

# Socialist Worker

## For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

# Welcome to the 'free' West

**WESTERN** commentators and political leaders are cock-a-hoop about the collapse of country after country in Eastern Europe.

They see it as a great defeat for socialism.

Many Western socialists have seen it in the same way and are confused and demoralised as a result.

But in fact socialism wasn't defeated in the Warsaw Pact countries, because socialism didn't exist there. (See pages 4 and 5 for a detailed account.) There's been a second massive lie contained in much of the recent propaganda. This is that the freedom and justice which people have been denied in the East are available in the West.

To countless millions of workers and poor peasants throughout the so-called "Free World" this is a sick joke.

While the flaxen-haired youths who flee oppression in East Germany are welcomed with open arms at the frontier—because it suits the West's political purposes for the moment—terrified Kurdish people who flee appalling repression in Turkey are shovelled back onto the planes without even a hearing.

Because Turkey is a member of NATO and itself part of the "Free World".

The Vietnamese boat people are held in pig-pens on islands choked with cholera in Hong Kong, while Thatcher prepares to send in the squaddies to bayonet and rifle-butt them back where they came from.

No country in the "Free World" is willing to open its borders to such numbers of yellow-skinned people.

Whether the West will make "freedom" available to refugees depends on the political advantage of the moment and the colour of the refugees' skins.

The hypocrisy of the Western rulers knows no bounds. The US President Bush condemns repression. But he sends 3 million dollars a day to uphold the regime in El Salvador. US armed and trained killers in El Salvador slaughtered Jesuits because they dared to criticise.

Thatcher talks of the system of Western justice. But the Birmingham Six linger in her filthy jails for a decade and a half.

In Southern Ireland, Fianna Fail politicians talk about the failure of the Eastern European economies. But the South has its own "refugee" problem. At least 40,000 a year are fleeing because the country cannot offer them a decent life. One third of the people are living below the poverty line.

Women in the South are denied basic information on all options when they are pregnant. Gays are still hounded. Travellers live on roadsides and are hunted through hedges and ditches like animals. If the Travellers were in the East, there would be a photo-feature in every right-wing Western newspaper pointing out what a savage place this is.

The "Free World" also contains little paradises like Northern Ireland. There is a state that continues to discriminate against 40 percent of its population who are Catholic. Not surprisingly, the place is riven with hatred and poverty, where ranting bigots still hold the stage.

Can anyone seriously argue that this is the best possible way to order the world? Can anybody suggest that there is no need for struggle here, *more* struggle, *more* militant struggle.

The East was and is indeed a rotten place for working class people. But the mass of working people there got off their knees. Within the course of a few weeks, mass action pulled down the hated tyrants. The tiny groups of revolutionaries there were told for a long time they were "extreme" and "impractical". But they have put the whole question of revolution back on the cards for the 1990s.



Gerry Conlon, of the Guildford Four, who spent 14 years enjoying the wonders of Western freedom.



# SPUC bigots hit back

IN November students marched to the Dail in protest against SPUC's legal action against student union leaders. Over a month had passed since the first demonstrations in defence of the right to information. And the situation had changed considerably.

In the period between the students' first victory, when Justice Carroll refused to find them guilty, and SPUC's appeal to the High Court, the balance of forces had tipped in favour of SPUC. The lower numbers on November's demo were sufficient evidence. No fewer than three colleges had voted not to provide information on abortion—UCD, UCC and UCG. SPUC

had launched an aggressive campaign, with its allies "Students for Life". The Right pushed for referenda to be held in various colleges, and began a campaign against the supposedly "anti-democratic" Students' Unions.

## TRIUMPH

But talk of "union democracy" is a bit rich when it comes from SPUC. Firstly, the backers of groups such as "Students for Life" are the Opus Dei organisation. This is a secretive right wing group which originated in Spain. Its members formed the top brass of the Francoist police state. Second, the

SPUC supporters in the colleges have made it clear that they are anti-union. They are pressing for the break-up of USI by demanding an end to the closed shop in the colleges. Their calls for a voluntary affiliation to USI mirror the proposals of the Tories in Britain.

The real question is why SPUC have managed to bounce back. There are obvious difficulties in fighting a campaign for abortion information in Southern Ireland. Many students went through school at the time when the Catholic Church's hysteria on abortion was at its height in the Pro-Life referendum in 1983. But these difficulties are not

insurmountable. The problem lies in the strategy of USI. After the victory at the Four Courts, there was very little attempt to keep up the campaign momentum. There was a switch to the campaign against education cuts in the colleges. Certain student union leaders argued that going on the offensive against SPUC, by setting up stalls, handing out the information publicly, etc, would simply alienate people. There was no attempt to take the issue out of the

## SYMPATHY

ghetto of the campuses, to get the support of the trade unions. No-one took up the issue of asking the left wing TDs to hand out the information publicly, because no-one wanted to embarrass them. It was okay to have Emmet Stagg et al making soothing noises in the background, but they couldn't really be pressed into service. Yet in some work places it is possible to

pressurise the unions into publicising the information; for example, this was possible in Dublin City University. The students can only succeed if they bring the issue to the unions. But USI has disclaimed any responsibility for initiating this kind of action right from the start of the campaign.

Furthermore, it has made significant concessions to SPUC on the question of abortion. In UCD, for example, leaflets were

distributed arguing that the way to stop abortion was by making the information available. While it is important to have a broad-based campaign around the right to information, it is impossible to duck the issue of abortion completely. Conceding the argument to SPUC

cannot help win in the fight against women's oppression. This is why it is important to target SPUC and argue vigorously against their assault on abortion information. This campaign needs an aggressive and determined leadership which makes no concessions to SPUC.

## Corporation Privatisation Threat



ACCORDING to a report recently published by the Environmental Research Unit the level of maintenance of Corporation dwellings (houses and flats) is so low that it would need to be trebled to meet the recommended standards of other EEC housing agencies.

The government's recruitment embargo in the public service has resulted in a reduction in the Corporation work force of 1,113 from a total of 6,000 since 1985. In the housing maintenance section, 850 remain out of 1,300 in 1985. This was brought about through retirement and voluntary redundancies.

The implication running through the 27-page Environmental Research Unit report is that inefficiency is a major problem in the Corporation. Yet this is contradicted time and again by their own findings, which state that average maintenance expenditure per dwelling per annum is £413 for Dublin Corporation while the same average for England and Wales is £560.

## RECORD

The increased use of private contractors (20 per cent of Corporation work is already done by contractors) is recommended by the report. The ERU's own survey of local authorities in EEC countries such as West Germany shows a preference there for a mixed work force (direct labour and private contractors) as opposed to a fully privatised one. Although legislation in the UK requires direct labour organisation (existing local authority staff) to tender for work against private contractors, there has

been no significant transfer of work from direct labour organisations to private contractors.

The Workers' Party in their document *A Workers' Plan to Improve Services and Create Employment* provide some important information on the situation in Dublin Corporation, but very few ideas. Their view that tendering for jobs should go ahead is a major climb-down for anyone who claims to be on the Left, as this will lead to further job losses and reduced services in housing maintenance.

## UNEQUAL

The government's report recommends the continuation of schemes to "encourage" tenants to become more involved in carrying out their own maintenance! This has not been very successful to date—which is not surprising, considering the cost of building materials. Their insistence in this area is due no doubt to the fact that further cutbacks could eventually lead to legal action being taken against Dublin Corporation for being in breach of the Housing Acts, 1966 and 1979, and the Housing Regulations of 1980 which require the carrying out by the Corporation of its responsibility to its tenants. Getting tenants to agree with the cutbacks would avoid any bad publicity.

The campaign against privatisation in Dublin Corporation is a campaign against cutbacks in the public services, which hurt the working class. Privatisation means further cutbacks as it will enable the government to hire and fire at will and push down the union rates of its employees.

CHARLES NOLAN  
UCATT Shop Steward  
Dublin Corporation



The Guildford Four were convicted on the basis of uncorroborated confessions. A massive consensus exists throughout the South that this was a terrible thing. Every national newspaper said so and not a single TD said anything to the contrary. But when the leader of the Labour Party, Dick Spring, introduced a Bill in the Dail to rule out uncorroborated confessions as the sole basis for convictions, he was voted down by Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats. Not a single one of the Fianna Fail TDs who grace the platforms of

# No handovers

Birmingham Six meetings could even be found to abstain. That in itself could have been enough to ensure victory for Spring, as it would have meant a tied vote. Sile De Valera, David Andrews, Hugh Byrne did not budge.

What's more, they now propose to send back Jim Clarke to the tender mercies of the RUC. Jim Clarke, along with Owen Carron, the former MP for Meremagh South Tyrone, and Dermot Finucane, the brother of the Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane who was

assassinated by the UVF, appear in the Supreme Court on January 16th on foot of extradition warrants.

## REPRESSION

Jim Clarke was convicted on exactly the same basis as the Guildford Four. Jim was convicted for trying to kill a UDR soldier solely on the basis of a confession written by the RUC who then beat him into signing it. Jim Clarke even has an alibi from none other than a Fianna Fail TD, Dr.

James McDaid. The Guildford Four at least had a jury trial. Jim Clarke will face one judge in the notorious Diplock Courts.

Yet when at the EC summit in November Thatcher apparently muttered something to Haughey about being dilatory in extraditing people like Clarke, Haughey was outraged.

The fact that the Labour Party is taking up the issue of uncorroborated confessions is to be welcomed. So is the appearance of Dick Spring at a Birmingham

Six meeting and of Labour Youth chairperson, Vinnie Byrne, at an anti-extradition meeting. Even if this is mainly for electoral reasons, in particular about outflanking the Workers' Party, it gives an opening to build up pressure on Labour to cast off the Conor Cruise O'Brien line on Northern Ireland.

But the problem is that the gestures are limited. Will, for example, Spring follow through the logic of his own Bill and call publicly for no extradition of Jim Clarke? Will he support the mobilisation outside the court on January 16th? In other words, is he serious or is he just playing voting games?



