely ignoring the manner in which the wealth is distributed amongst the workers who produce it.

—James Connolly, *Labour in Irish History*

There is a parallel between the approach of historians in Connolly's time to the prosperity during Grattan's Parliament, and the approach of orthodox Irish economists and other commentators, including Trade Union leaders, to the growth of the Irish economy since 1987. The approach assumes that there are only two fundamental questions to be answered in economics, i.e. *What is to be produced in the Irish economy?* and *How is it to be produced?* So commentators, in answer to these questions, emphasise the growth in output and in the level of employment in the economy. As growth in both of these cases has been very high, all the commentators and economists are saying that we never had it so good and that there is no need to change the approach adopted since 1987 (the year of the first 'social partnership' programme).

But the third fundamental question in economics, *For whom is it produced?* or *Who gets the output?* is being ignored. Since the fall of the Soviet Union this third question has been approached by mainstream economists as though there is no relationship between the payments to labour and to land or capital. So now there is emphasis on labour market economics as if this is totally separate from the economics of capital. There is no mention of the inverse relationship between the return on capital and the level of wages, i.e. that if profits increase, the wages for labour would be lower. The general approach of Connolly is used in this article to look at changes in the distribution of the extra output and income produced between 1987 and 1997.

Between 1987 and 1997, Gross National Product (GNP), which is a measure of total output or income generated in the economy, rose from £19,326.3 million to £42,626 million, a rise of 120.6%. This was a remarkable rise in GNP over a ten year period, when it is compared with the growth in consumer prices, which rose by 28.3%. It was a period of unprecedented growth in the

Irish economy. But all sectors did not benefit equally from this growth, and this is clearly demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1

	1987	1997	% change,
	£ million	£ million	1987-97
GNP	19,326.3	42,626	120.6%
Wages—total	10,095.0	20,607	104.1%
—agriculture	133.8	217	62.2%
—non-agriculture	9,961.2	20,390	104.7%
Income of farmers	1,452.5	2,136	47.1%
Profits—total	4,925.0	16,855	242.2%

Source: National Accounts ESA79, CSO June 98.

Profits (company profits, and profits and professional earnings of the self-employed in the non-agricultural sector) rose by 242.2%: more than twice the rate of growth in GNP and more than 2.3 times faster than wages, which rose by 104.1%. This growth in wages was held back by the partnership programmes, which operated as an incomes policy that only applied to wages. There were no restrictions on the growth of prices or other incomes.

Public sector pay

Total public sector pay rose from £2,759 million in 1987 to £5,183 million in 1997 (estimate), a rise of 87.85%. This figure is gross, so the cost to the government is much less, as tax, levies and contributions to the pensions schemes of civil servants are deducted. The cost of pensions is included in the figure. As a percentage of GNP, public sector pay fell from 14.28% in 1987 to 12.13% in 1997. Public sector employment was 304,000 in 1987 and 297,000 (estimate) in 1997. So average compensation per public sector employee was £17,451 in 1997 and £9,075 in 1987. This meant that average compensation in the public sector rose by 92.3% compared with the 242.2% rise in profits over the period.¹

At the same time farmers' incomes rose by 47.1% and farm workers' incomes by only 62.2%. These increases in farm incomes were slower than the increase in wages.

In the same period rents only rose by 52.5%, but it is likely that there is a high degree of under-reporting of rental income. Since December 1997, only 25% of private rented houses have been registered with the local authorities, leaving 75% of private rented landlords failing to comply with the law.² This means they are outside the tax net and in the black economy, and so are not

included in GNP. Recent rent rises have, of course, far surpassed the above rate of increase.

So in the period 1987-1997 there was a shift in income away from workers and farmers to other income earners, including the self-employed and shareholders of companies. The rising tide definitely did not lift all boats to the same extent.

