

# RED ACTION

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## REBELS WITHOUT APPLAUSE

SIXTY ARRESTED IN CONFRONTATION WITH LOYALIST/LABOUR COUNCIL, AS LEFT STAY AWAY

At the beginning of '93 The James Connolly Society (JCS) sponsored a day school on the theme of Connolly's legacy, to both revolutionary nationalism and revolutionary socialism. Prominent figures from the civil rights movement including a member of Sinn Fein spoke from the platform. In addition to the conventional publicity, posters also appeared inviting protesters to come 'tooled up', under the caption, "SLASH THE IRA!" A joint BNP/Loyalist picket, fifty strong was in position at 9.30 am an hour and a half before the meeting was due to begin. And so from early morning the shrill screams of leading loyalist James G Maclean and his supporters made vocal the posters' proclamation. Perhaps more significantly, over the same weekend less public discussions between representatives from JCS, the Bands Alliance, and Red Action concluded that unless the Loyalist/Fascist street presence was confronted in kind, the Commemoration which had been banned again on the pretext of public order in '92 faced the prospect of the ban becoming indefinite, as the threat of violence emanating from this quarter was not likely to be rescinded. The 600 plus street-fighters mobilised in London against the Bloody Sunday march added emphasis to this scenario. People present also were aware that the Edinburgh march was next on the calendar.

Due also to the emasculation of the anti-imperialist movement in the preceding years, this was the last pro-republican event mounted with any genuine potential or popular support; the only march, frankly speaking, actually worth defending. The consensus reached was that any future ban had to be greeted by something more substantial than the traditional demeanour of long suffering compliance. So, as a challenge to the loyalist veto and the anticipated juridical ban, the JCS issued the call for a national mobilisation. The alternative to this course of action, as proposed by the Scottish Republican Forum, was to lobby the trades Council in the hope that they (instead of the JCS) might submit the application for the march. In so doing it was hoped that by denying the inherent republican dimension, this might make the event, with regard to the authorities at least, more palatable.

'A radio message...which indeed was regarded with initial scepticism, insisted that sightings confirmed "hundreds of republicans....mobilising in Broughton St.. going for it in a serious way.."

(Always dubious as a strategy this was considered well past its sell by date even as a ploy.) Possibly fearful of the repercussions to the morale of its own supporters, should they fall victim of their own strong-arm tactic Loyalists, switched the emphasis in propaganda from the potential for violence of its own supporters, to the alleged notoriety of the commemoration's sponsors i.e. the CCS (Hibs' casuals) and of course *Red Action*. It was also taken into account by the organisers that, pre-ban, the Loyalist/BNP coalition would represent the official opposition, post-ban the role would be filled by the police.

In 1992 the authorities sought by setting up road blocks to keep the Republicans/Left out of the city centre and indeed out of the city. By and large a straightforward and successful operation. By 1993 as the Irish World reported "the operation to stop the march was mounted on several fronts - just as the marchers' operation to proceed was also carried out in a diverse fashion". The "organisers played a game of cat and mouse with the police" according to the Herald. The Sunday Mail account, conveyed something of the flavour of the 'Stasi' style operation. "Police in Edinburgh yesterday swooped on suspected ringleaders of an outlawed republican march. Thirteen men mainly from London were held at dawn after arriving by train at Waverly Station". This story was not entirely accurate. A London coach suspected of carrying AFA/RA personnel was stopped by



(above) Connolly Society supporters form up to march in defiance of the ban. (below) Marchers fighting with police after Commemoration is attacked.

police at a road block on the outskirts of the city. A perfunctory search revealed the intelligence to be correct and also that the coach, apart from the driver, was - completely empty! So in a fit of pique the driver was arrested instead! Having surmised that the erstwhile occupants may have taken evasive action using some other mode of transport a number of people were arrested on 'suspicion of conspiracy to cause a breach of the peace' in the vicinity of the station. By 11.20am following yet another round up of 'suspects', the police convinced themselves that they had captured the "bulk of them". Nevertheless, large sections of Edinburgh, to the visible disgruntlement of traders, were still staked out by police. Plainclothes officers were much in evidence, many loitering in the vicinity of the bars they expected

