

CONGRESS '86

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EXPOSE THIS SCANDAL!

The last year of the 1980's finds the Southern Irish State with more than a quarter million unemployed, one million living on the poverty line and 70,000 emigrated in '88. Conditions are so deplorable that even the conservative Irish hierarchy feel obliged to voice their disquiet.

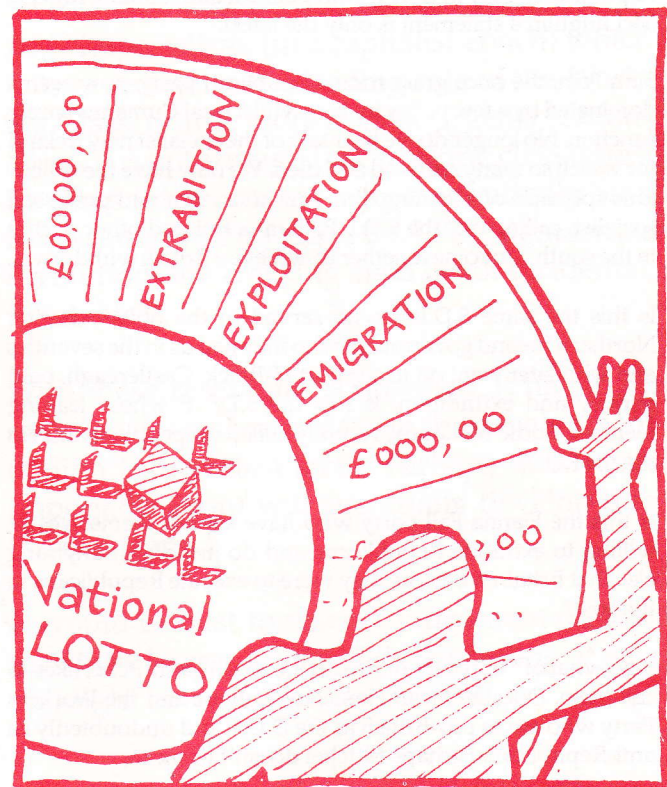
Set against this distressing background, two cold statistics illustrate the nature of Ireland's problem. Last year 13% of the 26 County Gross National Product (GNP) flowed abroad in repayment of foreign debt, repatriation of multi-nationals profits and overseas investments. At the same time public companies, registered in Dublin, managed to invest one billion pounds outside Ireland!

Sophisticated capitalist economists can offer countless plausible arguments to excuse this. So skilful are they that in certain circles in the 26 Counties a perception now exists that the Dublin government has created a healthy, vibrant economy!

In the last century the same thinking also prevailed when the labours of a few destitute peasantry maintained a native aristocracy and an absentee landlordry in splendour. The Irish might starve, but "god love them, they always paid the rent".

That situation was a scandal in the 19th century and the present situation is also a scandal. The major difference now is the source of our trouble. What colonial imperialism and a greedy aristocracy perpetrated in the last century, finance imperialism and native capitalism do today.

To end this outrage it is essential that we halt the transfer of wealth from Ireland. That we prevent, for example, the Allied Irish bank from investing £240 million in the US economy while the Irish economy is underemployed. But stemming the flow of wealth from the country is of itself not enough. A simple ban on capital transfers would only lead major capitalists to either evade the law or to maintain profits by further squeezing working people.



In reality Irish capitalism cannot be trusted to protect the interests of working people. As a matter of fact capitalism dare not put working people's welfare before profits. Were it to do so it would no longer be capitalism. A properly democratic government, one truly representative of Irish working people, would prevent not only the outflow of wealth but also ensure that the retained capital be employed on behalf of the working people.

To bring about such a government involves a change of state power. In the meantime we must make every endeavour to inform the largest possible number of working people that their wealth is being squandered. We must arouse a righteous indignation against the undemocratic injustice inherent in this.

We must lay bare the misery caused by capitalism and at the same time lay capitalism bare.

EX-PRISONER AGAINST PAN-NATIONALISM

The following article is reprinted from the Derry journal of 13.1.89. The writer has remained anonymous. However his observations, as a recently released republican prisoner, should be noted by all anti-imperialists and socialists.

Sir - I would be obliged if, through the columns of your newspaper, you would permit me to refer to the recent statement of Sinn Fein Councillor Mitchel McLaughlin, in which he called for a united front of all nationalists, both North and South, to achieve a united Ireland.

As a Republican, only recently released from prison, I must say that I have been greatly dismayed by some recent aspects of Republican policy in Derry, both political and military. Mitchel McLaughlin's statement is only the latest.

Sinn Fein, the once grass roots Republican party, now seems dominated by a few policy makers whilst local Cumannns barely function. No longer do we hear talk of the socialist new Ireland for which so many suffered and died. We now have the ridiculous spectacle of a leading Sinn Fein councillor and professed socialist, calling on "the S.D.L.P., Fianna Fail and other parties in the south", to come together to achieve a British withdrawal.

Is this the same S.D.L.P. who served in the power-sharing Northern Ireland government who interned us in the seventies and who later went on to support H-Block, Castlereagh, paid perjury and extradition. Is this the S.D.L.P. whose leading member, Eddie McGrady, recently called on people to inform the the RUC?

Is this the Fianna Fail party who have shown themselves as willing to extradite Republicans and do just about anything else that Britain wants, as they were to execute Republicans in the past?

And what of "the other parties in the south" as Mitchel likes to call them. Does he mean Fine Gael, Labour and the Workers Party who are as pro-British as the D.U.P. and undoubtedly as anti-Republican. Perhaps Mitchel doesn't think so.

Does he believe that our long suffering people would be any better off in a United Ireland brought about in conjunction with these people. Does he believe that we would even be free of British imperialism then. Perhaps he thinks that these parties are so politically naive that they would not look after their own capitalist interests once freedom had been achieved. Or is he so foolish as to think that somehow Sinn Fein will come to the fore in such a situation without doing any groundwork. Finally and more disturbingly, has he learnt nothing from Irish history which repeatedly teaches us that common fronts with middle class parties with different economic aims from us inevitably lead to sell-out for the working class.

For my part, Mitchel, your scenario for a United Ireland is not worth spending one day in prison, never mind the loss of one's life which so many of our comrades bravely did. While you may be prepared to settle for a capitalist Ireland, those who still endure poverty and social deprivation will only settle for a new society.

Finally, could I refer to some recent I.R.A. operations in Derry. It would now seem that, in increasing desperation to achieve Crown Force fatalities, the I.R.A. are sanctioning more of what could only be termed 'crazy operations,' endangering civilians more than the supposed targets. Indeed, on one recent shooting in Creggan, there was no-one around except children.

Bombs have also been left and lobbed in crowded streets, e.g. Bishop Street, Shipquay Street, Waterloo Place and Linsfort Drive. Only by pure luck have civilians not died. The bomb in Kildrum Gardens, which killed two civilians, typifies this easygoing attitude. This was not an operation which went wrong as the I.R.A. have said, this was an operation which should never have taken place.

As to the Linsfort Drive attack, who could honestly have believed that a one pound bomb would have inflicted injuries on the occupants of an armoured jeep, built to withstand landmines. As any fool could have predicted, it would endanger civilian lives only and cause damage to their homes, as did happen. These same residents were then tortured by the British army and RUC for a full day after the attack.