The decline in the share of wages as a percentage of Gross National Product also reinforces the argument that there has been a shift in income away from workers to the owners of capital, whether self-employed or shareholders. In 1987 wages were 52.2% of GNP (£10,095 million out of £19,362.3 million). By 1997 the percentage has fallen back to 39.5% of GNP (£16,855 million out of £42,626 million). This fall of a quarter in the share of wages in GNP over a period of ten years is unprecedented in the industrialised world. If the share of wages had been maintained at 52.2% and GNP had risen by the same amount, then wages in 1997 would be £22,250.8 million, £2,924.5 million higher than their actual level. Essentially this is a direct transfer from workers to employers and self-employed in the non-agricultural sector.³

Tax cuts and incomes

Trade union leaders and economists have been arguing that tax cuts have made workers better off. They have, but these tax cuts have made all earners better off, including the self-employed, farmers and company shareholders. Therefore it is important to look at what happened to pre-tax earnings as well as post-tax earnings.

As a brief indicator, in Table 2 the effects of changes in income tax on post-tax earnings, for a single person, are analysed. (In this table the effects of the tax changes are analysed using the average industrial wage (all industries) for 1987 and the estimated average industrial wage for 1996, and applying the income tax rates and bands and allowances, and PRSI rates and levies, to calculate changes in after-tax incomes over the period of the partnership programmes. The average industrial wage (AIW) rose by 44.3% over this period. Five levels of income are taken in the two years: half the AIW; three quarters the AIW; the AIW itself; twice the AIW; and five times the AIW. The basic allowances of a PAYE worker are applied to calculate after-tax income. These are the personal, the PAYE and the PRSI allowances. PRSI and income levies are calculated using the rates, allowances, thresholds and ceilings that apply to a full rate PRSI payer. Other allowances and changes in tax are ignored.)

Table 2

	gross wages		take home pay		% change, 1987-96
	1987	1996	1987	1996	
half AIW	£96.82	£139.75	£75.53	£116.65	54.4%
three quarters AIW	£145.23	£209.63	£103.25	£159.12	54.1%
AIW	£193.64	£279.50	£125.01	£198.90	59.1%
twice AIW	£387.28	£559	£197.93	£328.74	66.1%
five times AIW	£968.20	£1397.50	£435.61	£745.90	71.2%

Source: Irish Statistical Bulletin, Budgets 1987, 1996; Estimate of 1996 AIW based on ESRI forecast for wages

It is clear from the table that the tax changes since 1987 were geared towards those on higher incomes. The 1997 McCreevy Budget spurred this trend. A similar analysis of the tax changes, between 1987 and 1996, for a married person (spouse not working) shows a 52.8% increase for someone on half the average industrial wage, and a 67% increase for someone on five times the average industrial wage.

So in terms of incomes and tax the so-called Celtic Tiger has put income in the pockets of the employers and self-employed at the expense of workers.

Notes

1. Source: Revised Estimates for Public Services (various years); Labour Force Surveys 1993, 1997.
2. Kieran Murphy, *Poverty Today*, June/July 1998.
3. Similarly, the fall in the share of farm incomes from 7.5% to 5% of GNP has led to an increased share for the same employers and self-employed in the non-agricultural sector.

The Hidden Connolly

This issue's selection of uncollected articles by James Connolly opens with his retort to a would-be refutation of socialism. The other article, from the Irish Worker, testifies to Connolly's militant approach during the 1913 lock-out—reacting to state repression with a call for renewed struggle.

Home Thrusts

[*Workers' Republic*, 15 September 1900]

A Critic.

Cork's own city has provided itself with a critic who, in the *Evening Special* of last Saturday, runs full tilt up against the President of the British Trades' Union Congress, and against Socialism in general.

The Cork critic is a curiosity in his own way. He is in the first place a born journalist; you can see that with the first glance at his writings. The first qualification of a journalist on a capitalist paper is a perfect readiness to write columns of matter upon any subject which may turn up, without wasting any time acquiring a knowledge of what he is writing about.

So with this Cork critic. Every line he writes gives evidence of the density of his ignorance on all matters Socialistic, but he apparently conceives that fact to be of trivial importance for he continues to spread himself out on the question with a recklessness of grammar and an ignorance of economic teaching not to be surpassed by any collection of old women in the land.