might be used as pre-assembly points for the rally in the Grassmarket scheduled for 2pm. At noon precisely they came to realise that perhaps self-congratulation was a mite premature. A radio message, which to police listening must have seemed barely credible, and indeed was regarded with initial scepticism, insisted that sightings confirmed "hundreds of republi-

cans....mobilising in Broughton St.. going for it in a serious way.. "Perhaps sensitive to the feelings of those in charge, the scout neglected to mention the contingent also contained a flute band in full uniform! As police flooded into the area, the marchers, who had already formed up, then moved off initially brushing aside hastily formed police lines, before being unceremoniously scattered by the police on horses. Later in the day there were further arrests after skirmishing between march supporters and a large body of squaddies drinking in a city centre bar directly opposite the publicised assembly point. Suspicions of their actual motives were strengthened two weeks later by the appearance of at least two members of the Maclean escort, proudly sporting the colours, or at least the maroon sweat-shirts, of the Parachute Regiment.

If only from the point of view of propaganda, the campaign of defiance was a success. While the Loyalists/BNP had the law on their side we had public opinion, but little else, on ours. The march being illegal forced the organisers and even the participants to operate in a clandestine or semi-clandestine fashion, the effect on numbers is incalculable. A story planted in the Irish Post at the beginning of May, which deliberately and falsely stated that the commemoration would take place only with the permission of the authorities, was also responsible for confusion. Though this is no excuse for those organisations such as the Troops Out Movement, the Irish Freedom Movement, Wolfe Tone Society, etc whose 'raison d'etre' is anti-imperialism, who failed to mobilise, and were unable to send even a single delegate. As for the orthodox Left, further confirmation, that it is now thoroughly cleansed of any revolutionary instinct. Nevertheless a line has now been drawn in the sand, beyond which we cannot be pushed. They banned the march. We defied the ban. In '92, the ban sparked an instinctive show of defiance from the JCS. In '93, the ban anticipated, the challenge was political, the defiance pre-planned. Next year....but that would be telling...

## CAMPAIGN TO EXPOSE STATE CONSPIRACY

It is clear that the decision of the Labour-controlled Lothian Regional Council to ban the James Connolly Commemoration was not solely based on the rantings of loyalist bigots like James G McLean of Concerned Citizens Against Terrorism. We believe that the council are firmly involved in a conspiracy with other agencies of the state and the loyalists and fascists to ban the Connolly march and to criminalise its organisers.

The trumped-up nature of the charges against Jim Slaven, a leading member of the James Connolly Society, show where the real "conspiracies" are. Not only does Slaven face five charges relating to events on 5 June, he also faces three more charges including two of threatening behaviour which have been manufactured by the police and loyalists. The intention of the state and the fascists is clearly to completely remove

the militant republicans from the streets of Edinburgh by means of a jail sentence. It is vital that the defence campaign around the 23 who face charges relating to 5 June and the other five who were allegedly involved in an attack upon the ultra-loyalist Independent Orange Order march two weeks later is one that states clear and unequivocal support for the right of Irish republicans to free speech and the right to march. The civil rights of those who marched in Edinburgh have been flouted by the state and it is right that protests be made to all of the agencies and pressure groups possible, however, it would be a major mistake to believe that groups like the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties will deliver anything more than a strongly-worded letter of protest to the appropriate council and government department. It is clear from the state's action to attack the marchers that they, like the fascists

and loyalists, recognise that the issue will be ultimately decided on the streets. The decision by the JCS to march regardless of state bans was also a recognition that real power lay in the streets and not in the council chamber. Therefore, the defence campaign, like the march, must have a clear set of political objectives and a militant approach to their implementation.

There have already been some noises made in liberal quarters that "pressure" should be applied to the Labour Party for somehow moving away from its "traditions". *Red Action* believes that rather than betraying its real "tradition", the Labour Party has in fact remained true to it.