# WE THINK THE DEATH OF STALINISM



EVENTS in Eastern Europe have posed a major problem for socialists in the West.

The continuing turmoil in the USSR, and the collapse of one regime after another in the satellite states, has widely been interpreted as a defeat for socialism itself.

It isn't surprising that masses of people should see the issue in this way. For forty long years, all of the lifetime of most of us, the Eastern Bloc has emphatically laid claim to the mantle of socialism.

And the Western Bloc has been content to go along with this completely, day in and day out referring in newspapers, television etc. to Russia, Poland, Hungary and so on as "socialist".

What's more, the majority of socialists in the West have publicly identified the Eastern regimes as "socialist". And, while some of them have had mild criticisms to make of this or that aspect of life in the East, they have, also even if only by implication, offered these regimes as models of how society here might be organised once "socialism" has come to pass.

So it's in no way surprising that workers here in Ireland watching the Berlin Wall come down or the huge crowds rallying in Wenceslas Square to give the Czech regime its marching orders should conclude that they are witnessing working class people in the act of overthrowing socialism.

And if that's what the workers who have actually lived under socialism think of it, why should workers over here want to repeat the experience?

This is a good question. And absolutely impossible for those who have defined the Eastern Bloc countries as "socialist", "communist" or some sort of "workers' states" to answer.

But there's another tradition within socialism which has never identified with the regimes in the East or tried to argue that they were "workers'" regimes in any sense whatsoever, a tradition which, on the contrary, has argued that workers in the East should rise up under the banner of socialism and root out the ruling class which has presided over their exploitation and ruthlessly denied them even the semblance of democracy.

This tradition, which defines the Eastern Bloc countries as *state capitalist*, is represented in Ireland by the Socialist Workers' Movement.

## THE SIGN ON STALIN SAYS 'Nothing lasts forever'

And as socialists who oppose capitalism, whether in Western free enterprise or Eastern state monopoly form, we welcome and support the risings all across Eastern Europe. We do not share in the demoralisation and confusion which has overcome so many on the Left as the system they've represented as "socialist" has collapsed in terminal crisis.

When the Polish government talks of opening a stock exchange in Warsaw, when Gorbachev offers Fiat incentives to open another huge car plant in the USSR, when Hungary sells its massive state-owned brewery to the Australian multi-millionaire Alan Bond, our analysis of the world around us doesn't have to be altered or twisted to accommodate these developments. Far from it. Our analysis—that these countries are capitalist—is confirmed.

## TIBLISI

When Gorbachev's soldiers hack demonstrators to death with *shovels* in the streets of Tbilisi, or the Chinese army massacres workers and students in Tienanmen Square, we are in no way evasive about what this means: it's the way *capitalism* the world over responds to a serious threat from below.

Of course, we are aware that this analysis has tended to strike many who have come into contact with it as, well, a trifle eccentric. The whole world, so it seemed, both socialists and anti-socialists, accepted that socialism already existed in a number of easily-identified countries... the whole world apart from this small band of truculent individuals who just wouldn't be told.

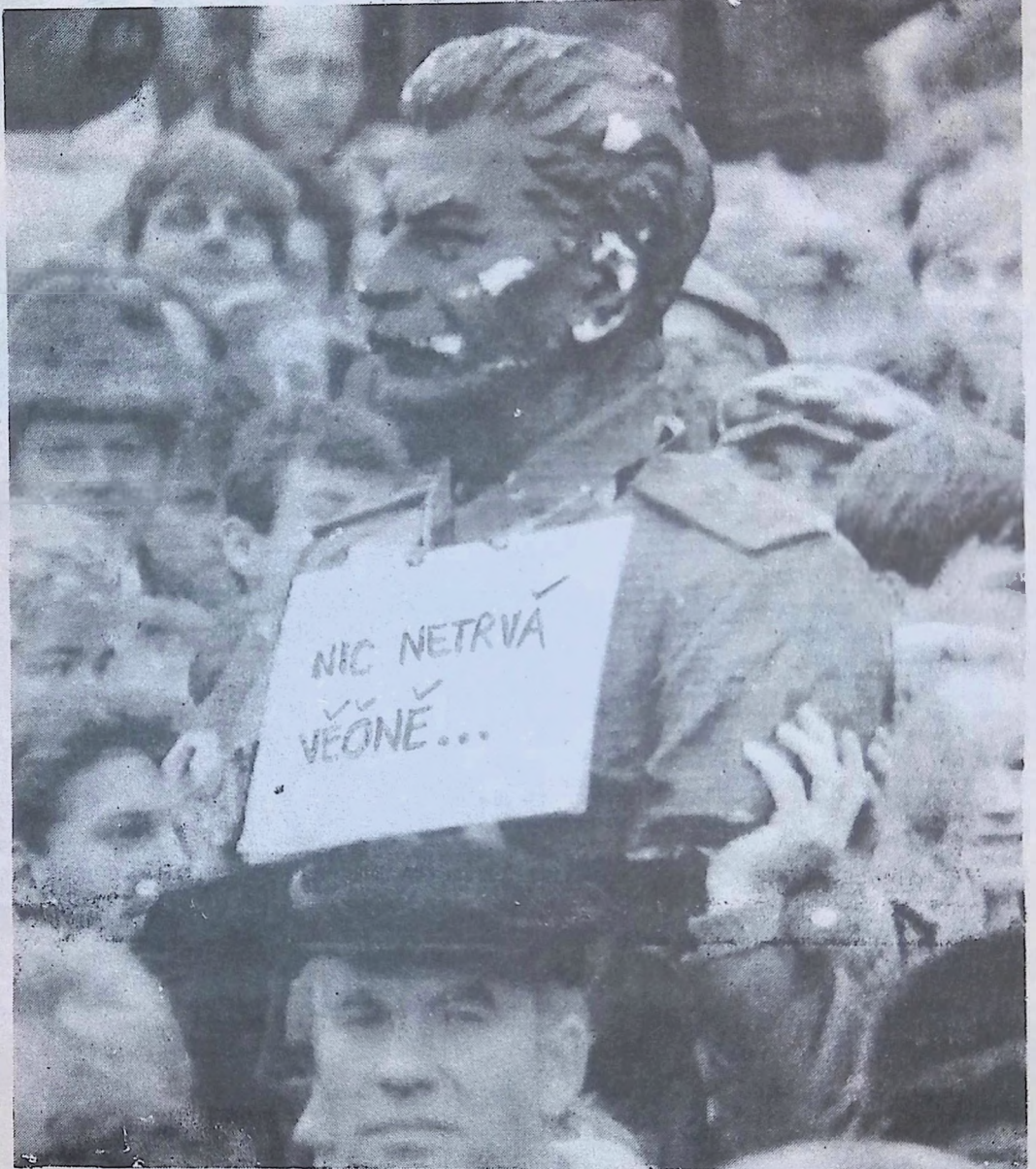
What's more, so pervasive has been the notion that the East epitomised socialism that the argument between our tradition and the rest of the Left—between the "state capitalist" analysis and the advocates of a "socialist" or "workers' state" definition—has seemed an "internal" dispute, an esoteric difference of opinion between people who were all basically in the same camp: the Eastern camp.

## ARGUMENT

It has also seemed to many people—maybe most people—who have listened to, or overheard, this argument that it really had little to do with their own day-to-day lives. They may well have been confirmed in this opinion by the strange jargon in which the argument has sometimes been conducted.

The relevance of the argument, and the importance of stating it in straightforward terms, should be more apparent now than ever before.

If the system which has been



shown to have failed in Eastern Europe is "socialism", then, indeed, what's the point of struggling for socialism here? Or anywhere else for that matter.

If the Eastern countries are now turning to a market economy as an alternative to what went before, where's the basis for opposing the dictates of the market at home?

The leaders of the British Communist Party certainly, and of the Workers' Party apparently, have, among others, accepted this logic and abandoned Marxism, or what passed for Marxism in those circles, and bowed to "the market". They have really had little choice.

Once you define what existed in the East as socialism the hard facts of what has happened forced you towards this conclusion.

But the alternative analysis leads to a different conclusion altogether.

As a socialist, Marxist, organisation, the SWM is inspired by the

mighty events in the East. They demonstrate the capacity of the mass of the people, no matter how heavy the weight of oppression which is laid on them, to rise up against those who rule over them.

## OBVIOUS

We are strengthened in our belief that no matter how "obvious" it sometimes seems that it's futile to think of smashing the whole system, that it's better to be "realistic" and work within existing structures, "impossible" things can happen, and do, when the great mass of the people, most particularly the working class, join together self-confidently and say "No" to the way things have been.

None of this leads us to be euphoric about the immediate possibilities. Many of those demonstrating in the East have illusions in the West. For all the reasons

mentioned above, many are disillusioned by what they have understood as "socialism".

Crucially, the most influential of the protest organisations are led by middle class intellectuals, when what's needed—just as much, and even more urgently, than it's needed here—is a mass, revolutionary party based specifically on the working class, a party organising the most militant workers and aiming not just at political liberalisation—which the intellectual elite genuinely wants, but will stop short when it gets it—but also aims to overthrow the existing, exploitative relations of production and to put the *working class itself* into power.