As to the grammar, will the reader cast his eye over this gem from the editorial in which this critic lets himself loose upon an unoffending community.

Speaking of the President of the Congress he writes: "He does NOT look at Labour and Economic questions from NO mere sordid bread and butter point of view."

If the schoolmaster was indeed abroad when this journalistic critic was developing I would suggest that for the sake of that schoolmaster's reputation this Cork critic should never tell what school he had attended.

Further on in this interesting article he declares that the President "soars aloft into the regions of Philosophy, and lectures the world on the prehistoric state of man AND OTHER WILD ANIMALS."

The confusion of thought shown in the paragraph, the entire inability to discriminate between a reference to the accepted facts of biological and ethnographic science and the mere speculations of philosophy is proof enough

that the writer's sole acquaintance with these subjects was limited to the names he juggled with so deftly, and used so wrongly.

But it is when he essays to argue out his position that this poor scribe becomes really touching in his simplicity. Here, for instance, is a specimen of his reasoning, and a sample of his knowledge, which should not be lightly passed over but should rather be preserved and carefully framed as a literary curiosity, born of an intellectual freak.

Pickle's Philosophy of Collectivism¹ put into a nutshell amounts to this: Everybody is to own everything, and nobody is to own anything. A nice comfortable philosophy for a considerable section of the world. Take for instance the man without any brains. What need he care if he has none? His neighbour has enough for the two, and as he would have the same right to an even share of the country's wealth as his brainy neighbour he would be the better off of the two, because he would have everything without worry or exertion.

There now, that is a gem. You will observe that the idea it means to convey is that Socialism means an equal divide of the wealth of the world—an idea which nobody holds now outside of lunatic asylums or the editorial rooms of capitalist newspapers.

Nobody ever heard a Socialist advocate a divide up, and when you hear any person tell you that Socialism means dividing up depend upon it he is either a fool who does not know what he is talking about, or else a rogue who means to deceive you.

Socialists say the land and all things necessary to life should be made public property and the journalistic tout for the capitalist class shouts out that that means an "equal divide."

Now just to emphasise the foolishness of such talk remember that "all things necessary to life" includes the rivers and canals. Do you suppose then that Socialists propose to divide up the Lee, the Blackwater, or the Liffey, and apportion to each inhabitant of Ireland a share which he can carry away in his pockets?

We do not propose to divide anything but the labour and that we hope to divide if not equally, at least equitably. When that division comes off I think that an enlightened community will find for this Cork scribe some function more suited to his intellect, or to his lack of it, than writing articles upon subjects he does not understand.

"Take for instance", he says, "the man without any brains." Certainly my friend, anything to oblige you, I will take your case—your case in every sense of the word. And really it is touching to observe how the poor uninstructed

instinct of this scribe brought him at once to the point which affected him most—the man without any brains.

Under Socialism those who labour will receive the full reward of their labour, no part whatever being deducted for the upkeep of a master class. The only deduction permissible being that proportion of the product necessary for the renewal of raw material and appliances.

The man who has brains will be expected to do his best, and the man who has no brains (a curious kind of animal he would be) will be expected to do his best, and both would be rewarded according to the length of time they spent per day, week, or year, in the service of the community.

Possibly the man with brains would not receive more per hour than the man not possessed of brains; he would however have that incentive to exert his intellect which would come from the knowledge that he would be honoured and respected by his fellows in proportion to the worth of his labours.

The respect and honour of our fellows is payment enough for full grown men after our material wants are satisfied, and only perverted intellects and debased natures conceive a useless superfluity of wealth or powers of mastership to be necessary as an incentive to human ambition.

A truly civilised society would no more think of rewarding a man because nature had endowed him with brains, than it would think of rewarding another man because nature had endowed him with good looks.

Yes, my Cork friend, the man without the brains will be looked after. Be under no apprehension.