Any strategy that has as its central aim the winning of councillors and Labour Party members to our point of view will fail. That isn't to say that "pressure" of a somewhat different nature cannot be applied to the Labour Party. For example, the members of the council committee which ordered the ban have shifted the blame to the police,

James G McLean and fascist threats. Loyalists like McLean represent a front and a flag of convenience for those who were involved in making the decision. Why should they be allowed to conduct "business as usual" whilst republicans are being fitted-up and criminalised. As long as the Connolly Commemoration and its supporters are the subjects of state bans and harassment then so too will the people who banned the march. If they want to align themselves with fascism then they should be 'respected' in the same way. Every major Labour Party event in Scotland should be picketed. They should not be allowed to address the media without a demonstration of republicans being there. We're facing fines and jailings because of their decisions, therefore we should bring the consequences of their actions back to their doorsteps.

The PTA and censorship of Sinn Fein through repressive legislation such as Section 31 has its exponents on this side of the water also. In Scotland, the public order act and local police powers have been used

to curtail the activities of the republicans. Just as the republican movement in Ireland opposes the state, its bans and repression, so must its supporters in Scotland, England and Wales.

The James Connolly Society Defence Campaign was launched around the following demands:

- End the Loyalist/fascist veto of republican marches.
- End Lothian Labour Council's collusion with loyalists and fascists.
- Defend the right of republicans to free speech and assembly.
- Oppose the state frame-up of Jim Slaven - drop all charges now.
- Drop all charges against the defendants of 5 June and 19 June.

For further information and to make a donation to the defence fund (cheques/POs payable to the James Connolly Society Welfare Department) write to JCS, PO Box 4, Prestonpans, Edinburgh, Scotland.

# ★ LETTERS ★

Therefore, every loyalist/fascist link that is proven has to be "balanced" by some insubstantial allegation that Sinn Fein and the IRA also has fascist tendencies. Hence the ludicrous allegations in Searchlight (which, incidentally, are the contentions of another American nazi) that the violent American fascist, Harold Covington, has IRA

links because of his association with a guy called Sean Maguire who wears a "Sinn Fein baseball cap". Hardly conclusive evidence of an IRA-American fascist link, is it?

In the June issue of Searchlight another aside is made about the IRA's links with "far-right groups on the continent". Absolutely no evidence is offered to support this statement. Why? Because Searchlight knows that it's not true but it serves some sort of perverse purpose in appeasing their friends in groups like Militant and it might keep the loyalists off their backs if they are perceived as attacking both sides. Ray Hill went as far as calling upon the organisers of Irish marches to "think long and hard" about having any future marches due to the "offence" that they cause to the host community. This analysis is based on the experience of the Bloody Sunday Commemoration in London in January this year when 600 fascists and loyalists took to the streets to oppose the march. In other words, Hill is proposing that the Irish in Britain should go underground because they are responsible for the fascist/loyalist backlash. Where does such a scenario stop? Are there any other ethnic communities that could be construed as "offensive" to the host community which Ray Hill would like to see stop marching? Would Ray Hill, for instance, suggest that other minority groups keep their heads down lest to provide the far-right with the opportunity to launch a public campaign, on say, the issue of immigration? This attitude from Hill is also consistent with the allegations and insinuations that he has made against republicans in Scotland. He sees the Irish, and republicanism in particular, as the root of the problem because he fails to understand why it should be that republicans can so readily identify with the anti-fascist struggle. The reason is in the roots of imperialism in Ireland and how its fighting fodder in the shape of loyalism has always represented the forces of reaction. They are fighting their own "parochial" version of fascism, death squads and all, everyday. There is a whole body of evidence going back as far as the fights against the blueshirts in Ireland and the Spanish civil war that the rank and file of the Republican Movement has consistently identified with progressive revolutionary movements. That tradition of rank and file republican activists support for progressive socialist and national movements has continued. In the last year, a member of Sinn Fein's POW department has visited Germany and spoke to audiences largely comprising of anti-fascists. Similarly, republicans from Scotland have many links with anti-fascists throughout Europe as a result of successful campaigns against racism and fascism amongst supporters of Celtic.

Whilst an organisation like Red Action makes no apologies for its political support for the IRA, it is mischievous and divisive to suggest that the existence of republican supporters in the anti-fascist movement is somehow unwelcome. First and foremost, AFA is about the physical and ideological confrontation of fascism. That is the bottom line for anyone who wants to join. In Scotland, as in other areas where AFA is active, we have supporters from various backgrounds who are prepared to fight together against fascism on the basis that there is a common enemy. The only elements who have issued directives to their members to keep their distance from AFA are the sectarian lefty groups and the loyalists. It would be extremely unfortunate if Searchlight were also to become part of the campaign to isolate AFA.