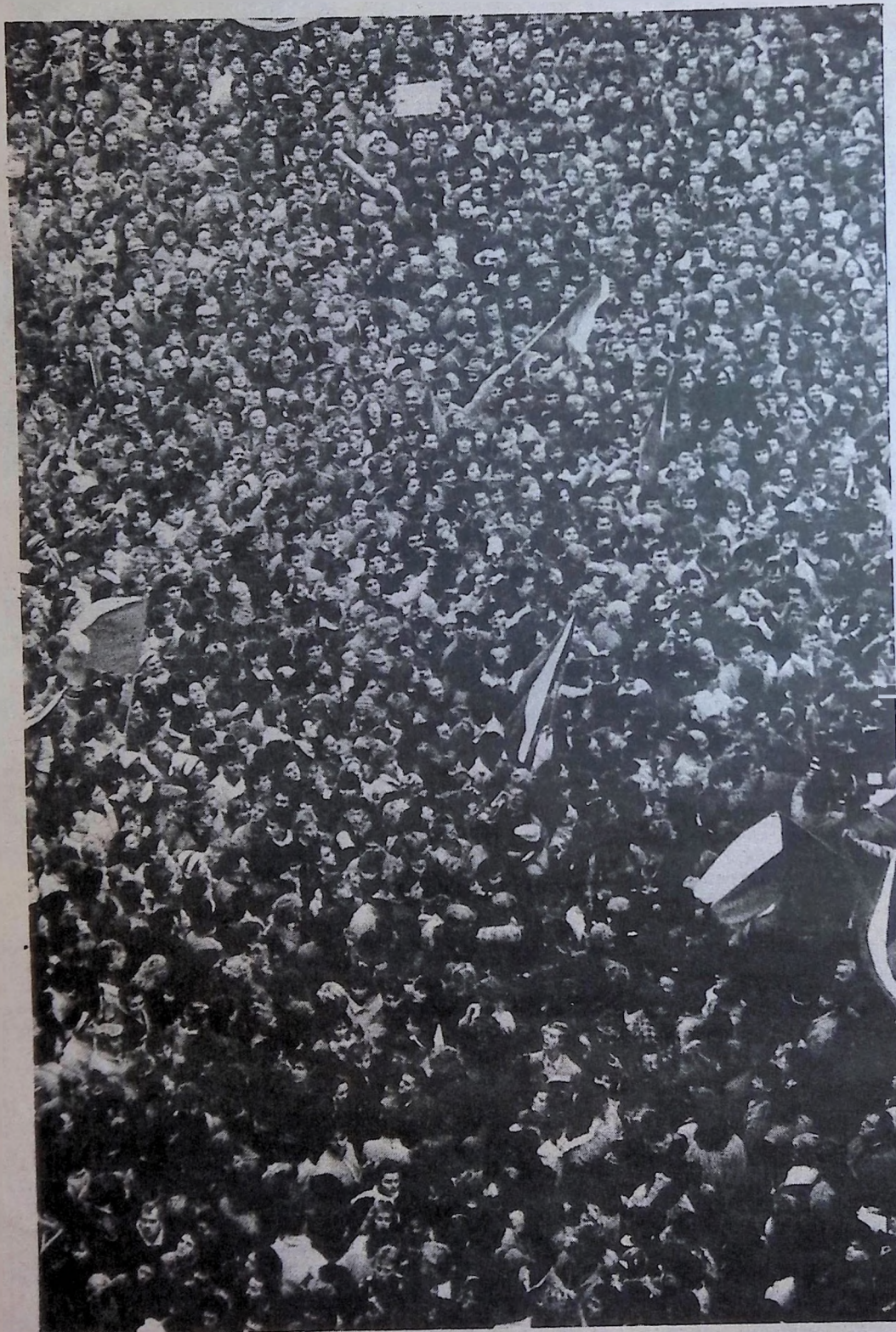
Not a new elite, but an end to elites.

The state capitalist analysis of the Eastern Bloc is not just an interesting, "different" way of seeing the world.

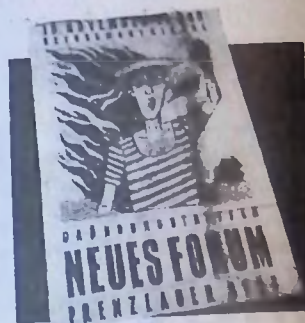
East and West, it's a key weapon in the fight for a new world.



# East Europe's left opposition



THE crisis in Eastern Europe has led to the emergence of genuine Marxist organisations. Their views are virtually unreported in the West. Here *Dominic Carroll* looks at the Left in Eastern Europe.



NEW FORUM poster, Gethsemane church

PASTORS, playwrights and pop stars have figured prominently during the momentous events in Eastern Europe, but fighting to make headway are a number of Left groups. The widely varying conditions, history, and unfolding events are reflected in the diversity of these groups, but in key areas they are saying much the same things.

Marion Seelig of East Germany's United Left summed up the difficulties facing the new organisations. "Many people are disillusioned with 'socialism' as it has existed here. For them the opening to capitalism, as it is happening in Poland and Hungary, seems like a way forward. The government believes that an opening to capitalism can solve its problems. The economic experts are saying that there is no other possibility. So it won't be easy to get people keen on socialism. It will take a lot of hard work."

The Left differs sharply with groups such as Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, New Forum in East Germany, Democratic Forum in Hungary and Solidarity in Poland on questions such as the market. These reformists believe that exposing the economy to the harsh winds of the market will both solve the economic problems and loosen the grip of the Communist Parties. Nor is this view confined to a few intellectuals. Just before the upheaval in Czechoslovakia, a study advocating market reforms sold 80,000 copies, with many being pinned on workplace notice boards, and in Poland,

workers at the giant URSUS tractor factory recently voted to "go independent".

However, the experience of the limited market reforms already introduced is serving to dispel illusions. Josef Pinior of the Polish Socialist Party—

Democratic Revolution (PPS-RD) explained: "More and more people will see that privatisation is not the solution. There is now a free market in food, and only a couple of days ago the prices rose another 40 per cent. We think the free market should be subordinated to democratic control from below by workers; a democratic rather than bureaucratic plan."

A similar view was expressed by Boris Kagarlitsky, a leading member of the New Socialist Party in Russia: "The Soviet economy is in complete disarray, but managers are getting a free hand to force workers to work more for the same wages while also being able to set higher prices. The market reforms are no solution, but they are awakening the consciousness of the working class."

Gorbachev himself is acutely aware of the dangers, commenting on the most far-reaching proposals: "I know only one thing: after a few weeks of such a market, people will take to the streets and it will smash any government." But the crisis forces him to take further risks.

The elections earlier this year in Russia were intended to forestall such an eruption by diverting discontent and co-opting critics, rather than a genuine extension of democracy. The Left resisted the lure of parliamentary cretinism, but were effective in



**"WE'VE BEEN listening to Big Brother in the East for 40 years. We're not going to start listening to Big Brother in the West now." Speaker at Leipzig demonstration.**

using the opportunity to argue their case.

Similar electoral reforms were only wrung out of the regimes in Eastern Europe by the mass protests. In Poland, the election of Solidarity has led to disillusionment and demoralisation, yet the illusions persist in the other Eastern Bloc countries. A thoughtful response that goes beyond merely rejecting the elections as fake is crucial, if the Left is not to be seen as irrelevant. This mistake was made by PPS-RD in Poland during the election.

But by working alongside the reformists for further improvements, whilst retaining their independence and establishing themselves as the most ambitious alternative, the Left groups can win influence as the reformists inevitably stop short of a

struggle for fundamental change.

Despite the differences, all the new groups recognise the centrality of the working class in forcing real change. The PPS-RD sums up the aim as "the political liberation of the workers and an end to the exploitation of labour", arguing for workers' self-management and industrial



MARION SEELIG

production through self-management committees."

However, confusion on the question of overthrowing the state persists. Kagarlitsky has yet to rule out the "reformability" of the state, whilst the United Left and PPS-RD remain evasive on the question of revolution.

Nevertheless, new developments and inevitable setbacks will force them to grapple with these problems, particularly when workers begin to take centre stage, and when the economic crisis deepens as is predicted.

The new possibilities for organising will make an enormous difference, and the picture is being qualitatively altered by the emergence of independent trade unions. The basic platform of the United Left is typical of the developing socialist currents in Eastern Europe, and shows great promise:

- Socialisation of the means of production
- Self-determination for the working class
- Social security for everyone
- For socialist democracy
- For the ecological re-organisation of industrial society.

## Irish left's about turn

THE revolts inside Eastern Europe have not only caused crisis for the ruling Communist Parties there. In the West, socialists and communists who for decades pointed to the Eastern Bloc as some kind of alternative to the system here are reeling under the impact of recent events.

In Italy the PCI has decided to drop the term "Communist" from its title. In Britain and Australia both Communist Parties have decided to disband.

In Ireland the Workers' Party and the Communist Party are quickly reversing their own previous attitude to Eastern Europe.

In the past both parties competed with each other as to who could shower the most fulsome praise on the stalinist regimes. Not any more. Under pressure of events they have been forced to rapidly distance themselves from "old comrades". The turnaround is most evident in the Workers' Party.

For years the Workers' Party held up the bureaucratic state capitalist countries as a shining alternative for socialists. Their monthly newspaper *The United Irishman* ran a series of articles between December 1974 and April 1975 on the Eastern Bloc countries praising them to the hilt.

Under the title "Economic Miracle in the East", the GDR is

described as a "socialist country in which the working people as a whole control all wealth and exercise state power".

Indeed, the "stability of the economy is due to comprehensive overall planning which allows rational and efficient use of all resources of the country... All sections of the population are involved in discussing and preparing these plans".

Romania, probably the most repressive and stalinised of the Eastern Bloc countries, is described as a place where "poverty... is only a memory". A place with a constitution which guarantees all citizens "among other rights; the right to work, the right to leisure, the right of education, the right to elect and stand for elections".

### HUNGARY

Hungary is transformed into a "modern industrialised country which guarantees a secure life and a continually increasing standard of living to its citizens".

The importance of this slavish devotion to the Eastern Bloc governments was that both WP and CPI became apologists for stalinist repression of opposition. So, both parties supported the repressing of the 1953 uprising in Berlin, the WP describing the 300,000 German workers who struck initially over dropping living standards as "agent provocateurs".

The Hungarian uprising of 1956, which saw workers' councils reappear in Europe for the first time since the 1920s, was described as being motivated by "fascist and

right-wing elements who tried to turn back the clock of history".

The Irish CP, on the tenth anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, took up the same theme. It described the revolt there as a "counter-revolution". Claiming "new evidence of CIA involvement", it denounced demands for human rights because it was "allowing the flourishing of all kinds of decadence, of backward ideas of individuality against society".

On the death of the man responsible for sending in the tanks, Leonid Brezhnev, the CP newspaper — *The Irish Socialist* — outdid even itself in writing that Brezhnev "was a visionary of peace" who "had much to do to revitalise the party's organisation and to strengthen its ties with the working people, so ensuring the harmonisation of the entire Soviet system".