Then our friend asks again:—Is the man who spends most of his share in public houses and lets his family suffer, to be entitled to an equal share of the spoil just like the industrious man who spends his money to good account.

The question thus put implies that the questioner would answer in the negative. The question has little bearing on Socialism, as Socialism only proposes to secure a man the reward of his labour and does not presume to dictate how he shall use that reward.

But observe the folly of the question and the implied answer. A man is presupposed to have a certain share of wealth, to drink that share and leave his family to suffer. As a remedy it is proposed to decrease his share as a punishment for his drinking. But by decreasing his share you shorten the period required to exhaust his funds, and therefore bring to want so much sooner the family about which you professed to be so solicitous. Which is as absurd as the remainder of your attempts at reasoning.

It is like the case of the henpecked husband who had his wife charged at the Police Court with assaulting him. The lady was fined, the husband had to

pay the fine, and he spent the rest of the week trying to figure out where his satisfaction came in.

The question belongs to the regime of capitalist society and not at all to Socialism, under which the family would not be dependent at least for necessities upon the dissolute husband, but the fact of the question being put is here mentioned as showing the habit some people have of thinking the conditions of the present into the future, instead of honestly attempting to master the problem they pretend to discuss.

The greatest minds of our time both in Science and Philosophy have given in their adhesion to Socialism; their works on the subject are accessible to all in most of our free libraries; the fact that such libraries are free does not surely lessen the educational value of the books contained therein; what then can be thought of the scribe who sneers at "Free Library Philosophy" and "Free Library Gleanings"?

What can be thought, except that this sneer is the only honest thing in his writings, betraying as it does the hatred with which his class view every facility for popular education, everything which would equip the worker for the task of measuring his intellect with the much vaunted brains of his masters.

That sneer and that hatred reveal who has most to fear from such a contest.

SPAILPÍN.

How to Release Larkin

[*Irish Worker*, 1 November 1913]

We have always held that when we are at war we should fight according to the rules of war, and that means that the first aim and object of all our activities ought to be to disable and destroy the enemy. Everyone familiar with the history of working class revolts in the past knows that these revolts generally failed through the fact that the revolutionists tried to practise their ideas of humanity before the war was over and their victory assured; they, in short, wished to practise peace in the midst of war. The enemy, the possessing governing classes, on the other hand, having no scruples of conscience and desiring only their own victory, proceeded ruthlessly to the work of extermination; and so naturally and inevitably the established order won over the working class idealists. We do not propose to make that mistake. We are at war. Our enemy is the governing class; the political force of that enemy is the Liberal Government. Next year it may be the Conservative Government, and Sir Edward Carson may be again prosecuting Irish rebels as he did in the past;² but this year and this moment it is the Liberal Government that fills the jury box with employers to try strike leaders; that sets policemen to ride roughshod

over the law guaranteeing the right of peaceful picketing; who orders the bludgeoning of men and women in the streets of Dublin; that has turned Dublin into an armed camp, in which the citizens walk about in terror of their lives in the presence of uniformed bullies—in short, it is the Liberal Government that has lent itself to the employers to imprison, bludgeon, and murder the Dublin working class.

Therefore, the Liberal Government must go.

Larkin is in prison, jailed by this cowardly gang!³ We appeal to the workers everywhere in these islands to vote against the nominees of that government at every contested election until Larkin is released. To-day we are sending a telegram to the electors of Keighley,⁴ asking them, in the name of working class solidarity, to vote against the murderers of Nolan and Byrne,⁵ against the bludgeoners of the Dublin working class, against the jailers of Larkin.

It is war, war to the end, against all the unholy crew who, with the cant of democracy upon their lying lips, are forever crucifying the Christ of Labour between the two thieves of Land and Capital.

JAMES CONNOLLY.⁶

Notes

1. Pickle was the British TUC president under the critic's gaze.
2. Carson, leader of the Ulster Volunteers, set up a few months earlier to resist home rule, had previously been the British government's Solicitor General.
3. Larkin had just been sentenced to seven months in prison for a seditious speech.
4. Where a by-election was impending.
5. James Nolan and James Byrne were killed by a police baton-charge on 30 August.
6. The Liberal candidate was defeated at Keighley and Larkin was released the following day.