Similarly, what of recent robberies in the city at least one of which has been definitely attributed to the I.R.A. I must admit that even a republican like myself had difficulty in distinguishing the sordid details of "this operation" from some recent "fundraising" activities carried out by the I.N.L.A. which rightly provoked an outcry and calls to disband from the Republican Movement. I wonder if Christmas had anything to do with this particular piece of "fundraising." Bobby Sands would turn in his grave.

To write this letter has not been easy for someone who has devoted a good part of their life to the Republican cause. In that time, I have stood by many things which the Movement has done. I would consider myself a Republican and supporter of the armed struggle, when waged properly. However, Republicans should remember that the struggle belongs to the people, not to elitist personalities. It is the people who have suffered and died this past twenty years. They don't deserve to be treated like fools and led up the garden path by our so-called elected leaders. Mitchel McLaughlin's United Ireland would not mean freedom, but simply further repression and a continuation of economic and indeed political control by Britain. Neither do the people deserve to be treated as pawns by the I.R.A. They may support a united Ireland, but they do not want to be blown up to achieve it.

WORRIED REPUBLICAN



THE SINN FEIN ARD FHEIS

The 1989 Sinn Fein Ard Fheis passed a motion accepting in principle the need for an Anti-Imperialist mass movement. Without a complete account of the proceedings yet, we have to base our first comments on the, admittedly, unsatisfactory press reports available. From the information at hand we can though make a few observations.

A first point is that we welcome any move towards the establishment of a broad-based, Anti-Imperialist Mass Movement. We also welcome the acknowledgement by Sinn Fein that their elitist brand of politicking is incapable of breaking British - Imperialism's grip on Ireland.

That said, there remains a sort of dreary repetitiveness in Sinn Fein's thinking. If Irish News reports are accurate, the mass-movement is to be made up of the broadest range of political and social forces. Its central objective is to end partition and achieve national independence and unity in the context of "Irish National Self-Determination". Its demands will be framed to reflect the "need for democratic, political, economic, social and cultural Rights in Ireland".

As one delegate, Johnny White (Derry), pointed out at the Ard-Fheis, such a broad front is liable to attract those who are neither Republican nor Socialist. By highlighting partition and pitching for the broadest range of political and social

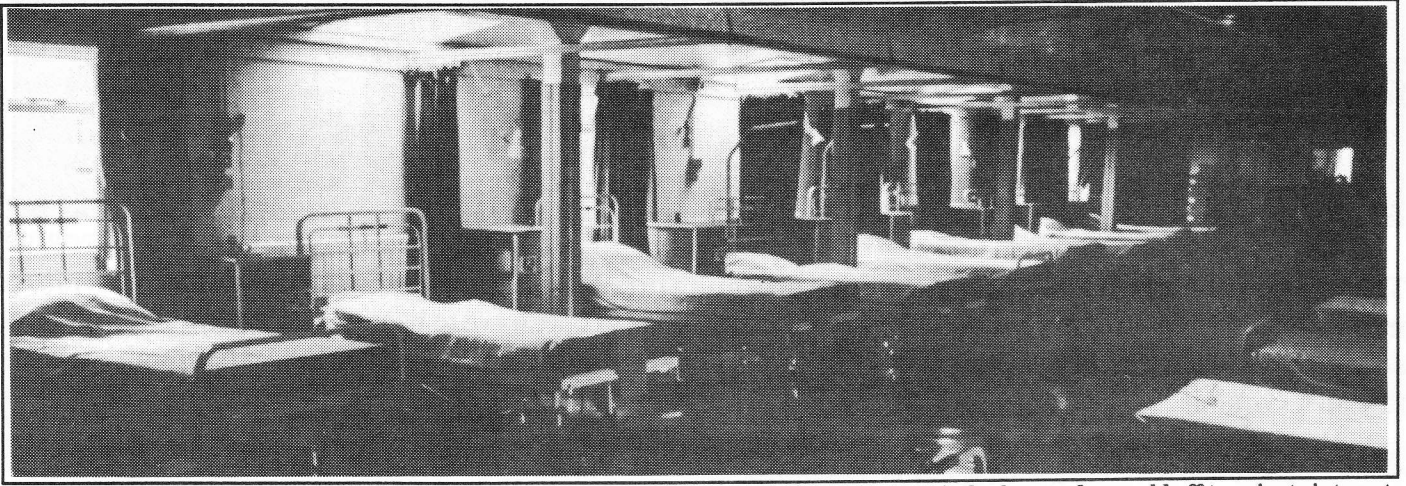
forces, Sinn Fein's 1989 Anti-Imperialist Movement may be little different from their 1988 Pan-Nationalist one.

Anti-Imperialism, (in a capitalist epoch) which fails to recognise the leading role of the Working Class, is little more than Bourgeois Nationalism. It is not enough that working class issues be taken into account - which admittedly Sinn Fein seems to be trying to do. In the democratic revolution, the working class is not incidental, it is central.

With these reservations however, it has to be said that it is still early days in the development of Sinn Fein's latest tactic. Perhaps their Anti-Imperialist Front will eventually develop into the real thing.

It would be best to reserve judgement on that for a little longer. Johnny White's feeling of déjà vu might be well founded after all.





Public Hospitals close and are sold off to private interests

PRIVATISATION FAVOURS THE RICH.

We're told that we live in a Democracy, but what kind of democracy is this that denies those who produce the wealth any input into the political/economic decision making process?

The privatisation policy clearly illustrates this lack of accountability. The anti-working class legislation which supports it is the brain child of the right wing and has been long identified with Thatcherism in Britain and, more recently, in Ireland by their class allies Fine Gael and Fianna Fail.

The supporters of Thatcherism would have us believe that all the economic and social ills have been caused by an overactive Public (state) Sector. They cite the breach of the free market competition, among other things, as lying at the root of the many economic crises. By way of a solution they advocate the scrapping of the Public Sector and a return to laissez faire capitalism.

What then does the dismantling of the Public Sector mean for the ordinary working person?

In a word - Poverty. Before we look at this in more detail it would be worth our while to examine the two different sectors in the economy. The Private Sector is that sector of trade and industry owned and controlled by individuals or groups of individuals (share holders). It has one simple objective - to make profit. If a particular service or industry does not generate enough profit then the Private Sector will not invest in it.

In our society some of the most essential services in the community do not provide opportunities for profit-making. The Private Sector either avoids them or focuses on those areas where profit can be made, like for example private hospitals and schools for the wealthy. At this point we begin to see the contradiction between what is necessary for the lives and well-being of the citizen, on the one hand, and the profit motivation of capitalism on the other.

While by no means resolving this contradiction, the Public, or State Sector has proven that it can intervene, thus filling the vacuum of economic chaos left by private enterprise. Government revenues can easily be pumped back into the community in the form of capital to industry and services.

Alternatively there is no advantage for the working people in privatisation. Just look at what happened to the British coal industry since the early 1980's since the decision was taken, behind the backs of the workers to sell out to private industry. Just as the pits were closed, many of our hospitals and other essential services are similarly threatened, that haven't already been closed. As we have seen in Britain, the Tories, in an effort to make the mining industry more attractive to private buyers, closed down many collieries and decimated the mining workforce.

Although the National Union of Mineworkers fought a courageous struggle to hold onto their livelihoods, they

found that their struggle was sold short by the TUC and the Labour Party. The Labour Party's problem then, as now like so many other reformist parties, was more to do with lack of a clear set of policies putting the interests of the working class to the fore.