P Matthews  
Paisley

Dear Red Action

The May issue of the anti-fascist magazine, Searchlight, contained a fictitious and sectarian attack upon Irish republican supporters in Glasgow AFA. In the Hill Street News column penned by ex-right winger, Ray Hill, there appeared the allegation that members of the anti-fascist movement in Scotland had been beaten up because they did not support the IRA. Hill offered no evidence to back up his contentions other than snide insinuations based on rumours which emanate from supporters of Militant and the now-defunct Glasgow Class War group. Despite several past visits to Scotland where Hill spoke on platforms provided by the same republicans whom he is now denouncing, he appears to have learned very little. He bases his opinions on the nonsense that is fed to him by right-wing labour students and the leftward-leaning loyalists in Scottish Militant Labour (SML).

Hill should be honest enough to bring his attack on Red Action members in Glasgow AFA into the open rather than hiding behind the smokescreen of lies that his fairweather friends have fed him. He even went as far as claiming that the BNP's success in securing a base in the staunchly loyalist enclave of Larkhall was due to the perception in this community that the opposition to fascism was pro-republican and laid the blame at AFA's door! Ray Hill has a very short memory. During the last general election campaign the only groups to hold meetings in the Larkhall area were the Militant front groups, Lanarkshire Against Racism and Fascism (LARF) and YRE. At one meeting, in Hamilton, a leading member of the local Orange Order was invited to address the meeting and was roundly applauded by Hill and his associates after he delivered what could only be described as "a bizarre contribution". A meeting organised by Militant in Larkhall a couple of weeks later at which Hill was billed to speak had to be abandoned after threats from the BNP. It would be more appropriate for Hill and his colleagues to examine their own confused analysis than to start pointing the finger at others whom they may disagree with politically but who at least have been consistent in their approach to loyalism and fascism.

Unfortunately, Hill and Searchlight appear to have adopted the position that loyalism and republicanism are two sides of the same sectarian coin. This is a completely false analysis which owes more to the warped politics of Militant than to non-sectarian anti-fascism. Despite Searchlight's exposure of the very real links that exist between Ulster Loyalist paramilitaries and the BNP's own paramilitary wing, C18, the magazine still attempts to appease these allegations with clumsy efforts at "even handedness".



## BANDS ALLIANCE

Dear Red Action

The Republican Bands Alliance (Scotland) take this opportunity to send solidarity greetings and thanks to our comrades in Red Action for their recent supportive activities.

Both at the annual Bloody Sunday Commemoration in London and the recent James Connolly demonstration in Edinburgh you proved that only disciplined united action can defeat the fascists. The fact that you were willing to travel from London to Edinburgh to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us in our struggle against neo-fascism left the rest of the so-called left, who never bothered to turn up, with egg on their faces. To the comrades who turned up in Edinburgh we give our thanks. To the comrades who were arrested we pledge our total support.

Yours in solidarity,  
PRO, Republican Bands Alliance (Scotland)

## SOLIDARITY

Dear Red Action,

I am an Irish Republican prisoner in gaol in the north of Ireland. I am working on a project on wall murals from all over the world. I would be very grateful if you would print this letter in your newspaper for me. Please allow me to use your columns to ask your readers if they could help me to gather information on wall murals throughout the world. I am interested in the location of murals, what the murals are about, why they were painted and if possible some photographs of the murals. I am interested in all types of wall murals. Readers can contact me at the address below.

Thank you.

Leo Morgan 6242  
H-Block 4 B-Wing  
Long Kesh Gaol  
Lisburn  
Co Antrim  
Ireland.

# MORAL OR MARXIST DECLINE?

Dear Red Action

Congratulations on a great issue (65). Your article on Marx's attitude to political parties was thought provoking.

Although, unlike yourselves, I do not sympathise with the IRA, I fully endorse your call for the march in commemoration of James Connolly in Edinburgh to go ahead. It is important that right-wing elements are not allowed to prevent the commemoration of the greatest working-class leader Edinburgh produced. You do not need to support the IRA to be worried by the events of 30 January. The mobilisation of hundreds of fascists to prevent a protest march bodes ill for the whole worker's movement.