The Communist Manifesto: birthday honours

Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh

The Communist Manifesto is 150 years old already, but the celebrations have been nothing to write home about. Magazines and papers, television and radio programmes have been beating the bushes all year for anyone who'll answer to the name of communist and subjecting them to the full rigours of whatever facile question comes into their researchers' heads, before presenting their own ignorance as the last word on the subject. If this is the Manifesto's birthday party, Harold Pinter could have thrown a better one. This article is for everyone who has found themselves rolling their eyes at what's passed for serious consideration of the Communist Manifesto.

Everyone knows the first sentence, if they know no more: "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism." But most people have been so bewitched by the metaphor that they've missed the point. Read on another few lines and you'll see that communism itself isn't the spectre, but the myths and legends about the communist bogeyman coming to gobble up every good bourgeois in his bed. The whole point of the Manifesto is to set the actual principles of communism against "the fairy tale of the spectre of communism".

"To this end communists of the various nationalities have assembled in London and drawn up the following manifesto"—only they were more or less all Germans, only two of them did the business in the end, and not in London. The conference of the Communist League, an organisation of emigrant German craftsmen, appointed Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to write them a manifesto. This point is important politically (and not just historically) because this was the manifesto of an organisation, not the personal opinion of Marx and Engels—who weren't even identified as the authors for some years. So it may well be that they had to express themselves in a way that would be acceptable to the League, rather than just as they liked, although they were just after winning the League to their way of thinking.

Engels had a bash, coming up with a kind of communist catechism, "in which there will at least be nothing contrary to our views", he told Marx. But he felt the question-and-answer format wouldn't do, and hit upon the idea of a manifesto in narrative form. Marx wrote the final text in early 1848 on the basis of Engels's draft—which goes a long way to explain why the Manifesto

is Marx's most concise and direct piece of writing, free of the tendency to explore every nook and cranny that characterises most of his work, for good and ill.

This is where we get down to business: "The history of every society until now is the history of class struggles." Engels was right to point out later that this doesn't go for hunter-gatherer societies, but the proposition that since then the motor of history has been the "uninterrupted, now hidden, now open struggle" between oppressing and oppressed classes is a defining moment. Marx never claimed to have discovered the class struggle (explicitly denied it, in fact), but to trace its development and harness it as the means of achieving the liberation of the working class set Marxism apart, and still sets it apart, from most other versions of socialism knocking about.

Class division gets starker in capitalist society: "The whole society splits more and more into two great opposing camps, into two great classes standing directly against each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat." Before the sociologists get out of their tree and hurl textbooks on stratification theory at us, it should be noted that nowhere is it claimed that this class division is finished, that every mother's son can fit unproblematically into a box marked Capitalist or a box marked Worker. It expressly describes this division as a *tendency*, that "more and more" people are being forced into one of the two classes, down the Property in the Means of Production to Declare channel or the Nothing but my Labour Power to Declare channel. Capitalism will always throw up in-between groups, but Bourgeoisie versus Proletariat is the way things are headed.

"The modern state power is only a committee that manages the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." Now there's a sentence calculated to devalue your politics degree: surely that's a bit over-simplified, reductionist, verging on conspiracy theory? But have another look at it: if it manages the *common* affairs of the *whole* bourgeoisie, then obviously different factions with divergent interests exist within the capitalist class, so divergent that they have to delegate a committee to look after the really important things they all agree on. The Manifesto (never mind the rest of Marx's or Engels's writings) presents a more sophisticated picture of the capitalist state than you'd think.

If there's anyone left out there who still thinks that Marx's writings on alienation were just a folly of youthful idealism that he grew out of, the Manifesto should make them think again: "The work of the proletarians has, through the spread of machinery and the division of labour, lost all autonomous character and with it all charm for the worker. He becomes a mere accessory of the machine, which calls for only the simplest, most monotonous, easiest to learn knack from him."