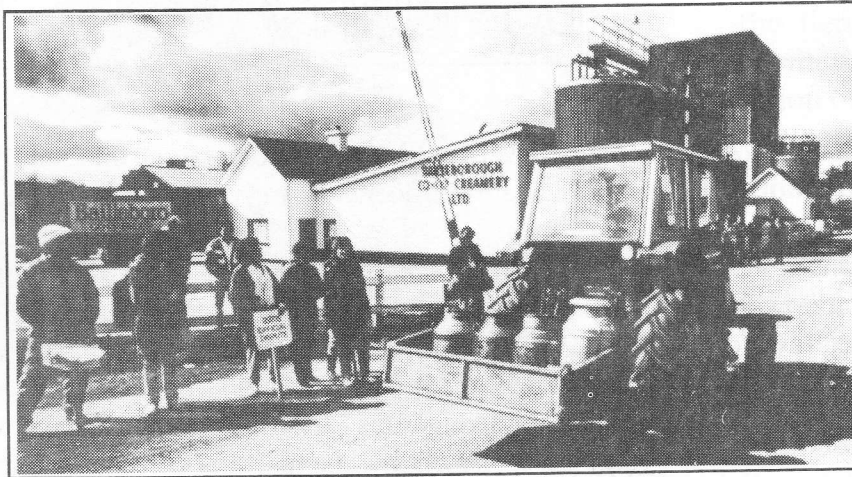
What we find in such parties are conservatives, albeit with a smaller and less pronounced "c" than the Tories. This is the absurd and contradictory price that a "left" party in search of the elusive path of reformism risks paying.

The question of privatisation boils down to this:- Should we allow the wealth of our country in raw materials, industry, schools and hospitals be organised by a small group of profit motivated individuals?

As you are reading this hundreds of workers are threatened by privatisation. In the north there is the case of Harland and Wolff and the Electricity Service, while in the country as a whole hospitals, colleges and community projects are being singled out. The attack on the health Service is the most deplorable of all the attempts at privatisation. Putting a price on a sick patient may not be of any great concern to the wealthy, but what of the more vulnerable, the unemployed, the pensioners and the very young.

All of which leaves us with the conclusion that **Privatisation Favours the Rich. Oppose privatisation. Fight the Cuts.**

THE DONERAILE CENTENARY 1889 - 1989



Striking workers on picket duty outside the Bailieboro Co-Op, before Goodman take over.

Perhaps one of the less familiar anniversaries of 1989 is that of the founding of the Doneraile Co-operative in Co. Waterford a century ago. Although it subsequently failed this co-op did signify a new initiative insofar as it was the first Irish co-operative. It was a group led by the progressive Unionist Horace Plunkett (MP for S. Dublin 1892 - 1902) who were the originators of the Co-op idea to Ireland in 1889. The previous year, 1888, Plunkett and his co-founders of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS), were involved in talks with the English Co-op Movement. It will hardly surprise anyone to hear that the English and Irish disagreed! The reason for this was that the English Co-operative Movement was more concerned with retail, wholesale and manufacturing. On the other hand Plunkett and his friends recognised the underdevelopment of agriculture in Ireland as their immediate priority. This point is emphasised by the title the Irish adopted, the IAOS, this also helps explain the subsequent identification of the Co-op movement in Ireland with agriculture.

Within the past few years one Larry Goodman has undone much of Horace Plunkett's work. However to reduce social development to an account of the actions of a few individuals is unmarxist. Just as the British and Irish co-op thinking a century ago was the product of different economic and social development patterns in the two nations, so takeovers like that of the Goodman Group, have as their motor the logic of today's Irish economy.

In the late 1980's Ireland's agricultural co-ops were operating in splendid isolation and were not geared for survival in a competitive market. It was obvious, for instance,

that a state sponsored marketing organisation was badly needed. The Goodman Group, in a partial and parochial fashion, have provided that coordinated approach to marketing. Irish agriculture, if it is to survive, needs aggressive direction and development? With schemes aimed at increasing herd numbers to encouraging pig production operating in different parts of the country, Goodman and Food Industries are providing a version of a marketing organisation.

That the rationale behind what Goodman is doing is maximisation of profit and that its effect will be, in the most part, short-term, is besides the point. No Irish government has ever produced a long-term development plan for agriculture.

The anniversary of the Doneraile Co-op should be an occasion for focusing attention on Co-operatives in general. It's worth admitting that in this area left-wing contribution has been uneven to say the least. In 1923 Lenin pointed out that Co-ops in the capitalist states are "collective capitalist institutions". He argued that they catered, mainly, for the small property owner or the petit bourgeois. However Lenin also argued convincingly an argument which in today's perestroika/glasnost times is once again getting attention: that in a socialist state where the working class hold political power, co-ops were useful and socialist institutions.

Soviet co-ops which did develop were almost exclusively agricultural. The extent of that development is also worth noting. Statistics given in the Soviet English language publications, "New Times" and

"Socialism: Theory and Practise" show that in 1983 there were 21,000 State Farms employing 11.6 million workers and 25,000 co-operatives employing 13 million workers.

So while co-op development is still a revolutionary force in socialist society, in Ireland agricultural co-ops in particular are under pressure. From this situation three conclusions may be drawn:

1. Agricultural development in Ireland has been and is being changed fundamentally. Unless the government provides a marketing board and begins a programme of active development of existing co-ops the trend towards bigger and more authoritarian structures in agriculture will continue. This trend is sharpening the class conflict in agriculture here in Ireland where around 20% of the nation's workforce are employed. The role of the farmer is being reduced to one of delivering at a price. This situation needs to be clearly spelled out to all small farmers and workers.
2. In order to protect Irish agriculture, political power must be won. Piecemeal changes won't halt the present trends.
3. The attainment of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Small Farmers will only become feasible after a period of prolonged and successful agitation. Workers and small farmers must break with the reformist thinking which confines change to within the capitalist structure and has been the accepted norm for generations.

Anniversaries like that of the Doneraile Co-op should be used by all progressive organisations and individuals to take some of

contd. over

SDLP DUPLICITY

God's good and the Devil's not bad might be the SDLP motto.

Despite having a plentiful supply of knavish politicians in Ireland, Hume and his followers would surely win a special award in any contest for duplicity on this island.

In their convention, held since this magazine last appeared, the SDLP gave a display of political dishonesty which would take some beating. The tone of the convention was set, from the beginning, by the debate on extradition. Approval was voted for the Dublin government's extradition policy while noting at the same time flaws in the quality of Britain's judicial system. Brid Rogers insisted that what is most important is the rule of law. While acknowledging the flawed nature of British legal justice she maintained that handing

Doneraile Centenary continued

the first steps towards:

- A. A re-evaluation of the co-op movement as a potentially revolutionary force.
- B. The drawing up of a practical programme aimed at plotting a course for existing co-ops and all small farmers to culminate in fundamental revolutionary change.



New Times" and "Socialism: Theory and Practice" are available from New Books, 43 East Essex St., Dublin 2.

people over to this system does not indicate confidence in it!

The SDLP, it seems, would have us believe that there is a difference between the rules of law and those who administer it. Equally incongruous was the key-note speech by the party leader. John Hume went to considerable length in an effort to prove that the sole source of the troubles in the Six Counties is the IRA. In contrast to his behaviour in the early part of the year, the logic of Hume's position would indicate that the IRA are not a consequence of an undemocratic regime but the cause of it!