Finally, both the Workers' Party and Communist Party initially supported the imposition of martial law in 1981 and the suppression of Solidarity.

Now that these stalinist regimes are starting to crack, both parties are being forced to revise old attitudes. The Workers' Party are taking the lead with Proinsias de Rossa now claiming that the Workers' party "had always made clear that they were not attempting to reproduce the form of socialism which existed in other countries".

Des O'Hagan writes in the *Irish People* of 17th November that "communists have nothing to fear from the truth".

An ironic turnaround from a party that has done its bit to suppress the real truth about these regimes for most of its existence.

GER FRANCIS

# Coming to terms with upheaval

**THERE HAS BEEN a long debate on the left about the nature of Russia, Eastern Europe and the other so called communist states.**

What have been the positions in this debate and how do they stand in the light of the recent momentous events in the East?

The majority position on the left—that held by the Communist Parties, many on the Labour left and the mainstream of trade union officialdom—has been to go along with these societies' evaluation of themselves as socialist.

Apart from a tendency simply to accept the propaganda of these regimes, the main argument put by advocates of this position has been that in all these states private ownership of the means of production has been replaced by state ownership and state planning.

Since in their minds state ownership and state planning represent the essence of socialism, it follows that these countries must be socialist.

A second position, derived from Trotsky's analysis of Stalinist Russia in the 30s and held by the Militant Tendency and other followers of Trotsky, is that these regimes are degenerated or deformed workers' states.

Supporters of this position refuse to call Eastern Bloc countries socialist because they are ruled by anti-socialist, privileged and tyrannical Stalinist bureaucracies which have usurped political power from the workers.

Nevertheless the existence of state ownership and planning defines the economic base of these societies as non-capitalist—they are workers' states whose transition to full socialism has been blocked by Stalinism.

### Support

The tradition of this tendency has been to regard these "deformed workers' states" as more progressive than the capitalist West, but to support workers' struggles against the bureaucratic regimes.

This "orthodox" Trotskyist analysis is held by only a small minority but a softened version of it has been much more widely influential. It has been adopted by some Euro-communists, Labour lefts and left intellectuals.

They acknowledge the crimes of Stalinism and the oppressive nature of these Communist regimes, but they still cling to the notion that nationalisation equals socialism.

The compromise they have finally settled for is that these regimes represent a kind of deformed or undemocratic socialism.

Finally there is a fourth position, that these regimes are not any kind of socialism or workers' state at all, but examples of bureaucratic state

capitalism.

Our view has always been that what is fundamental to Marxism and socialism is not the form of property as such (state ownership existed as far back as ancient Egypt) but the self emancipation of the working class.

Whether or not a society is heading for socialism depends first and foremost on whether the working class actually con-

degenerated workers' state or deformed socialism—positions, recent events pose an acute dilemma. According to this standpoint what defined these countries as non-capitalist was their state ownership and state planning.

But so abject is the failure of the Communist economies that both the reformists within the bureaucracy and the mass movement itself are calling



trols the means of production and the state.

In the absence of such real workers' power—and clearly it has been absent throughout the "communist" world—these regimes can, in today's world, only be state capitalist.

The economic and military pressure of world capitalism and the world market forces the ruling bureaucracies to engage in competitive capital accumulation through the exploitation of their respective working classes.

So what are the implications for these positions in the light of the mass upheaval in Eastern Europe?

For the view that Russia and Company are bastions of socialism the implications are disastrous. For many years this view may have been theoretically and factually unsound but at least it could be psychologically reassuring.

Socialists could comfort themselves that socialism did exist and that it was a major force in the world.

Today, however, it means trying to grapple with the idea that wherever socialism exists or has existed it is actively and demonstrably rejected by the mass of the working population.

It cannot even be seriously defended by its self appointed guardians, the Communist Parties.

Nothing could be more demoralising. For the intermediate—

for and initiating moves towards privatisation and the market.

Consistency would therefore demand that "orthodox" Trotskyists and their co-thinkers denounce the Eastern European mass movements as objectively counter-revolutionary.

But this would mean lining up with the Stalinist hardliners (whom they have always opposed) against the workers at precisely the moment when the Stalinists are utterly discredited and approaching their downfall.

Within the terms of their analysis there is no escape from this contradiction.

It is increasingly clear that the state capitalist analysis is the only position from which anti-Stalinist revolutionary socialism can be coherently defended.

From the state capitalist viewpoint we do not advocate or welcome the introduction of the market, for it is no solution at all to the problems of the East European working class. But neither do we fear a restoration of capitalism, since capitalism already exists.

We can argue about the way forward with the workers of Eastern Europe without in the least compromising our total support for their struggle against oppression.

The collapse of Stalinism is not the collapse of socialism but of its extreme opposite, the most concentrated form of capitalism.



# THE PROFITS OF SMOG

The smog that has descended again on Dublin this winter may send dozens of vulnerable citizens to an early grave. But that is unlikely to cause too many sleepless nights to the coal barons who are making millions out of polluting the air we breathe. The coal business has a turnover of around £120 a year, and that's just for the smoke producing variety.

At the top of the heap is Mr John Reihill, multi-millionaire boss of Tedcastle McCormick, Ireland's biggest coal importer and the dominant force in Coal Distributors Ltd, (CDL) which supplies 80% of the coal burned in Dublin homes. John Reihill and his brother, Frank, hold between them 55 other company directorships.

Founder of the Tedcastle empire was John Reihill Snr, a leading member of Taca, Fianna Fail's fund raising organisation in the 1960s, which traded favours to big business for financial donations. His sons carry on the family tradition with frequent contributions to Fianna Fail funds, a fact which may explain the tardiness of the party in stamping out coal pollution.

Most of the coal sold by CDL in Dublin comes from Poland. The Reihills buy it for £15 a tonne less than they pay for comparable British coal, thanks to the abysmal wages paid to Polish miners. But householders have to pay the same price for both varieties, ensuring enormous profits to CDL.

No other than Reihills and a handful of their friends have access to Polish coal and the profits it brings. This exclusive buying agreement signed in the days of Sean

Lemass and with his blessing, explains CDL's fierce opposition to all attempts to restrict coal burning in Dublin.

Taking advantage of loopholes in the Air Pollution Act that were introduced by the Environment Minister, Pádraig Flynn, in 1987, at the insistence of CDL itself, the coal barons have stymied all efforts to introduce smoke control zones in the city.

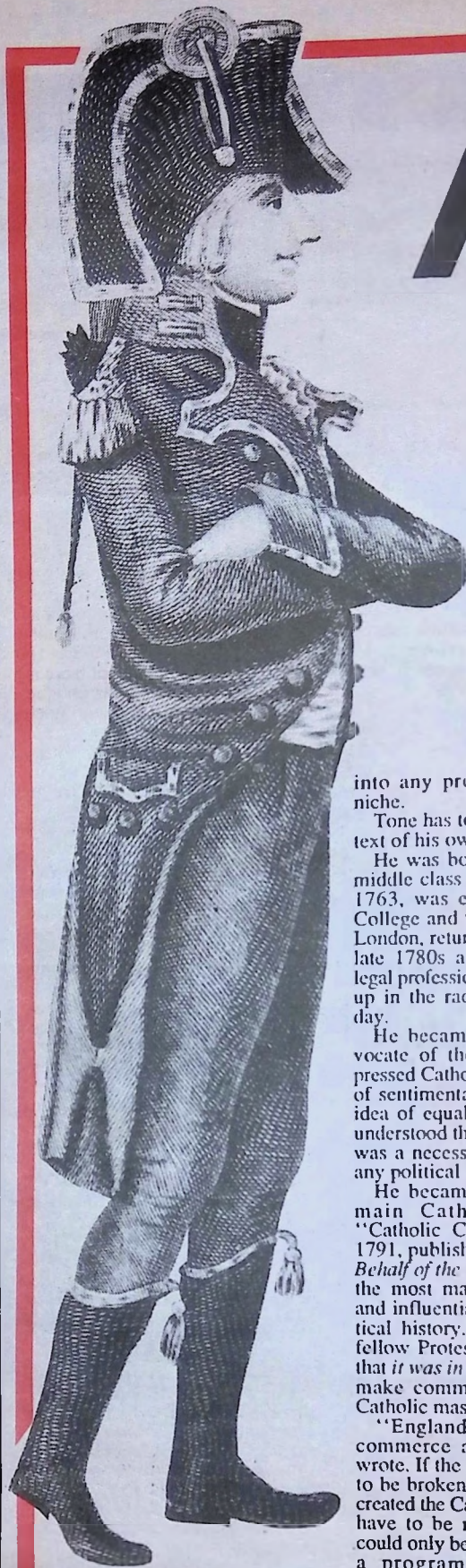
When he brought in the CDL sponsored amendments to the Act, Flynn was brazen enough to tell the Dail that he hoped he was doing enough to satisfy their demands. His own back bencher, Gerald Brady, pointed out that "people were dying of air pollution in the capital" while the act was being made "inoperable". He was ignored.

One measure of the coal lobby's political clout is the fact that in Britain, where there is an indigenous and historically native coal producing industry, all major cities have been converted to clean fuels, while in Southern Ireland, which has no such industry, there is not one single smoke control zone in operation.

The business operations of CDL are currently under investigation by the EEC's fair trading authorities. But after five years of red tape the case is unlikely ever to come to anything. Needless to say, the Irish government has made no effort to force a speedy resolution.

Dublin's smog could be cut at a stroke. If CDL were nationalised (and no compensation paid because of the massive damage they have caused to the lives of Dubliners), coal could be subsidised for a period without creating huge profits for private industrialists. Irish gas from Kinsale could also be pumped into Dublin as part of a massive re-conversion programme that could create thousands of jobs. But all to this might mean tampering with the profit system.

Meanwhile more Dubliners will die this winter to ensure the dirty profits of CDL.