As a result of this, "The cost of the worker therefore shrinks almost to nothing but the means of existence required for his maintenance and for the propagation of his race", and so, "The average price of labour is the minimum wage." Wrong: as Marx later pointed out, the ability to work is different from other commodities in that it happens to be embodied in a human being. Consequently, the amount needed to produce this commodity is flexible and depends on historical, social factors—on the going rate of civilisation, if you like. Where workers have managed to win a certain standard of living, the expectation of maintaining this standard (and even improving it a bit) enters into the determination of the value of their labour power. The economic and political struggle of the working class can pull against the capitalists' struggle to push wages down.

"Differences of sex and age no longer have any social validity for the working class." But of course (and this goes for national, racial and other prejudices too) just because something has become worthless doesn't stop people futilely trying to spend it. And the Manifesto is far from painting a rosy picture of the onward-ever-onward march of the proletariat into the revolutionary sunset: "This organisation of the proletarians as a class, and consequently as a political party, is burst apart at every turn by the competition amongst the workers themselves."

The Manifesto rightly states that "the proletariat is the only really revolutionary class", but is too one-sided in characterising some of the others. Small farmers, artisans, the lower middle classes are all of them "not revolutionary, but conservative. What's more, they are reactionary, they try to turn back the wheel of history." On the off-chance that they do behave in a revolutionary way, it's only "in view of their impending crossing over to the proletariat" anyway.

This encourages a sort of 'ourselves alone' approach, the kind of dismissal of every other class as reactionary that Marx and Engels had to fight against in later years: the workers can just go their own way, and if the others want to join the back of the queue, they know where to find us; if not, sure it's their own loss. But there are virtually no situations where the working class can't use allies, and some situations where we can't begin to manage without them. We have to actively go out and win these other oppressed classes, to rally them behind our banner, not sit back waiting indefinitely for every one of them to become proletarians anyway.

The bourgeoisie itself has created the working class, and here comes another of those classic images the Manifesto is full of: "It produces above all its own gravediggers. Its downfall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable." This is hopefully no more than a rhetorical flourish on Marx's part because, while you don't need to be a brain surgeon to see the

inevitability of capitalism collapsing, there's nothing inevitable about the workers emerging victorious from the ruins. World war, fascism, barbarism—"the common downfall of the battling classes" is how the Manifesto puts it—awaits if our class doesn't shape itself to build socialism instead.

Which is where section II of the Manifesto comes in, asking where the communists stand in regard to the working class as a whole. The initial answer is worth repeating in full:

The communists aren't a separate party as against the other workers' parties.

They have no interests apart from the interests of the whole proletariat.

They set up no separate interests by which they seek to mould the proletarian movement.

The communists differ from the rest of the proletarian parties only in as much as, on the one hand, in the various national struggles of the proletarians they emphasise and bring to bear the common interests— independently of nationality—of the whole proletariat and, on the other hand, in the various stages of development that the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie pass through they always advocate the interests of the entire movement.

The communists are therefore practically the most resolute part, always driving further forward, of the workers' parties of all countries; they have theoretically the advantage over the great mass of the proletariat of the insight into the conditions, the course and the general results of the proletarian movement.

Firstly, why is the class-conscious section of the working class referred to as "communists"? Engels later explained that "we could not have called it a *Socialist Manifesto*". 150 years ago socialists were those who advocated social reform with the support of middle-class philanthropists; those in the working-class movement who called for the workers to free themselves through social revolution were known as communists. And so, "there could be no doubt as to which of the two names we must take. Moreover, we have, ever since, been far from repudiating it." Since then, Stalinism has gone and ruined the word communism on us, and socialism is a much less problematic term, especially now that the labour parties only use it when they lose the run of themselves. But, with a small c and a clear health warning, communism is a grand revolutionary name for a grand revolutionary thing, and we shouldn't go throwing it out altogether.