You are, of course, right to ridicule the suggestions by the march organisers that 360 arrests of BNP members was a defeat for fascism. You have to be pretty numerous to have that number arrested. It is that rather than the arrests that is important.

You fail, however, to answer the question: why can British Nationalist groups organise such numbers to oppose the march?

Might it have something to do with the intensified IRA bombing campaign against civilian targets over the last year or two?

When a civilian population is bombed it does not turn against its government nor sympathise with those doing the bombing. Attempts by the Luftwaffe to demoralise the population of London had limited success. The RAF bombing of Berlin was also a moral failure. If anything, they cemented nationalism and so prevented a war of states turning into a war of classes. Similarly, if the IRA, as representatives of Irish Nationalism are seen to be targeting the English population, this is bound to foster English Nationalism, to the benefit of groups like the BNP. When, on the contrary, attacks are targeted specifically against the ruling class: Thatcher, royalty etc, they win working-class sympathy.

Dear Red Action

I picked up your paper for the first time in many years and quite a good read it is too. I'm so glad there is a group on the left that is not dominated by the middle classes and is prepared to put itself where its mouth is. As an anarchist I have a few differences with you and this is why I am writing. You talk about unconditional democracy in 'We are Red Action', could you maybe define this a bit better? How, for example, would it differ from an anarcho-syndicalist structure i.e. one which would appoint delegates to important tasks, make them recallable and keep rotating them. How would you keep your structure democratic and keep it running from the bottom up? Finally when anarchists and their hangers on can be an embarrassment sometimes, I do feel they don't get the credit they deserve. At Waterloo, rightly described afterwards by an AFA spokesperson as a possible watershed for events in Europe, there were a lot of anarchists there. Much of Class War and DAM and more sizeable in number, squatters, punks and the odd crusties! While the last three groups may not have well defined ideas like CW and DAM a hell of a lot tend towards anarchism (even if they are a pain in the arse). I have seen anarchists and their like do stupid things on anti-fascist demos, but as

## CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE

importantly they make up the numbers which gives us all more confidence in situations. I think its time AFA and RA gave it some credit.  
Mike London SE11

(RA REPLY) What is the difference between an anarcho-syndicalist structure, one which would appoint delegates to important tasks, make them recallable and keep rotating them and RA's approach? As you have outlined it, the differences are fundamental. The primary definition of unconditional democracy, is that no-body be appointed. Everybody must be elected and be accountable to those to whom they owe their position. Instant recall is the only guarantee that the opinion of the delegates reflects his or her constituency. A political organisation is like most other collectives, a co-operative venture. If it is to run efficiently for the benefit of the members there must, in addition to delegates, be some form of supervision. The principle difference between capitalism and socialism is that "the manager is paid by the labourers instead of representing capital counterposed to them". Red Actions simply applies

the same principle in relation to the structure of the revolutionary working class organisation. The organisation is built and run from the bottom up, so ultimately this is where power resides, at the bottom.

In relation to anarchists not getting "the credit" they deserve; AFA have long recognised that the anarchist constituency to which you refer has adopted us, and their support for events like Waterloo is invaluable. On the other hand they take no responsibility for organising, calling or planning the event, so to that extent credit or responsibility for success or failure lies with the organisers, be they marxist - or anarchists. In addition, organisations like Class War who promote AFA, and urge people to join it, in their paper, do so from the rather curious position of not being members of AFA themselves! Would it be too cynical to suggest that they want their bread buttered on both sides! The ideal position is being able to share in the glory and criticise the mistakes, without being responsible for either victory or defeat. What applies to organisations applies with even more authority to individuals.

Dear Red Action,

Just back from

Euskadi, I ask you

for some support for some prisoners.

Mitxel, an ETA member jailed for 170 years from the town Eibar (well known by RA members, I believe) needs some moral support. Mitxel understands English, he translated 'One Day in My Life' by Bobby Sands into Euskara (the Basque language). Recently, he has been moved to another prison without his family or lawyer being informed. Therefore, his wife made the long, expensive journey for the 20 minute visit for nothing.