# A BOU

Tone was impatient with these doubts and argued that the Catholics, if given their full rights as citizens, would cease to be Catholics. Their "foolish bigotry and superstition", he claimed, resulted precisely from oppression and the ignorance that went with it.

Later, in France, Tone was to express regret that Napoleon didn't kill the Pope when he had the chance, and he angrily opposed priests—even "progressive" priests—being allowed any role in the expedition to Ireland.

In this regard Tone, almost two centuries ago, was years ahead of today's Republicans.

Tone's advocacy of Irish independence was in no way introverted or narrow minded. He saw himself as part of a great European movement for the Rights of Man. He spoke no Irish and appears to have regarded traditional Irish culture as quaint and amusing and of little interest to serious people. He felt entirely at home as an officer in the French army and, after his capture when he returned from France with the 1798 expedition, protested vigorously against the refusal of the British to treat him as a French soldier.

## NO PROPERTY

The single most misused quote from Tone is his reference to the "men of no property".

"Our freedom must be had at all hazards," he wrote. "If the men of property will not help us they must fall; we will free ourselves by the aid of that large and respectable class of the community—the men of no property".

This is often taken to mean that Tone advocated not only equality before the law but complete economic equality too: that he was a sort of eighteenth century socialist.

In fact, although Tone cared passionately about the rights of the down-trodden masses, he would have been puzzled by the notion of economic equality. He did believe that the worst excesses of the existing order would be eliminated by the institution of democracy. But in April 1796 he enthusiastically supported the French Directory in its bloody suppression of the group around Babeuf, arguably the first "communist" in history.

Tone wanted a disciplined, democratic state within which a vigorous economy could be built: a modern nation state. He argued in unambiguous terms that this project deserved the support particularly of people with property who were prevented by England from using their assets to best advantage. In his *Argument* he appealed even to "the gentry" to take their place in a new Irish nation, rather than remain as agents of an English power which was holding all sections of Irish society back.

This was a progressive, indeed revolutionary, perspective in the 1790s. But it is a nonsense to pre-

into any present-day political niche.

Tone has to be seen in the context of his own time.

He was born into a Protestant middle class family in Dublin in 1763, was educated at Trinity College and the Inns of Court in London, returned to Dublin in the late 1780s as a member of the legal profession and became swept up in the radical politics of the day.

He became a passionate advocate of the rights of the oppressed Catholic majority, not out of sentimental attachment to the idea of equality, but because he understood that civil rights for all was a necessary prerequisite for any political advance in Ireland.

He became Secretary of the main Catholic lobby, the "Catholic Committee" and, in 1791, published *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, the most marvellously eloquent and influential tract in Irish political history. In it he urged his fellow Protestants to understand that it was in their own interest to make common cause with the Catholic masses.

"England chokes our rising commerce at every turn," he wrote. If the grip of England was to be broken and a modern state created the Catholic masses would have to be mobilised. And that could only be done on the basis of a programme guaranteeing Catholic emancipation.

Tone was enthused by the political ferment he found among Protestants in Belfast in the early 1750s. The French Revolution of 1789, the overthrow of feudal monarchy and the institution of the Rights of Man, had spurred thoughts of revolution all over Europe. And in Belfast, much the most advanced town in Ireland, the political excitement was intense.

These Protestant revolutionaries, mainly small property owners or involved in the professions, were not liberal reformers, and certainly not Irish nationalists in the sense in which the phrase is used today. For example, they saw Catholicism, accurately, as the ideology of the old feudal order in Europe which they were later to play their part in overthrowing. Indeed, many were uneasy about the implications of demanding full civil rights for Catholics, fearing that Catholic ideology would increase in influence.

"FEW moments in history have been more consistently misrepresented both by open enemies and professed admirers than that of the United Irishmen."

So wrote Connolly in *Labour in Irish History*.

Eighty years later the misrepresentation continues and increases. Wolfe Tone is "claimed" not only by every competing brand of nationalism in the land, but now also, amazingly, by the latest breed of anti-nationalists too.

Everybody from Gerry Adams to Conor Cruise O'Brien, by way of Charlie Haughey and Proinsias de Rossa, can make an argument that they stand in the "true" tradition of Tone. Which proves only that Tone can't be fitted neatly





# Bourgeois Rebel



tend that it provides an adequate framework for political advance two centuries later.

It would make as much sense for French revolutionaries today to dedicate and continually re-dedicate themselves to the ideas of Robespierre, Marat or Danton.

What we need today is not the revolution of the eighteenth century to bring about bourgeois democracy, but the revolution of today and tomorrow to overthrow capitalism—the never-failing source of our *present* political ills—and to usher in the socialist society.

## Revisionist Review

**THE** recent publication of a new biography of Tone—*Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* by Marianne Elliot—triggered a spate of newspaper articles by “revisionists” who saw the work as a newspaper weapon against the Provos.

Elliot argues that Irish nationalists have distorted Tone’s life and ideas in order to suit their own political purpose. She argues specifically that Tone, were he alive today, would be appalled by and opposed to the Provo campaign.

In fact Elliot is guilty of exactly the sin she accuses the nationalists of: her account of Tone is designed

to bolster her political position.

At the heart of her argument is a claim that nationalists misuse Tone’s declaration of August 1796, which has come to be regarded as the definitive statement of his political beliefs.

“To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country—these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman, in the place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter—these were my means.”

Essentially, Elliot claims that while this may have been Tone’s position in August 1796, it wasn’t the basis of his thinking during his years of political activity in Ireland itself.

She suggests that for most of his political life Tone had been devoted to uniting Irish people of different denominations: that this wasn’t merely a means towards an end, but the end itself. And therefore that Tone, in effect, was *misrepresenting himself* when he described the achievement of national independence as the overriding objective.

### TONE

This has been hailed by commentators like John Cooney of the *Irish Times* as a very significant political insight. In fact, it is a piece of profound silliness.

It is no more than the old chicken-and-egg conundrum in an unusual context. It is perfectly true that Tone’s political ideas developed and deepened over his ten years or so of virtual full-time

political activity. Throughout that time, he saw the struggle against sectarian division and the struggle for independence as intertwined.

Elliot’s implied argument—that in order to be consistent Tone “ought” to have postponed the pursuit of independence until sectarian divisions had been ended—tells us far more about the desperation of the revisionists than about Wolfe Tone or about historical accuracy generally.

They want to argue that there is a contradiction between the struggle for national independence and the struggle against sectarianism *now*. So they project this back onto Wolfe Tone.

Even sillier is the other point of Elliot’s which has caused excitement among revisionists.

In the title page of the book she quotes Tone’s statement at his trial in November 1798: “For fair and open war I was prepared; if that has degenerated into a system of assassination, massacre and plunder I do...most sincerely regret it.”

This has been used by the revisionists to suggest that Tone was near enough a pacifist and that for this reason too he would have been opposed to the Provo campaign.

In fact, it demonstrates nothing other than that Tone was a decent person who had no compunction about organising for all-out war but who disapproved deeply of sectarian killing or killing for personal gain.

Elliot’s attempts to use the quotation to recruit Tone posthumously into the ranks of the

IRA VOLUNTEERS FOLLOW IN THE TRADITION OF TONE

Peace Train freaks is laughable.

Trying to “claim” Wolfe Tone for this or that late twentieth century political faction is futile. What we can say for certain is that he was a *fighter* against oppression and injustice and in the vanguard of progressive political thought in Europe at the time.

In that respect he has nothing whatever in common with the comfortable clique of conservatives who seek to revise past history in order to preserve the present status quo.



Flanna Fall march every year to Tone’s grave



# Interview with PAUL HILL

(Taken from transcript of Interview with British Socialist Worker)

**WHAT happened when you were first arrested?**

I WAS taken to a police station in Guildford and told I was a prime suspect for mass murder.

The police say I arrived there before noon on Thursday and I didn't see a single police officer until late on Friday night.

In fact I was interrogated all the Thursday night and they deny it.

**DID Peter Imbert—then the head of the Metropolitan Bomb Squad and now Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police—interview you then?**

HE DID twice. And there's no record of Imbert's interviews. That's the damaging paperwork and that's the paperwork they will now shred. That will never come to light.

They can't possibly uphold the remaining conviction against me in the light of this.

**THE POLICE threatened to kill your mother and charge your pregnant girl friend, Gina, for the bombings. Did you believe them?**

I WASN'T thinking in a logical fashion. I was absolutely petrified.

You have to put yourself in our position. We were very naive people. I'd never been in a police station before. And here we were arrested and brought to a town that had been devastated by seven people being killed in the bombings.

And where I came from policemen did do things like that.

When I was a small boy my grandmother had an old pot which was battered beyond repair. Her mother used to bang that in the 1920s when murder gangs used to come into the area. So I knew what police officers were capable of.

But I didn't relate that to English police officers. They were people who would help you across the road and show the way if you were lost.

I was terrified when I realised that they weren't like that.

People ask, did you really think they could do that to Gina? But just look at what they did to Carole Richardson.

We had this assumption that we didn't do it, that we'd go into court and tell what the police officers did.

There's no identification evidence, no circumstantial evidence. The confessions were absurd—there were over 100 contradictions between the four of us.

**AT WHAT stage do you think they knew they had the wrong people?**

I THINK they knew from the start.

You have to take everything in context. It was just after the Birmingham bombings. The atmosphere was bordering on hysteria.

One of our QCs whispered to another before the trial, "I feel dreadfully unpatriotic because I think my client



## 'We didn't believe the police would do this to us'

really is innocent."

The atmosphere filtered right down from the very top. The Department of Public Prosecutions was involved in it. Scientific people got involved in it. They had a free hand.

In our case they had confessions from the Guildford Four. They had no confessions from the MacQuire Seven. They had no scientific evidence on those that they got confessions from. On those they didn't get confessions from, it was all scientific evidence.

**WHY DO you think you were treated so brutally in prison?**

WHEN the campaign to free us was at its peak I got the most brutal treatment.

My aunt and uncle would come in and say, "Should we slow down a bit?" I would say no every time. "That they are harassing me means you're having an effect."

They moved me 51 times. I spent 1,600 days in solitary confinement.