Secondly, if communists aren't a separate party, what exactly was this here Communist League up to then? And what was it doing publishing a *Manifesto of the Communist Party*? The answer requires a look at how political language has changed. In the mid-nineteenth century the word "party" had a much wider meaning. The 'Repeal party' referred to the movement for the repeal of the union with Britain, not just Daniel O'Connell's clique; the 'Chartist party' in Britain meant the movement to enact the People's Charter, rather than a particular association; the 'democratic party' in Europe was those who wanted democracy, instead of any individual organisation. If you read this sentence as meaning that socialists are part of the workers' movement rather than a movement of their own, it makes perfect sense. Whether the work of socialists requires separate organisation at all times is a question the *Manifesto* doesn't attempt to answer.

Thirdly, how many Marxist organisations of the past 150 years can you recognise in the above quotation? On one side, the humility of the *Manifesto*, modestly pointing out that us communists aren't all that different from most people after all. On the other, those who define themselves by what separates them from the working class rather than what unites them, who judge the success of a strike by the number of members they've recruited, who always manage to conclude that what's best for them happens to be best for the working class. Wherever these latter get their inspiration from, it isn't the *Communist Manifesto*.

In attacking the capitalists' hypocritical defence of the family, the *Manifesto* refers to the "absence of family amongst the proletarians". In 1848 this was fair enough: capitalism was young and was dragging in anyone and everyone to turn a profit for it, tearing family ties to shreds in the process. It was only later in the century that it began to see the family as a handy institution for rearing the next generation of workers and privatising domestic labour. This is one of the rare occasions on which the *Manifesto* mistakenly takes a short-term trend for a permanent feature of capitalism.

The communists were accused of wanting to nationalise women. The allegation is now more curious than anything else, but the answer shows that sexual politics is nothing new to Marxism:

The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production should be worked in common, and naturally can't think other than that the fate of being in common lies in store for the wives as well.

Little does he know that it is a question of abolishing the position of wives as mere instruments of production.

"The national separations and antagonisms of the peoples are disappearing more and more already with the development of the bourgeoisie, with free trade, the world market, the uniformity of industrial production and the corresponding conditions of life." Yes and no: the world market and trade has *increased* national antagonism, by systematically *underdeveloping* large regions of the world. But at the same time it has created the *foundations* for a global community, the *potential* for a united human race. But like most of capitalism's possibilities, the capitalist system will have to be abolished internationally before it can be realised.

The first step in socialist revolution is "the elevation of the proletariat to ruling class, the winning of the battle for democracy". Democracy is here equated with the victory of the working class: socialist revolution is the *beginning* of democracy. (The standard English translation is unclear here: "to win the battle of democracy". But "die Erkaempfung der Demokratie" clearly means winning democracy in a battle. Samuel Moore's translation, edited by Engels, improves upon the original here and there, but sometimes confuses matters. Worst of all, how did Engels allow "proletarians" to be turned into "working men"? This article uses the original text of the *Manifesto*.)

"If the proletariat in struggle against the bourgeoisie necessarily unites as a class, through a revolution makes itself the ruling class and as ruling class forcibly abolishes the old relations of production, it then abolishes with these relations of production the conditions of existence of class antagonisms, of classes in general, and with that its own rule as a class." The workers' use of state power is a minimal one: the only reason they assume political domination as a class is to put an end to political domination and to classes.

The *Manifesto* outlines ten immediate measures such a revolution would take. Despite Marx and Engels stressing how provisional they were, dependent on a particular time and place, too much attention has been focussed on them. Many commentators are surprised at how moderate they are—but, the same as anyone else, the working class will have to walk before we can run, and the important thing is to get things underway; building a socialist society will be a continuous job, constantly outstripping itself.

The big mistake is measure number three: "Abolition of inheritance"—a step guaranteed to drive the small farmers of Europe into the arms of reaction. Engels's draft called for the *restriction* of inheritance rather than its abolition, and even for the right of children born outside marriage to inherit. When the Communist League drew up a list of demands on the outbreak of revolution in Germany a month or two later, Engels's approach prevailed. And in later decades Marx found himself arguing that the workers' state wouldn't take land from small farmers' children.