Blatant nonsense of this sort may win applause from Stormont (or Dublin) Castle, but it is of little value in the search for an end to the nightmare in Ireland, which is by no means confined to Northern nationalists.

Ireland-wide we are at present experiencing a nightmare resulting from both economic and political imperialism. The round of totalitarian legislation from Westminster is paralleled by a less dramatic, though equally damaging set of measures being implemented by Dublin at the behest of foreign financiers and their native administrators.

SDLP silence about this nightmare is no accident. Representing the interests of the northern Catholic middle class, Hume's party faces a dilemma. On the

one hand the party tries retaining its influence within the Six Counties by showing concern over extreme violations of justice. On the other hand the SDLP knows it has to support (South as well as North) the governmental systems which best guarantee the self-interest of the middle class in general.

Bluntly speaking the SDLP are faced with a contradiction which knows no reconciliation. It is futile to deplore an RUC "shoot to kill" policy while advocating the surrender of suspects into the hands of the very same force. Ultimately Hume's party must support both.

By the same token the SDLP cannot aspire to the privileges selectively dispensed by capitalist imperialism without endorsing the system which maintains capitalism. When Hume eulogises the Single European Market of 1992 he is simply acknowledging a debt the middle class must pay if they wish to consolidate their position.

No-one can say for sure how long the SDLP will be able to continue with their masquerade. What can be certain though is that when the chips are down they will not show the slightest ambiguity. Their true nature will become public - solidly on the side of capitalist imperialism and solidly on the side of whatever brutal measures are employed in its defence.



REACTION IN RANGOON

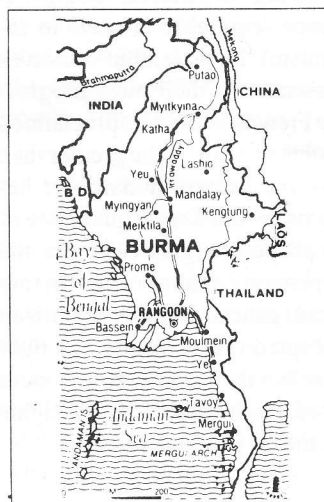
October 1988 saw a brutal bloodbath on the streets of Rangoon, the Burmese capital. Some estimates put the death toll in the thousands with many more maimed or injured. The demonstrations which were so bloodily suppressed were demanding an end to the military dictatorship that has ruled this country since 1962. Protests were given added impetus by the country's economic plight, a direct result of the policies of "isolationism", as practiced by the Ne Win regime. In this article we will look at the circumstances and ideology which gave rise to such a brutal regime and what lessons it holds for Ireland.

You could be forgiven for thinking that the story of Burma, cradled as it is in the lap of South East Asia, is the story of another Vietnam or Laos. Indeed the country's portrayal in the west as another "armed" socialist state might serve to reinforce this view. But a cursory glance at

its recent history reveals that you could hardly be more misinformed. The roots of the recent street battles in Rangoon extend back into the country's colonial past, its victorious independence struggle and the political prejudices of the Founding Fathers of the new state.

INDEPENDENCE

Independence from Britain was achieved in 1948. Used by the British as a huge rice paddy worked by the mainly rural population, the running of the country was left in the hands of Chinese and Indian middlemen. It was a reaction to this rather than any attach-

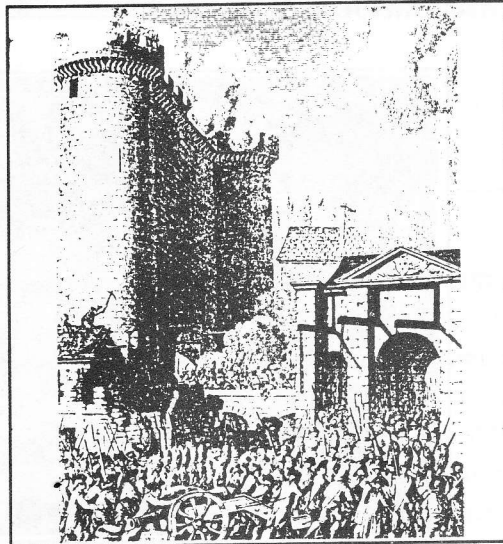


ment to socialist principles which influenced the drafting of post-colonial policies, the fierce condemnation of capitalists and the nationalisation of banks, private businesses and foreign owned companies.

By 1962 the nationalistic jingoism of the post-war leaders was to find fulfillment in the military takeover by the Burmese Socialist Programme Party. Their objectives had far more in common with the National Socialism that had strangled Europe two decades earlier than with those of its socialist neighbours.

The installation of a dictatorial regime, the freezing of wages, the suppression of labour organisations and the fixing of prices were all aimed at squeezing a higher rate of profit from Burmese workers. These strategies served only the interests of the Burmese ruling class enabling them to amass the necessary capital to create their own industrial infrastructure. For the workers and students beaten and shot at by the jackbooted guards last October, there are remarkable similarities to Nazism. An aging bourgeoisie embracing military rule, war economy and slave labour in an attempt to salvage a falling rate of profit. There can be little doubt that the Ne Win regime is the undeveloped state's equivalent of fascism's heavy handed protection of the industrial

Northern Dissenters & the Bastille



History is such a complex thing: it rarely has neat edges; eras and periods seldom have precise beginnings or obvious endings. This year, for example, sees the bicentennial of the outbreak of the great French Revolution. With the exception of a handful of monarchists, all of France will celebrate an event which in its time deeply divided the French nation - not into two, but into several camps.

Here in Ireland we shall, no doubt, have the token cliché-ridden acknowledgements of 1789 from the usual quarters, each for their own reason inferring different interpretations on the event. Perhaps the saddest misconstruction will be one which reminds us of the connection between Republican France and the United Irishmen, implying that radical democracy was imported into this country from Paris.

There is just about enough accuracy in this claim for it to remain in circulation all these years. Yet the most pernicious aspect of this partial truth is that by ignoring the older radical democratic traditions of Irish Non-Conformists (Dissenters or Presbyterians in the main) a vital message is lost. Blurring historical fact is a pity but to actually lose sight of its relevance to the present is a tragedy. And losing sight of history is what happens when we confine the inspiration behind the United Irishmen to the Revolution in France.

BOURGEOISE DEMOCRACY

Because the French Revolution wasn't so much the beginning of bourgeois democracy as, in reality, its coming of

age, we should look also for earlier manifestations. There's a case to be made for considering Luther's Reformation as an early signal of the coming wave. Yet the first time the forces of Bourgeois Democracy made an impact at governmental level was during the English Civil War.

In spite of the eventual compromise with the aristocracy, England of the 1st Commonwealth produced radical democrats in the Levellers. A group who were physically crushed by Cromwell but whose ideas survived among Non-Conformists in particular. Some of them emigrated to America while others found a home in Ireland. History records their influence on the US Constitution and subsequently on the radicalism of the French Revolution.

To an extent therefore, when Belfast of the 1790's celebrated Bastille Day, it was not an aberration by the North's Non-Conformists. In fact it was completely in keeping with their culture.

Lest we drift off into non-materialist romanticising of radical bourgeois democracy (equitable in ways to republicanism), let us remind ourselves of its essence. At their most progressive, the French democrats proclaimed the "Rights of Man" to be greater than those of any despot-monarch or hereditary ruler - in effect, a guarantee of private property rights (whether the private property of huge capital or tiny farmstead) guaranteeing every citizen who accepted this principle, the right to help select the form of government he desired. (In the 18th Century Rights of Man meant just that, ie male).