They put me into solitary for various reasons. If I was doing some legal work which they knew I needed done they would remove me.

In the last nine years I wouldn't do prison work. I

took the position that I was every bit as much a hostage as Terry Waite.

**WHAT impact does your release have on the Birmingham Six?**

THE Birmingham Six people will come home. You will sit and you will speak to them like you are speaking to me.

But the establishment won't want to live this again. They won't want another six people out. It nails dead the idea that ours was an isolated incident.

We have merely rerippled the surface of a very deep pond. And the establishment are aware of this.

This goes to the core of the establishment and it epitomises all their dealings with Ireland.

**AS LONG as Britain continues to play the role it does in the North, do you believe there will be more Guildford Fours, more Birmingham Sixes?**

MANY people have asked me how can this be prevented from happening again.

The safeguards they are talking about are a nonsense.

If you have a video in the interrogation room the assaults happen in the corridor, in the cells, on the way

to the police station.

A tape recorder only records the moment of confession. By then you are beyond retrieving your situation. You have totally capitulated because they have worn you down to the point of confession by a myriad of means.

The only possible way of stopping this from happening again is if you have immediate access to a solicitor who is with you through every moment of that interrogation.

The message must be that there can no longer be uncorroborated confessions.

**DO you see any prospect of peace in Ireland as long as the British are there?**

NONE whatsoever. They are the root cause of the whole situation. The longer they remain, the longer the agony is going to continue.

Who can argue with me on the right for the British to be in my country and do this to innocent people like me? No one can.

**WHAT DO you think of the way you were released?**

UNFORTUNATELY I believe that the greatest breakthrough came with

the "influential" people. I hate to say it about people like Cardinal Hume and Devlin and Scarman etc... that's ironic for me.

People say that the dam burst with all the influential people, yes, but before the dam bursts there must be an incredible volume of water building up behind it.

And that wasn't influential people, that was just ordinary people.

**DID YOU find the attitude of the major Irish Left parties disappointing?**

VERY disappointing. There were one or two individuals, like Pat McCartan, the Workers' Party TD, who were very good.

In the area where I lived we didn't have a great deal of love for the Workers' Party. They did nothing for the defence of the community.

I was disappointed with the Irish Left more than the British Left... that the British Left didn't unite on this issue shows the depth of their fragmentation.

I didn't think that should

have held on the Irish Left. I thought they'd unite on the question of innocent Irish people in British jail. We thought that would bridge the differences but it didn't.

Neither Dick Spring (leader of the Labour Party) nor De Rossa (Workers' Party) expressed any interest in meeting us when we were over.

**JUST BEFORE you arrived in Dublin there was a radio phone in where De Rossa was asked about your release and he said we should remember the people who died in Guildford.**

UNFORTUNATELY Irish people have those kind of people in our midst. People like him epitomise the border that's in our country. They're more English than the English.

The actual people who did this to me are irrelevant. It's the mechanism of the state not the people within it is important.

De Rossa etc will sell their soul for acceptability... people like them were killing republicans—other Irish people—in the civil war.

**HAS the leadership of the British Labour Party expressed any interest in meeting you?**

NO, AND I have no desire to meet them. They did absolutely nothing. Just individual people like Jeremy Corbyn and Joan Maynard.

They are still doing nothing around the Birmingham Six and that's the sharp aspect of things.

There are a great many people who are coming out in favour of the Birmingham Six because it's now hip to speak out.

**WHEN GERRY came out of the court the people that were there included young post office workers, black and white, lots of English people as well as Irish people cheering.**

Yes, because it's a release of people against Thatcherism. People have been under the whip.

I've been in prison and I haven't really appreciated how Thatcher had really deprived people of many, many things. When I came out I thought people were really uncaring and unfeeling and just interested in themselves and just concerned with feeding their family and trying to get a roof over their head or get a job.

When I came to prison unemployment was very low and there weren't many homeless. Now they're sleeping in cardboard boxes.

I have to mirror that by the political decisions makers from 1974 to now and that's Thatcherism.

I think that when people see us having a victory they gain some pleasure from that. A little personal amount of pleasure.

I expect Irish people to be pleased. But English people and black people, Indian people.



# ★ Around the movement

## Belfast supports strike

DESPITE bad weather and poor publicity, more than 150 people attended a rally in support of ambulance crews in Belfast's Cornmarket in November.

Workers distributed leaflets and copies of a joint union statement on a step-up of industrial action. They also collected signatures for a petition in support of their pay demand.

Roger Poole, chief ambulance negotiator, was the main speaker at the Cornmarket rally. The meeting was also attended by local NUPE and COSHE leaders. Poole outlined the case for the ambulance crews' wage increase, claiming that arbitration is the solution to the dispute, and that a political victory over the Tories is not what's wanted.

But as last month's *Socialist Worker* explained, defeating the ambulance workers is central to the Tories' plans for dismembering the NHS. Ambulance crews are fighting for the service as well as their pay. Strike action which mobilises the collective strength of organised workers, not arbitration, is the only way to stop Tory attacks on the NHS and gain a decent wage for the ambulance crews.

At the rally SWM members invited a shop steward to speak at a demonstration against the introduction of student loans.



## Ahern meets with abuse

MEMBERS of the Combined Tenants and Residents Association and the Waterford Branch of the Socialist Workers Movement picketed Bertie Ahearn in Waterford in November. Ahearn, the Fianna Fail Minister for Labour, had been invited by Waterford Council of Trade Unions to launch a book, *A Labour History of Waterford* by Emmet O'Connor.

Shammy Power, a leading figure in the Water Rates Campaign, said that the Trades Council's decision to invite Ahearn to launch the book "was an insult to all trade unionists in Waterford, particularly all those who fought in the past and who had to emigrate".

Jimmy Kelly, the convenor of Waterford Glass, said that the decision "had effectively undermined all the good work in recent years in Waterford to break workers from Fianna

Fail". A statement issued by the local SWM denounced the Trades Council decision as "particularly insensitive at a time when the whole of the local trade union movement is locked in battle with the Fianna Fail led City Council and government over rates changes and are being threatened with jail as a result of their opposition".

A mass meeting of water rates campaigners came out against the visit. After their decision they were told by WCTU officials that the use of Connolly Hall by the Campaign might be withdrawn if they went ahead with the picket.

In the event a total picket of 20 people went ahead. The picketers waylaid Ahearn as he entered Connolly Hall and left him in no doubt what they thought of Fianna Fail and the Trades Council cabal who invited him.

## Debate on armed struggle

Over a hundred people turned to a debate in December on the tactic of the Armed struggle hosted by the Critical Studies group.

Jim Gibney, from Sinn Fein, argued that the armed struggle would eventually drive Britain to the negotiating table. He claimed that it continued to maintain the morale of the Catholic population who could be sure that their army would 'punish' the British Army after every round of harassment and brutality.

Peadar Kirby, from the radical Christian magazine, ALPHA, claimed that he was not in principle against armed struggle. But he contrasted the specific situation of the IRA with the position of the guerrillas in El Salvador. According to Kirby, the political conditions that justified armed struggle did not exist in Ireland.

Speakers from the SWM claimed that the starting point for every socialist must be that Britain was the source of violence in Northern Ireland. They rejected any notion that there was a 'cult of violence' inherent in the republican tradition.

But they also argued strongly against the view that the armed struggle was a tactic that was likely to bring victory to those fighting bigotry and sectarianism. They pointed to the experience of Eastern Europe where, in 'abnormal' conditions, it was the small groups who had a perspective of mass mobilisation that won out.

A lively debate ensued with speakers from the floor from SWM, Militant, IRSP and Sinn Fein.

## What we stand for ★

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

### FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

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

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

### NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

This kind of socialism does not exist anywhere today. Workers do not have control in Russia, China, Cuba etc. Instead, power is held by a state-capitalist class. A workers' revolution is needed in these countries too. We are against NATO and the Warsaw Pact and all weapons of mass destruction. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

### FOR AN END TO PARTITION

The Northern State was created by British Imperialism in its own interests. Sectarianism and bigotry were built into it and will continue to exist for as long as the state exists. The marginal privileges given to Protestant workers are just that: marginal. It is in the immediate interest of Protestant as well as Catholic workers to fight against their exploitation. It is in the interest of all Northern workers to unite against the state and aim at socialism in Ireland. We support all forces struggling against imperialism and the Northern state, regardless of differences we may have with them.

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

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

### FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

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

### FOR A FIGHT IN THE UNIONS

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

### FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To destroy capitalism and achieve socialism the most class conscious sections of the working class must be organised in a revolutionary party. The SWM aims to build such a party through spreading its ideas and through its activity in the working class movement.

## Students fight against loans

In November thousands of students converged on Belfast city centre in an enthusiastic and angry protest at the proposed implementation of student loans. Amid chants of "grants not loans" and various anti-Thatcher placards it was clear the morale of students was high.

Students came from universities throughout the North and a large contingent arrived from colleges in the South.

Loud cheers greeted ICTU speaker Al Mackle's

pledge of support to the ambulance drivers who are also engaged in struggle. Rebecca Packwood from the NUS pointed out how devastating the loans system would be in Northern Ireland with its low wages and high unemployment.



USI speaker Marty Whelan said the introduction of loans would prevent working class people, women—with their notoriously badly paid jobs—and mature students from entering third level education.

At the demonstration SWM members distributed copies of our 'Fight Tory Loans' leaflet, and a good many copies of Socialist Worker were sold.