The third section is notable for being a fine example of Marx keeping his satiric powers under control. Too often he would fill pages with minute critique of whatever counterfeit version of socialism he was faced with, ten times more than it deserved. That he succeeded in keeping it snappy here is probably a tribute to the influence of Engels's draft. And he had so much to play with—it seems every world-reformer going back then called themselves a socialist.

The section on petty-bourgeois socialism interestingly sees its origin in the way that “a new petty bourgeoisie has been formed, that hovers between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and is continually formed anew as a supplementary part of bourgeois society”. So the tendency of capitalist society to split up into a capitalist class and a working class is modified by another tendency, to create a new middle class. But this tendency is a subordinate one, and these petty bourgeois are constantly pushed up or (more usually) down into one of the two great camps.

For all its criticism of the various socialist schools, the Manifesto does give credit where it's due. The “critical-utopian” socialists, for example, “assail all the principles of existing society. They have therefore provided extremely valuable material for the enlightenment of the workers.” Their problem is that “they see no capacity for historical activity on the part of the proletariat itself, no political movement of its own”; all they see in the workers is “the most suffering class”.

Section IV, like section III, deals with parties that have ceased to exist, but tactics that can still be applied. Socialist activity is summed up in one of those sentences that a century and a half hasn't bettered: “They fight for the attainment of the immediate present aims and interests of the working class, but in the movement of the present they stand at the same time for the future of the movement.”

The allies of the communists in various countries are then outlined. Where there are working-class parties, the position is as already stated in section II. But elsewhere communists critically support social democrats, radicals, agrarian revolutionaries—“every revolutionary movement against the existing historical and political situation”, but always “bring to the fore the property question, however developed or undeveloped a form it may have assumed, as the basic question of the movement”. Socialists take an unapologetic part in a united front, but without putting the class struggle on the long finger.

Understandably the Manifesto goes into more detail when it comes to Germany. Here the communists fight alongside the capitalists against the aristocrats, whenever the capitalists seriously want to fight. “But they don't forget for a moment to carve out amongst the workers the clearest possible

consciousness of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, so that the German workers can at once turn the historical and political conditions which the bourgeoisie must bring about with its rule into so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, so that as soon as the reactionary classes in Germany fall the struggle against the bourgeoisie itself begins.” Germany was on the eve of a bourgeois revolution but, because the German working class was more developed than the English or French working classes were during their bourgeois revolutions, this “can therefore be merely the curtain-raiser to a proletarian revolution”. The concept of permanent revolution is not a more recent bit added on to Marxism: here it is right in the heart of the Communist Manifesto itself.

The communists “openly declare that their aims can only be achieved by the forcible overthrow of every social order that has existed until now”. When Engels's draft asked if private property could be abolished peacefully, it answered: “It would be desirable if this could happen, and the communists would certainly be the last to oppose it.” But given that the capitalists were already forcibly holding down the workers' movement, this hardly seemed likely. “If the oppressed proletariat is thereby finally driven to revolution, then we communists will defend the cause of the proletarians with deeds just as we now defend it with words.” Marx's final version is more up-front, not bothering with the outside chance that the capitalists might come quietly. And this is the better approach, because it wasn't a question of crystal ball-gazing about what might and mightn't happen, but of preparing the workers for what will most probably be necessary.

“*Proletarians of all countries, unite!*” This isn't just a big finish. It is worth taking to heart that the last word of the Manifesto is a call for *workers' unity*. After all is said and done, the *most* important thing is not for socialists to get themselves organised and clear—important as that is. The *most* important thing is for workers everywhere to stand together, because the united working class is the force that can end all the oppression that haunts us today and replace it with “an association in which the free development of each forms the conditions for the free development of all”. The reason we need to discuss, criticise, celebrate the Communist Manifesto—and above all *read* the thing, again and again—is that it puts our class in a better position to reach that goal.

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