At the time such ideas were progressive and revolutionary. Not only that, but for people exploited by greedy landlords and/or a capricious aristocracy, such ideas were exciting and welcome. Not only because the concept offered an academic improvement to the body politic, but also a genuine tangible benefit in their daily circumstances.

IRISH RADICAL DEMOCRATS

In Ireland, as in France, democracy was recognised as a cause worth fighting for. None were quicker to grasp the significance of this fact than the Northern Non-Conformists, many of whom had long espoused the radical democracy of the Levellers. For them, the French Republic and its Jacobinism was the same practical clarification of theory that Soviet Russia and the Bolsheviks was to be for socialists of this century.

We often fail to appreciate nowadays, the intensity of the Northern United Irishmen in their commitment to republican democracy. The military defeat in 1798 tends to overshadow their political successes in the years prior to the uprising. With the exception of Co. Armagh, the United Men had massive influence among common people of all Northern counties.

Being for the most part, Presbyterian, the United Irishmen in Belfast realised the crucial importance of winning support, not only from their co-religionists but also from the Catholic population. With an understanding of political reality rarely found today, they quickly learned that Catholic Emanci-

pation was not a major concern with most poor Catholics.

Tithe payments, unfair rents and an unjust magistracy were issues of more immediate distress for poorer Catholics. With a programme, directly addressed to correcting these wrongs, set into the overall demand for a democratic republic, Belfast's radical United Men managed to achieve a unity not seen before or since. So depressing indeed has the subsequent history of the North been that it's worth asking how this bright beginning toppled into the ensuing mess.

France of the Revolution offers a clue. Quite early on, the poorer French began to realise that a declaration of the "Rights of Man" which also guaranteed the rights of private property, carried within it a contradiction - the right to deny its possession to others. The grand coalition of French democrats which united to smash Louis XVI split apart over the undemocratic distribution of wealth.

THE DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE SPLINTERS

The French bourgeoisie showed ruthless enthusiasm when disposing of Monarchist despotism in 1793. They demonstrated the same relentlessness in 1797 when crushing supporters of Babeuf, who claimed that workers and poor were entitled to a livelihood by right. Following rupture within the democracy, France moved inexorably towards Empire. Bourgeois Republicanism alone was incapable of reconciling different class interests, even to the extent that when threatened from below the wealthy began to revive the alliance with the aristocracy.

A similar though not identical process led to the breakup of democratic unity in the North of Ireland. Government loyalists employed Machiavellian subtlety in breaking the unity. With a keen understanding of northern undercurrents, they used economic inducement, brute force and naked sectarianism to achieve their ends.

The 1800 Act of Union, accompanied by British - Irish free trade, gave the Northern bourgeoisie sufficient economic incentive to seek accommodation



Henry Joy McCracken: in 1798 he led the United Irishmen at the Battle of Antrim and was subsequently hanged at Cornmarket.

with London. Brute force contained the radical democrats long enough for this inducement to take effect. Flagrant encouragement of Orangeism caused a degree of religious tension which prevented radicals gaining a respite to reassess and reorganise.

As a conclusive masterstroke, the Crown encouraged "dependable Catholicism" to wage a lengthy and finally successful campaign for Catholic Emancipation. The twenty year agitation led by Daniel O'Connell and the Roman Hierarchy was all it required to finally convince people opposed to papal despotism, as much as monarchical despotism, that Home Rule did indeed mean Rome Rule.

LESSONS FOR TODAY'S STRUGGLE

What therefore are the lessons left for us by this period when a revolution in France inspired Irishmen to unite? First there is the reassuring knowledge that unity around a relevant political standard is possible. Evidence from the past indicates too that this is possible even after times of upheaval.

A second lesson though is to realise the limitations a purely bourgeois democratic republican programme faces if it attempts to provide this standard. Unity around a standard is possible yes, but not total multi-class unity. It was the multi-class nature of the Northern United Irishmen which allowed British government agents to divide them so comprehensively. It is the multi-

class nature of contemporary republicanism, making it more nationalist than radical democratic, which helps perpetuate these divisions.

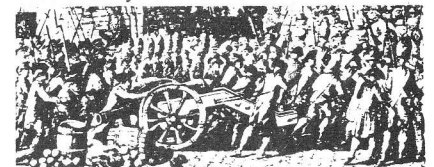
If we are ever to end these divisions it is essential that the entire Irish Working Class are provided with, and attracted to, a radical democratic programme. A programme which at once identifies immediate problems and offers realistic solutions. A programme sufficiently revolutionary that its impact is not set apart from, but cuts right through current difficulties and dissensions.

Today's distressing realities must never become an excuse for cynicism. Belfast sectarianism of 1989 is no more a permanent feature than Louis Bourbon's Bastille of 1789. Nor is an end to Belfast sectarianism necessarily dependent on the removal of partition. Whatever hand history may deal us eventually, one thing is clear - it will be a lot easier to end partition if sectarianism can be broken or at least curbed in the course of a struggle for a Worker's Democracy.

With the increasing despotism of Thatcherite economic devastation causing more and more hardship in all parts of the north, who can guarantee anything anymore? The northern bourgeoisie is no longer the autonomous economic force it once was, nor is it quite so exclusively Protestant. Since 1973, the influence of Orange bourgeois/aristocratic paternalism has diminished.

Social relations usually lag behind underlying material conditions and it is about time a greater effort was put into bringing the two together.

A democratic republican programme proved capable of temporarily uniting a majority of Northerners in the 1790's. What is required today is a radical democratic programme. One which recognises both the strengths and limitations of 18th century French republican democracy and grasps the importance of 20th century working people's democracy.



from pg. 7

and big business class which is too unstable to run under its own steam.

OPPOSITION

At the moment opposition to this dictatorship appears to be scattered and demoralised. Mass demonstrations and a six week general strike have all been suppressed by the military. Many of the leaders of the opposition movement have been forced to flee the cities. Even the country's dire economic problems (foreign debt of \$3-4 billion, GDP of \$1.42 billion and reserves of below \$20 million) have not seriously affected the regime's grip on power. Only a communist party capable of the mass mobilisation of the urban workers and small rural proprietors will be capable of wresting power from the regime.

At present there is every sign that imperialism is seeking to impose its own solution. By applying sanctions against the dictatorship it hopes to aid the succession of a more liberal government. The result of this would be to open up the Burmese market to foreign capital. In the longrun this will leave the workers of Burma as badly off as before. The international banking system and the IMF would impose undemocratic economic measures to extract from those already most persecuted, the credits owed by Ne Win's regime. Already the

regime's largest contributor, Japan, has opted for sanctions.

LESSONS FOR IRELAND

Army takeovers, rice fields and Asia seem far removed from the concerns of shoppers in Dublin and Belfast. There appear to be few comparisons between our two countries. To suggest that dictatorship and isolationism are trends to be guarded against here in Ireland would seem to many an exaggeration. After all, for example, despite its potential for repression, it remains highly unlikely that the Free State Army will be used to shelter our native industrial capitalists from foreign competition as happened in Burma. Indeed the trend at present is towards the integration of the regular army into a European "defence force" capable of both defending and expanding the markets for the increasingly concentrated capital investments of a future European economic bloc. The latent threat of National Socialism has been waning, in the 26 Counties, for over thirty years now.