FIONA MACLEAN

## What's on: SWM meetings and activities

### ■ Belfast Branch

Meets every Monday at 7.30 pm in the Ulster People's College, 30 Adelaide Park, Belfast (between Lisburn Road and Malone Road, opposite Queens Elms Halls of Residence)

### ■ Bray Branch

Meets every second Tuesday at 8.00 pm in Hibernian Inn, Marine Terrace

### ■ Cork Branch

Meets every Tuesday at 8 pm in the Anchor Inn, George's Quay

### ■ Derry Branch

Meets every Tuesday at 8.00 pm in Dungloe Bar, Waterloo Street

### ■ Dundalk Branch

Meets every second Tuesday at 8.00 pm in ATGWU, Francis Street

### ■ Dublin Branch

Meets every Wednesday at 8 pm in the Bachelor Inn, O Connell Bridge

### ■ Kilkenny Branch

Meets every Tuesday in the Club House Hotel

### ■ For more details of regular branch meetings in BRAY, DERRY, DUBLIN, DUNDALK, DUNGARVON, GALWAY, KILKENNY, PORTLAOISE 6 WATERFORD contact: SWM, PO Box 1648, James's St. Dublin 8

# Join us!

If you would like to join the SWM or want more details, complete and send to:

SWM PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

Please send me more details of SWM

I want to join the SWM

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....





## REVIEWS

# Going to the pictures

HAVE your parents ever told you about going to the pictures in Dublin on a Sunday afternoon? Or surely you have seen the queues that form outside the capital's cinemas on a Friday night? If the answer to both these questions is "yes", then it must come as no surprise to learn that, according to *Film International*, Dublin is second only to London's West End in terms of box office receipts.

With 140 screens in the Republic, and 28 in the North, over eight million tickets were sold in 1988 and £20 million taken in box office sales. By the close of this year it is expected that roughly 10 million

cinema tickets will have been bought by the Irish public, both in the Republic and in the Six Counties. When it is considered that expectations for the UK amount to sales of 80 million tickets to a population of 55 million (the population of the UK is over ten times that of Ireland, which has a total population of four and a half million), it is easy to see how, per head of population, attendance rates for Ireland are

## CINEMA

much higher. What have Irish cinema goers flocked to in 1989? The biggest earners of this year have been, in descending order, *Indiana Jones: The Lost Crusade*, *Roger Rabbit*, *Batman*, *Rain Man* and

## Licence to Kill.

The most relevant point that can be made about these films is that they all try to offer the punter an escape from the ordinariness of his or her everyday life. Moreover, the content of these films, with the exception of the technologically innovative *Roger Rabbit* (and Dustin Hoffman's superb acting in *Rain Man*), points to a dearth of ideas on the part of their makers. The biggest earner of all is a sequel to a sequel; *Batman* is a re-working of an old comic strip, and we even have James Bond in there, once more strutting his stuff.

Take a look at what are likely to be the two biggest earners over this Christmas and we witness a similar trend—*Back to the Future 2* and *Ghostbusters 2*. The fact that these are the films to which people will flock is not really relevant; what is relevant is that they are all Hollywood has to offer. The promotional facilities at the

disposal of the big name directors unfortunately do not reside with those film makers who try to deal with ideas relating to the society in which we live. Spike Lee's pockets are sadly not as deep as Steven Spielberg's.

Yet, in these times, it may just be true that people don't want to be reminded—even more than most of us are forced to be—of all those things that are wrong with our society.

What might be needed to boost sales of films like Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* is just the sort of burgeoning interest in the arts and popular culture that accompanied the Russian Revolution. Films made

during those years, like Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, were classics of their kind and are still shown today.

At the moment, however, most of us make do with sequels. One thing's for sure, though, it certainly makes predicting next year's box office successes much easier. As for myself, I think I'll go for *Back to the Future 3*.

KEN MULKEARN



## Should Porn be Censored?

THIS pamphlet is the latest statement of the feminist argument that pornography should be banned. The author puts the case in terms of a woman's rights issue—it is a question of women's rights over the rights of men to do as they please.

It is certainly the case that pornography degrades women. It represents them as second class citizens. It shows them as victims, as objects available and subordinate. All socialists should oppose pornography for these reasons.

## BAN

Does this mean that we support a ban on pornography? The answer must be no. Socialists differ from feminists in their analysis of women's oppression because they locate the source of the violence in different areas. For Corcoran pornography "...portrays a deep aggressive hatred of the female sex and the desire to degrade and hurt womenkind". She quotes Andrea Dworkin, who says "men like hurting us... it's fun". Later, Brownmiller's famous quotation is repeated: "Pornography is the theory, rape is the practice."

In short, feminists argue

C. Corcoran:  
PORNOGRAPHY: The  
New Terrorism

that the source of women's oppression is male domination. Therefore it follows logically that the reason a ban on pornography in Ireland doesn't stop violence against women is because the legislators and judiciary are male and therefore refuse to interpret the law in a way that benefits women. Thus the solution is a more carefully designed, "women-oriented" legislation.

The British National Council for Civil Liberties is quoted: "The essential question is whether by legislation more will be gained than lost? For example, although the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act have proved disappointing in terms of their effect, even inadequate legislation helps change general attitudes, influences women's own expectations and encourages them to fight for their rights."

Yet Ireland represents the perfect test case for such a theory, having plenty of "inadequate legislation" to guarantee censorship of all sorts, by Corcoran's own admission. Where has the ban on pornography led to a decrease in sexism or violence against women?

Women are still denied abortion, equal rights at work—practically if not legally—and generally have fewer rights than most European women.

Banning pornography does not prevent violence against women, although Corcoran finds some connection between the increase in the number of

video shops opening in the country and an increase in violence against women. The problem is that customs are not siezing enough pornographic material! Corcoran refuses to accept the evidence that banning pornography does nothing to fight sexism. Worse, it will be used by the state to oppress and harass minority groups and opponents of the system.

For example, the feminist campaign to "clean up Soho" in 1982 did not result in sex shops being closed down. However, the police took advantage of the situation to harass every gay bookshop and cinema in the area.

## ACCESS

Socialists oppose censorship of pornography not because—as Corcoran argues—they want public access to it, but because the state is actively involved in oppressing women, and giving it more power merely increases its power to oppress.

What is necessary is that workers take on the struggle against women's oppression, and undertake the censorship of sexist representations of women themselves. By refusing to produce pornography, the working class can fight against the real source of women's oppression—class society and the greed of the ruling class. Only when working class men and women unite against their bosses will they win equal rights for women. Handing more power to Thatcher and Haughey will only perpetuate their oppression.

CATHERINE CURRAN

## Culinary delight

THE COOK, THE THIEF,  
HIS WIFE AND HER  
LOVER

SOME people have told me this is a great film. It has received rave reviews from various film critics, and has reportedly given rise to great enthusiasm and/or outrage in the UK. It is definitely not your average film.

Maybe I'm not well enough copped on about this type of cinematic genre (although I can just about manage the jargon, dubious achievement though that is). But for the life of me I can't make head or tail of what this one is trying to say, although I have an idea it is supposed to be saying something profound and meaningful about something. Possibly it's a morality tale about modern decadence or Thatcher's Britain? Your guess is as good as mine. It's about an extremely nasty and rich crook who owns an incredibly sumptuous restaurant. Here he lavishly entertains his circle of vicious cronies. A large part of the film revolves around food, him being gross and brutal in



just about every possible way, and sadistic violence.

As a foretaste of what to expect: the film starts with one of the patrons being stripped and smeared with dog shit for complaining about the food.

His wife is more refined than he is. He beats her up and degrades her in public. She gets off with a diner who is a bookish intellectual. They manage to have passionate sex in various parts of the restaurant, the jacks, larders, etc. The French chef aids and abets them. The crook eventually finds out and your man is murdered in a very gruesome and sickening way. The wife persuades the chef to cook her dead lover ("Cook Michael now—it was his favourite restaurant")

and he is served to the husband, roasted with all

the trimmings.

The idea that it is a morality tale is partly because of the medieval type music, and there is a golden haired choirboy who sings in a piping voice among the silent downtrodden minions working in the vast, gloomy kitchen. Also the formal arrangement of people and colours is often like old paintings.

Visually it is sometimes beautiful. Fantasy—definitely, or nightmare. Definitely not realism. Definitely not meant to be funny, or if it is the humour is beyond me. The goodies (wife, lover, choirboy, chef) have posh or foreign accents. The baddies have Cockney ones. What else can I say?

Don't see it just before or after a meal.

NAN DALTON



## INDUSTRIAL

# Ambulance workers fight the Tories



THE ambulance workers' dispute which people have seen reported on BBC and ITV news is affecting the North of Ireland too. We've heard very little about it because in early December, as the dispute entered its fourth month, escalation of the dispute by ambulance crews in Northern Ireland was far behind that in Britain—and, crucially, there had been no suspensions. In Britain, ambulance workers refusing to work normally were suspended without pay so that in

many areas 999 calls were being answered by crews who were working the emergency service without pay.

## EGG SHELLS

Ambulance workers in Derry told *Socialist Worker* that they didn't expect any suspensions. "Management are walking on egg-shells," they said. "They've never been so polite to us, they really don't want suspensions. They know they can't call

in the army or police."

Certainly, an army or police ambulance called out to a nationalist area would have to fear an ambush, so management are likely to avoid the kind of escalation there's been in Britain.

Given the nature of ambulance work, all-out strike—which is the only way to guarantee victory—is impossible. Emergency cover is necessary and the workers have continued to give cover even where they've been suspended. In this situation, the key to

winning the dispute is the solidarity action of other workers.

## DERRY

Ambulance workers who addressed Derry Trades Council's December meeting agreed with this view and backed the Trades Council's proposal for a Day of Action as a first step. The Trades Council will be writing to the Northern Ireland Committee of the Congress

of Trade Unions (NICTU) asking it to call the Day of Action in conjunction with the ambulance workers' unions as early as possible in January.

However, because NICTU has never been known for its militancy the Trades Council agreed that if NICTU wouldn't call for action soon, the Trades Council would get together with the ambulance unions to organise a Day of Action locally and would encourage other Trades Councils to do likewise.

# Ahern attacks unions

FIANNA Fail Minister for Labour Bertie Ahern has brought in a new Bill to restrict union activity. And the ICTU have welcomed it!

The new Industrial Relations Bill:

- outlaws one-worker pickets. If an individual in a small job is sacked they can no longer put up a picket in order to win over fellow workers to backing their reinstatement.