But the disappearance of such a danger from one quarter should not mean that we don't guard against its re-emergence from another. It would be tragic indeed if, as happened in Burma, the ill-defined nationalism of a pro-independence grouping con-

tained within it the seeds of such isolationism.

AGAINST ISOLATIONISM

Economic isolation within the context of alliances with native capital, as Burma chose and large sections of Republicans espouse, would have dire consequences for the Irish working class. In Burma the lesson was proved conclusively with the military takeover and mass nationalisations in 1962, it should not be repeated here. High minded speeches denouncing foreign owned multinationals or loosely worded text hinting at "socialist programmes" simply cannot be regarded as a litmus test for Irish patriots. It is only by understanding the need to put the Irish workers to the head of the anti-imperialist struggle that we can protect ourselves from just such an eventuality.

Our fight is not one which guarantees the right to freedom for Irish bosses and their political front-men. No, it is for the freedom from exploitation and repression of the working people, both in Ireland and throughout the world.



SOCIALISM OR NATIONALISM?

In a recent edition of the Belfast "Newsletter" Rob Harrison claimed that Marxism was a spent force. He went on, at some length, to demonstrate that nationalism, as he thought, is the great political motivator. According to Harrison, the struggle between classes is a thing of the past.

In one form or another this is a common theme of capitalism's most vocal apologists. In the '80s this lobby has become more strident. A leading exponent of this particular line of thought is "The Economist", who would have us believe that communism is in fact dead.

While most critics of socialism confine their condemnations to the old rhetoric of the Cold War, those like "The Economist" go further. By reference to tendentiously selected facts they try to prove that capitalism provides an inherently freer system of government and a higher standard of living.

By an astonishing use of tunnel vision these right wing ideologues contrast the handful of wealthy capitalist states (USA, Japan and those of Western Europe) with the entire socialist system. In terms of consumer goods the socialist world shows up poorly.

No mention is made of mass unemployment or other misfortunes in the West. Equally important, no mention is made of the wretched state of those so called "Third World" or imperialised countries which are also part of the capitalist world system. It is the ruthless exploitation of these imperialised countries that provides so much of the

wealth on which the "First World" is built.

This however is almost a digression. The validity of Marxism is not necessarily something which can be tested by a random check on an index of available consumer goods.

A basic teaching, if not indeed the basic teaching of Marxism, is that of the struggle between classes. Marx neither invented nor even claimed to have discovered this conflict. What he did was outline its course through history and define the role of the working class in the class struggle. Marx also underlined the necessity and inevitability of the working class triumphing in this struggle. At the risk of oversimplification, Marxism maintains that the working class, which produces society's wealth, must also take political power to distribute it.

It's a relatively straight forward proposal. One that makes the logical point that the interests of working people can only be guaranteed if and when power is exercised by and for the working class. In other words a system which responds to the needs of the working majority rather than one acting for the narrow benefits of a capital hogging elite.

Should the working class of any nation find itself exploited and repressed by a foreign power, it naturally follows that the source of exploitation has to be resisted. To achieve this temporary alliances may even be formed with a native bourgeoisie.

Only the wilfully blind would interpret such cooperation as purely nationalist. And only the self-deluding would believe that such a temporary arrange-

ment ends or even suspends the conflict of interests between workers and native capitalists.

As a matter of fact it has been the experience that the struggle for national rights, led by the working class, usually causes the native bourgeoisie to side with the foreign exploiters in an attempt to protect their own interests and privileges.

James Connolly foresaw this situation and insisted that in the long term only the Irish working class can truly achieve national liberation. Since in their efforts to liberate themselves, they will simultaneously "Liberate Ireland".

Naturally enough there are those who would prefer to ignore the continuing validity of the Marxist teaching on class struggle. Wealthy capitalists and their hired apologists would be quite content to attribute all discontent to atavistic nationalism.

In truth there are more than enough atavists to lend a certain spurious logic to this argument.

However the underlying struggle between classes is like truth. There are always those who will strive for it and sooner or later it will come through. When it does there won't be much that capitalism, much less the "Newsletter" or "The Economist", can do about it.





What follows is the first of a series of short articles on political concepts for the uninitiated as requested by some readers. We begin with a look at military elitism.

The concepts of "Mass Mobilisation" and Militarist Elitism" are best understood by looking at a few practical examples. These will allow the reader the opportunity to see the vast difference between the two strategies. They will also demonstrate clearly the need for a mass mobilisation in Ireland today.

The idea of mass mobilisation is no stranger to the Irish. In the Land War of the 1880's it was used to break the stranglehold of landlordism, without the firing of a shot. Branches of the Land League sprang up in virtually every locality. Eviction was resisted, labourers and servants went on strike, local tradespeople refused to supply landlords or their agents, scabs were ostracised and huge demonstrations were held.

In the Tan War of 1919, large sections of the population gave active support to the war effort. Again during the Civil Rights Movement of 1968, people took to the streets in their thousands, established no-go areas and organised themselves into Defence Committees. However it is important not to confuse mass mobilisation with having a big vote. Fianna Fail have a massive vote, but they could hardly be described as organisers of mass mobilisation!

In complete contrast to mass mobilisation is Militarist Elitism. The idea that making instant war on the state is of the utmost importance, while little trust is placed on the role of the people as a whole, is central to the militarist. Without the active support of the people, armed actions will either fizzle out or drag along at a level which poses no real threat to the enemy's rule.

In either case the realisation that a military victory is not possible leads to the use of military operations as a means of making propaganda. The effect is to produce headlines aimed at keeping the political question on the international agenda. While it is understandable that young men and women want to strike out at those who are oppressing them, this genuine fighting spirit is only misdirected by Militarist Elitism. A concrete example of the consequences of this strategy was demonstrated by the complete failure of the 1950's Border Campaign.

It should now be clear that the difference between these two outlooks is not an argument about the use of force. Indeed the

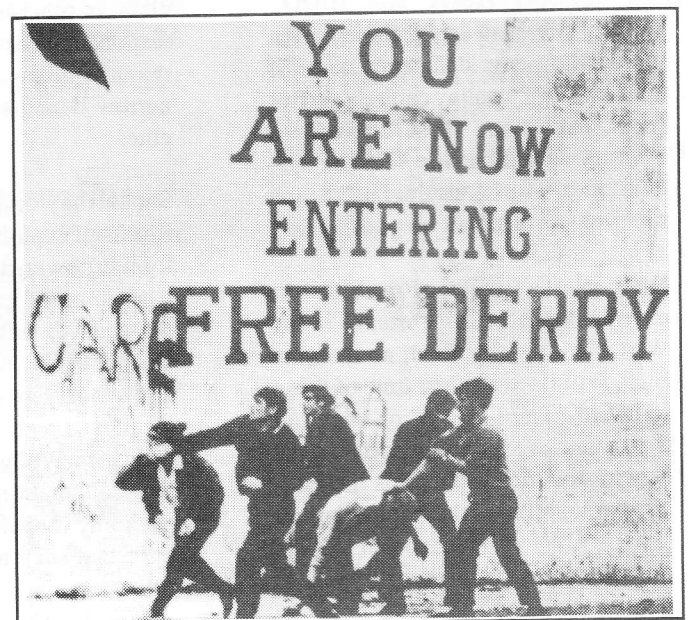
MOBILISE - NOT MILITARISE

concept of mass mobilisation has been the cornerstone of some of the most notable liberation struggles throughout the world. Particularly those in Vietnam, Mozambique and Nicaragua.

In occupied Vietnam, militarist elitism as practised by a variety of rebel groups consisted of a variety of sporadic and militarily ineffective attacks on government institutions and enemy posts. These attacks were carried out by groups of armed nationalists who, while occasionally earning the sympathy of the Vietnamese people, ignored the importance of organising the mass of the people. The futility of such acts was often pointed out by Ho Chi Minh, who later led the revolution to victory over the might of the American imperialists.

Ho argued that the struggle could only be successful when it had mobilised the mass active support of the whole people. realising that there were no short-cuts to victory, his activists spent many years of hard work politicising the people in order to win them to the struggle. With the active support of the people secured, a long armed campaign was carried out which resulted in a humiliating defeat for the biggest imperialist power in the world and victory to the Vietnamese people.

Of course Ireland is not Vietnam, nor do we live in the 1880's. But there is a real and pressing need for a mass mobilisation against the policies of those who oppress us now.





Gennady Gerasimov

SOVIET SPOKESMAN EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS IN ULSTER.

We, in the West are all too frequently bombarded with criticisms of Human Rights abuses in the USSR. The impression is often given that our capitalist masters are above such excesses. The following release from the Novosti Press Agency indicates Soviet concerns with the denial of human rights in the North of Ireland.

Nov '88

"The Soviet public expresses concern over the continued and massive violations of human rights in Northern Ireland by the British authorities. "Gennady Gerasimov, head of the Information Directorate of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said at a briefing in Moscow on Friday 11th Nov '88.

"Soviet people ask when will the machine of police arbitrariness with regard to dissenters in N. Ireland be stopped once and for all. When will justice, as regards hundreds of political prisoners, who were unlawfully thrown into Ulster's jails, be restored?"

Gennady Gerasimov pointed out that the Soviet Union repeatedly returned to the subject, both at official level and in the mass media, persistently calling on the British authorities to take urgent measures in accordance with the final Act of the Helsinki Conference, with a view to releasing political prisoners and restoring legality and constitutional law and order in Ulster.

"Our calls of this kind are by no means an interference in the internal affairs of the UK", the spokesman said, "They are prompted by a desire to draw the attention of the British authorities to

the acute problem in the hope that their policy in Ulster will correspond to the high-sounding statements being voiced in London in favour of guaranteed ensurance of the basic human rights and freedoms in other countries. Unfortunately, the practical actions of the British side do not indicate a change of the situation in N. Ireland for the better."

Mr Gerasimov went to speak of the outcome of London's Direct Rule in Ulster, ever since British troops were introduced there almost 20 years ago. Over the period 3,000 people have been killed and 30,000 wounded or crippled. About 7,000 have been detained under the Anti-Terrorism Act adopted in 1974. There are now more than 400 political prisoners in N. Ireland.

COMMUNIST PRISONERS WELCOME SOVIET STATEMENT.

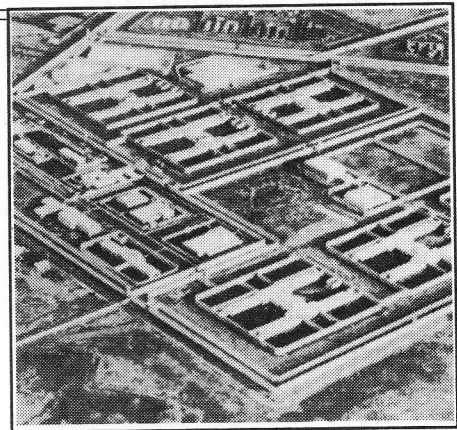
Shortly after the above statement was released the British Government and the mass media dismissed the Soviet statement as a disingenuous attempt by Moscow to discredit Thatcher's administration and British rule in Ireland. So just where does the truth lie?

Let us just look at one period from Britain's administration of the rule of law in the Six Counties, the infamous Castlereagh era. Little doubt will remain as to whether the Soviet accusation is accurate or not.

Although many facts and figures are available, they do not always give a complete picture of the unjust nature of Britain's legal system in the North of Ireland. For a proper insight it is necessary to examine aspects of the system's application throughout those years.

The spokesman for the USSR Foreign Ministry pointed out in this connection that the Soviet public had serious doubts about the fairness of the sentences passed in Ulster and about the methods by which investigations were conducted. He also pointed out that the conditions in which the prisoners are kept give rise for concern also.

Gennady Gerasimov emphasised that what was said was not a lecture addressed to Britain. "We live in a 'common European home' which is taking shape and in which everything is interconnected. If the community of European countries is aiming in earnest to give a 'human dimension' to the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) process then efforts to establish law and order in our common home should originate in national apartments," he said.



A major factor to bear in mind is the role of the "self confession of guilt" in the Northern Ireland legal system. Here, under the prevailing Diplock Courts (one judge, no jury, relaxed rules of evidence) an uncorroborated confession acquired in a detention centre is sufficient to secure conviction in every case.

This remnant of medieval juridical principle, once described by Bukharin as "confessions of guilt", means that the RUC need only obtain a statement from the accused. A signed confession looks a lot more convincing in court, but in its absence a verbal statement is still damning. The scope for abuse is obviously enormous and, in fact, the system has been abused enormously.

Although recently ruled unacceptable by the European Court of Human

contd. over

Rights, the RUC has made extensive use of a law which allows suspects to be interrogated over a period of seven days. Much evidence has been gathered to support claims that the RUC has used torture methods during this lengthy period in order to extract confessions from those detained.

During the late 1970's Amnesty International, the Catholic Church and the English journalist Peter Taylor, amongst others, revealed the true extent of Human Rights violations by the RUC in the course of these interrogations.

Perhaps the most damning indictment was that of Doctor Robert Irwin, who at the time was Belfast City Forensic Medical Officer. In 1979 this doctor, who worked with the RUC and was thus an employee of the British Government, claimed, "I have records of 160 patients (in custody) who have injuries I would not say are self-inflicted."

Even though the British were then forced to modify their use of physical brutality during interrogation, many of those sentenced to prison terms on the basis of such "confessions" remain in jail. Ten years later many are still without the prospect of release or, at the very least, a review of their conviction.



Barney McGuigan a victim of British justice, Bloody Sunday Jan. 30th 1977

The injustice of the Castlereagh era, as the period is known, has yet to be remedied.

However deplorable this episode was it is not unique in the overall behaviour of British rule in the North of Ireland. Use of the fabricated verbal statement continues. This insidious instrument has the advantage (in the eyes of the RUC) of not requiring a victim's signature and hence no risk of leaving tell-tale marks and bruises.

Lately other refinements have been added. One such is the element of "plea bargaining" whereby a person is offered the option of pleading guilty in order to get a reduction in sentence. Choice is limited to accepting the plea bargain or attempting the almost impossible task of refuting one of these

"confessions" in the sure knowledge of receiving a lengthy prison sentence on conviction. More recently still has been the ending of a suspect's right to silence. As a consequence anyone who continues to exercise this long-held legal right may be found guilty and sentenced.

Hundreds of men and women are imprisoned today in the North of Ireland as a consequence of these British legal machinations.

This, of course, is not a comprehensive detailing of the full Human Rights deprivations in the North of Ireland by any means. No mention has been made here of the countless incidents of heavy-handed treatment inflicted by government troops and police on the civilian population. No mention of the numerous deaths as a result of British government agents shooting opponents out of hand or uninvolved civilians through pure recklessness. Nor do we mention the basic injustice of Britain's undemocratic interference in Irish affairs.