- stops picket of the employer's home or social function. Bosses can bring misery to workers' homes but

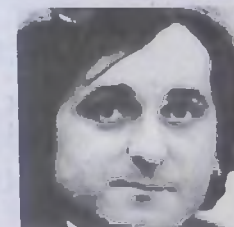
they will be left in peace. — limits the right to secondary picketing. From now on an employer must be directly assisting a strike-bound workplace for secondary picketing to be legal. It is not enough that they are tied together in the same group of share-holders.

- makes secret ballots compulsory. Votes by show of hands at union meetings will be outlawed. Unions that try to persist in this practice will be de-registered.

## CONCERN

Despite their hypocritical concern for democracy in the unions, there is a specific provision that employers' organisations are exempted from having to have votes on lock-outs or strikes. Furthermore, if workers do vote to go on strike, the new law will not insist that the strike go ahead. The union officials can still ignore the results of the ballot.

One of the main aims of the Bill is to surround the conflict between workers and employers in a maze of procedure and bureaucracy, a new Labour Commission is to be established which adds a new rung to the procedural ladder. This



Bertie Ahern

commission can draw up a code of practice and then award against workers who refuse to adhere to it.

Overall the Bill stays within the lies of the general Fianna Fail strategy. This has set out to use the union leaders to discipline their members. This Bill strengthens the hand of the union official who insists on "following procedure". Meanwhile more jobs will be lost and conditions worsened while the famous "procedure" is followed at an even slower pace.

## ABORTION INFORMATION

TEL:  
DUBLIN 794700

DON'T LET SPUC  
CENSOR YOU

# Programme for National Recovery create jobs?

IN 1980, 227,200 people worked in manufacturing industry in Ireland. In 1987 when the Programme for National Recovery was agreed, the number was 181,500. Almost 46,000 industrial jobs had disappeared in just seven years, a 20 per cent cut in the workforce.

It is against this background that the Programme for National Recovery has to be seen, for even if all the jobs promised in the PNR were to be realised we would still be worse off than a decade ago. This, it seems, is the sum total of what our union leaders can offer us: not so much back to the future as forward to the past. The Programme for National Recovery promised 20,000 new jobs in manufacturing every year between 1987 and 1990. The union leaders who negotiated the deal thought this meant an extra 20,000 people at work each year. They didn't realise that jobs lost through redundancies and "natural wastage" had to be subtracted from those created, leaving the numbers at work virtually

unchanged.

According to the Economic and Social Research Institute the number in industrial employment in the first quarter of this year was just 300 more than in 1987.

And since 1980, 183,000 people are officially acknowledged to have emigrated, 78,000 of them since 1987. New research suggests that the real number leaving this decade could be closer to 300,000. It is this, and not new job opportunities, which explains the small decline in the numbers unemployed.

To pay for this miserable achievement we have had to accept low wage rises, increase our output, and keep silent while tens of thousands of jobs disappeared through union-promoted voluntary redundancy schemes. Workers' sacrifices have meant lower inflation and lower public spending and borrowing—the conditions employers said were necessary for the creation of jobs. But the jobs haven't materialised.

There are two main reasons for this.

On the one hand, employers have been able to increase output and profits without employing

any more workers; and on the other, a very high proportion of profits extracted here are not re-invested to create new jobs but are repatriated by the multinational corporations that dominate the economy.

Labour productivity has increased to a staggering degree. Between 1980 and 1987, when 46,000 industrial jobs were lost, output per person increased by 88 per cent. That is, those with jobs were producing almost twice as much as seven years earlier. Since 1987 output has continued to soar—by a further 80 per cent—while employment has been stagnant.

The only explanation for this is that whatever investment has taken place has been in machines, not jobs. As the *Irish Times* noted recently, "It is a fact of modern economic life that the successful expansion of a business is

more likely to led to an investment in technology than in personnel." It concluded that workers should not expect any growth in jobs as a result of profits going up.

This bias has been directly encouraged by the Industrial Development Authority which gives our money to industrialists to set up or expand in Ireland.

If an employer wants to expand, the IDA will give grants worth £5,000 per new job, where no capital investment is involved. However, where capital investment is involved, the average cost per job created is £18,000. Giving grants to industry will cost the taxpayers around £450 million this year.

Employers get other major subsidies from the state as well. Tax concessions to business will cost the exchequer £850 million this year. Such subsidies are justified on the grounds that they leave more profits in the



hands of employers to reinvest and create more jobs. But what really happens to profits? The biggest manufacturing companies in this country are foreign-owned multinationals. In 1982 these companies repatriated £500 million of profits, royalties and dividends. This year it is officially estimated that they will take out of the country almost £2,000 million. So much for investment in jobs!

The ESRI has predicted a total of 82,000 additional jobs by 1994, an annual growth rate of just one and a half per cent at a time when the economy overall is expected to grow by five per cent per annum. But this is not taking into account a world recession. Growth is already slowing down in the USA. In a situation where over-one third of all Irish exports go to Britain, what happens there is still critically important for what happens here. And all the signs are that the British economy is heading for a major recession.

Growth in the UK has already fallen from 4.5 per cent in 1988 to 2 per cent this year and is predicted to fall again to 1.25 per cent in 1990. A severe recession in Britain will create havoc



# Socialist Worker

## Unions cave in to Fianna Fail

TOP trade union leaders have been working flat out to ensure a majority in favour of the programme for National Recovery (PNR) at the special ICTU conference in January.

The three year programme has a year still to run. But already it is plain that it has operated against the interests of rank and file trade unionists.

The ICTU bosses who are pushing for the Programme's endorsement, and laying the basis for another one when the present deal runs out, are betraying the people whose interests they are well-paid to represent.

And the main parties of the Left are letting them get away with it.

The trade union leaders initially sold the plan on the basis that it would benefit workers—or at least ensure that they didn't bear an unequal share of any sacrifice which had to be made.

This hasn't happened. As *Socialist Worker* has consistently pointed out, workers have been the losers on every front.

While wage increases have been pegged at 2.5 percent a year, prices have risen annually by 4.5 percent. And food prices which form a disproportionately high element of working class families' spending have risen by almost six percent yearly.

Meanwhile, company profits have been rising by 17.5 percent.

At the same time industrial output has been increasing. The industrial peace guaranteed by the

agreement has enabled employers to change work practices to the extent that in 1988 average productivity per hour rocketed by 12 percent.

Fewer jobs and the workers working harder for pay which is worth less in real terms than before, and young people in droves emigrating in despair. That's what the Programme for National Recovery has meant. And the top union bosses want more of the same!

The leaders of the two biggest unions, the about to merge ITGWU and FWUI, are implacably determined that there'll be no pull-out. Neither union has allowed democratic discussion at branch or district level. Indeed, thousands of members are quite unaware that the matter is up for decision.

### LEADERS

Phil Flynn of the biggest public sector union, the LGPSU, is likewise gung ho for the pact.

A number of smaller unions have called for a pull out and the MSF leadership has given officials the go-ahead to aim for increases above the levels laid down. But given the line of the biggest battalions, the likelihood is that the PNR will be confirmed.

The reason union bosses inflict such betrayal on their "own" side is that their interests are different from the interests of the great mass of the membership. Their income, their status, their life-style, and therefore their outlook, is different.

Although some of them—by no means all—may have started out on the shop floor, even been shop floor militants in their day, their natural habitat now is the corridors of power. They see themselves not as the leaders of our side in the endless battle between classes with fundamentally conflicting interests, but as professional negotiators between the two classes. They see their essential



task not as winning disputes but as "solving", or better still, avoiding disputes.

So when Minister for Labour Bertie Ahern boasts that, under the PNR last year, the number of strike days "lost" was the lowest in the history of the state, the union bosses don't meditate on the sad state of working class militancy. They rejoice that their members are behaving reasonably.

It's "natural" for them to accept the political logic of the ruling class, that it's irresponsible and futile to demand or expect anything which would put the capitalist system under strain.

So they accept, for example, that "the public finances" must be put in order. And if that means cutting public sector jobs in order to reduce public spending, so be it. If it means holding wages

in the private sector down so as to give "our" capitalists an edge over their rivals elsewhere—who of course are advancing exactly the same argument to "their" section of the working class—then that's what they'll do.

Among ordinary trade unionists there is widespread bitterness at the way the PNR has undermined standards and increased feelings of insecurity. It's on account of this that ICTU general secretary Peter Cassells has been begging Haughey for some minor concessions on PAYE in the budget, which might be presented as a success for the policy of class collaboration.

But when those workers who see through the PNR and who are willing to fight look for leadership to the major Left parties, they find themselves left in the lurch.

While both Labour and the Workers' Party are willing to give out about the PNR, and about the failure of the promised benefits to materialise, they have made no move whatsoever to lead a fight against it. In Leinster House, Michael Bell and Pat Rabbitte fowl-moth the employers and the government for the way they've ridden rough-shod over workers despite the provision of the pact. But within the unions themselves, both Labour and the WP sing dumb.

To borrow a phrase, they act like Mighty Mouse in parliament, where words are only words, but like Church Mouse in the unions, where words might spark action.

The ranks of trade union officialdom are teeming with members and committed supporters of these two parties. If they offered to lead a fight, thousands of workers right across the union movement would

rally to them. We are referring to people like WP leaders Des Geraghty of the ITGWU and Labour Party Left-winger Bernard Browne of the FWUI and dozens of others like them.

The reason their great prestige and influence in the trade union movement is not put at the service of the working class interest in this instance is that the parties they belong to are frightened they might be denounced as "irresponsible", "wreckers" and so forth if they were seen to be instrumental in having the pact broken off.

As is always the case with parties committed to the "parliamentary road" electoral considerations win out over the interests of the working class.

The SWM is involved at rank and file level fighting for a pull-out from the pact and an end to all collaboration with the government of the enemy class. We call for the creation of a rank-and-file movement independent of the trade union bureaucracy, which would link together the groups of militants in different industries and areas who do want to fight back but who are weakened and risk being worn down by being isolated from one another.

Most of all, we strive to build the revolutionary socialist leadership which alone can dispense with all notions of "national interest" and instead offer workers the political weaponry to smash the capitalist system.

Interview with Paul Hill Page 8