Need we mention therefore that Britain's indignation with the Soviet Union's foreign Ministry statement is downright hypocrisy. Gennady Gerasimov's statement is as accurate as it is welcome. hopefully it will not be the last expression of concern from Moscow.

BRITISH DEMOCRACY

When British governments deal with Ireland, they are rarely known to be over-scrupulous about observing the highest standards of democracy or legal justice. Martial law, Coercion Acts, Special Powers Bills, P.T.A. legislation, we've had them all. The recent clutch of measures are only the latest in a great British tradition. Banning a legal political party from the air-waves, ending a defendant's right not to incriminate him/herself, concocting fresh criteria for holding elective office - all variations on a shameful theme.

So accustomed are we on this side of the Irish Sea to British government's crude behaviour, there is something we have often overlooked. That is, in reality, the British ruling class are as contemptuous of democracy in their homeland as they are here. The British political hooligan doesn't confine his/her misbehaviour to Foreign Policy matters. They practice their dirty business just as assiduously at home as in Ireland.

Take for example the current flurry of activity involving the British secret services. For in spite of Thatcher's best efforts to obscure the story, a few basic facts have emerged. That with the most sinister implications being that Secret Services owe loyalty, not to the government, but to the Crown. (In effect this means loyal to the British ruling class).

At first sight this may seem a fine, almost irrelevant distinction. In effect it carries a dire verdict on what the British fondly believe to be their democratic society.

Owing loyalty to a hereditary monarch rather than the elected parliament means the Secret Services do not feel themselves to be even theoretically under democratic control. They take it on themselves to interpret what is in the best interests of the Monarchy and act accordingly. As we now know from the bizarre case involving Harold Wilson, this role is even taken to the point of defying an elected Prime

EXTRADITION, EXPLOITATION, EMIGRATION

At the time of writing rumours still abound about the fate of Fr. Paddy Ryan. As yet Haughey has not acted on Thatcher's warrants. Whatever the outcome of this case, it has certainly highlighted many aspects of the extradition issue, not least of these Fianna Fail's collaboration with British Imperialism:

- * The dilution of national sovereignty resulting from the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Single European Act:
- * The arrogance of the British in their dealings with an ex-colony:
- * The difference between British and Irish Citizenship.

The British government acts, often illegally, to defend and protect its own, while the Irish government abandons its citizens to the "due process of law" - any law. Regardless of whether Paddy Ryan is handed to the British or he becomes the exception to the handing over rule (and hopefully he will), the long-term lessons are the same, Irish citizens can only expect extradition, exploitation and emigration from Leinster House.

While it is tempting to concentrate on the main actors in any extradition case: - a vindictive, ill-mannered Thatcher, a cute but spineless Haughey - the practical implications of such an approach is simply more inertia. The logic of blaming the figureheads is that everyone else can claim that while they don't like what is happening, "But at the next election we'll vote for ...", when all the constitutional parties are in favour of extradition. For an example of this note the "greening" of the treacherous Dick Spring.

In the ensuing helplessness another wave take the emigration route. Another generation lowers its sights and tighten their belts. And another batch of people are extradited.

Such is the reality of an Ireland linked to the capitalist world. Modern imperialism has no other use for us. That is the conclusion each successive extradition case highlights. As an understanding of where we are at it should help us decide where we want to go.

It's clear that we need a democratic Ireland. A democracy where the views of the majority are represented in administrative power. The structures of the present system produce a committee to defend capitalist interests. It makes very little difference who the personnel filling the committee seats are. After all wasn't it the Dail that passed the extradition legislation into law.

The structure which has given us extradition was imposed or accepted from the British. The structures which will bring a proper democracy into existence will first have to be put in place by the working class and their allies the small farmers. Our class must be organised into a force capable of fighting for, and creating, these structures.

Until then our political struggles will remain defensive struggles, like anti-extradition. Before we can become politically creative we must have power.

Everyone interested in the Anti-Extradition cause should be made aware of this fact. Anti-Extradition activists should find a role in organising our revolutionary forces now. To begin with the Anti-Extradition Campaign should be used to propagate the practical means necessary for attaining our People's Republic.

- OR WHATEVER IT IS.

Minister. Remember too that when we speak of the "best interests of the monarchy", Britain's ruling class have, since at least 1688, been the arbiters of what is "best".

The Secret Services in Britain may be as incompetent as the Blunt affair would suggest. However they are a powerful and influential instrument nonetheless. As such, they have a huge capacity to alter the balance of politics within Britain if they choose to exercise their "extraordinary powers".

It is not necessary to paint melodramatic pictures of the British Secret Service conspiring to manipulate governments in dark covens. Under present circumstances they don't have to. A discreet leak here, or a carefully planted piece of disinformation there, is often enough to achieve the desired result. Especially with the Fleet Street press always anxious to lampoon non-establishment figures and organisations, trade Unions and the left in particular.

Generally speaking the Secret Services don't have to overstretch themselves in maintaining the status quo favoured by the British ruling class. As the episode with Wilson indicates though, there is no limit to which they won't go.

Should the people of Britain choose a government of which "the firm" doesn't approve, that government will just have to go. Shades of Henry Ford and his offer to supply any colour of car so long as it was black. Britain can have any form of government it likes so long as the Secret Services reckons it is suitable.

It's certainly one way to run a country and probably an agreeable enough arrangement if you happen to belong to the magic circle. It's hardly democracy though!

CONGRESS '86

POVERTY - BLAME FIANNA FAIL

The statistics have become increasingly depressing to the extent that agencies such as Combat Poverty are having trouble keeping up to date. While groups and organisations like this can only be applauded for their efforts, who takes any heed of them? It is most certainly not the Fianna Fail government. They, it would appear, suffer from the ostrich syndrome each time the subject arises.

It is increasingly common to see the politicians trot along to Brussels cap in hand these days, crying the poor mouth ar son Mother Ireland. Their actions suggest the possibility of a solution in Europe for the country's problems. The sad truth is that Europe's subsidies will change nothing. The problem is at home. It is here too that a solution must be found.

The working people of this country do not want charity from the EEC or elsewhere. We don't want our dignity and our human rights to be bestowed on us as a privilege, on the whim of some faceless bureaucrat.

Meanwhile the media tries to condition us to the dominant view of the Government and its "experts" that poverty is by no means at all an indictment of the economic order. Implicit in this is the notion that poverty is a self-inflicted wound. Of

course there might be some hiccups they would admit. But as far as the media is concerned Fianna Fail's strategy of "economic recovery", aided and abetted by the Congress of Trade Unions, will put everything right. Or so they would have us think.

We would need to be damned gullible to buy that out' one! What has this Plan of Recovery brought the less-well-off? Hospital closures, government cut-backs, unemployment and massive emigration. Is this an example of Haughey's duplicity, or could it be that this is his vision of recovery? That is, creating more wealth for the multi-nationals and native capitalists and ignoring the needs of the working class.

Nothing else makes any real sense. Everybody knows that the resources to defeat poverty exist. yet Haughey's Government opts for alienating an increasingly large section from society and maintaining a dependency on benefits and, worse still, money-lenders.

Whatever the uncertainty and ambiguity of Fianna Fail in the past, they now stand clearly guilty of furthering policies geared to maintaining working class people and small farmers in poverty. Reject the politics of Fianna Fail. Help build the Socialist alternative.

Congress '86 No. 6

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