Please write to Mitxel at:

Mitxel Sarasketa Zubiarrenmenteria

Centro penitenciario Madrid 3

Carrete Ra De Pinto A San Martin De La Vega KM5

28340 Valdemoro Madrid

Spain

People who are able to write in Spanish

## EUSKADI

can also send solidarity greetings to Inaki and Asier. These young Basques are sentenced to seven years for sabotage actions. Their addresses are:

Asier Zacona Gurid  
Centro Penitenciario  
Alcazar De San Juan  
CP 13600  
Ciudad Real  
Spain

Inaki Elikoro Barrutia Larrea  
Marques Del Saitilla No 1  
CP 42002 Soria  
Spain

I hope that many Red Action readers express their solidarity with these prisoners.  
Yours  
Sigi.

# The Stepping Stone



*In the wake of the Warrington bomb, the entire Trotskyite left united with bourgeois parliamentarians in a fierce condemnation of the Irish Republican Army. Inside the Republican Movement itself, reformist elements made tremulous calls in letters to AP/IRN for the armed struggle as a tactic to be abandoned. Of course, the IRA itself has long recognised that, 'the struggle could not be fought and won exclusively on the backs of the Nationalist working class, nor could victory be attained by a military campaign alone.' In addition, it is generally acknowledged that without a mass movement in the 26 Counties a united Ireland 'on Republican terms' is impossible. Given that the declared objective is a socialist republic, the question is on what basis can this 'mass movement' be mobilised. 'It is clear that appeals to altruistic patriotism cuts no ice in the 26 Counties....and....if all we can offer the majority of the people is a change of flag then it is back to square one.' 'Square one,' is precisely where the constitutional path would lead. Moreover a simple 'change of flag' is the desired reformist solution. Red Action argues that, only by 'starting from scratch' can revolutionaries ensure ultimate victory and avoid the possibility of ever finding themselves back at 'square one.' (An edited version of this article was submitted to AP/IRN in letter form, but not printed.)*

The massacre in Derry on the 30th January 1972 brought the use of non-violence as a tactic to an abrupt end.

tactic of non-violence or 'blood sacrifice' won them widespread sympathy including a condemnation of Israeli actions by a British Cabinet Minister. Between 1955-65, the civil rights movement in the deep south 'unmasked' American democracy. But, like the Palestinians, black people were to discover, that government propaganda also influenced world opinion, and sympathy for them existed only for as long as they were perceived to be victims. Their moderate demands for civil rights and the tactic of non-violence advanced the respective causes not one inch (ask Rodney King.) Indeed as James Forman, one of that era's leading campaigners, was to point out later, "Many black people and many black leaders.... failed in those years to understand that beneath all popular struggles there must be built a firm foundation for armed struggle.... Today there are

Nationalist still people in the United States, who do not yet understand that such struggles cannot win decisive victories if they are not coupled with armed revolutionary organisation and struggle." Not only in the United States either. Behind the concept of a thirty two county programme lies the idea that for things to be pushed "in a positive direction" the national issue and armed struggle must be made subordinate to the emphasis on social reform (presumably) and peaceful struggle. And so this is the way the question is posed. Either non-violence, social progress and majority support, or armed struggle, national liberation and isolation? The question framed in this way is part of a wider agenda and is of course a trap; but a trap republican militants seem all too willing to fall into. By allowing a false dichotomy to develop between national liberation and total social change, republicans often find themselves in a position of arguing in defence of the latter (i.e. armed struggle and isolation) and against and suspi-

icious of radical elements within other progressive movements, for fear it might alienate conservative social forces within their own. The pro-choice movement is a case in point. So in a systematic fashion the views of the left are choked off on the traditional grounds that they are divisive and so constitute a blow against party unity. The Republican Movement has, as a consequence, become democratically tolerant only to its right. So we are told 'Socialism must wait.' Strip the 'ism' from Socialism and it ceases at once to appear as an obscure or abstract notion. The naked reality of the Republican demand is also revealed. In the interests of national liberation the immediate interests of the working people must remain subordinate to the interests of another class. The enemy class. In an extension of this theoretical position SF electoral policies have veered between two equally disastrous strategies. The first implies that a class alliance in the 26 Counties is needed to drive the British into the sea in the north. The 'alternative' which Owen Bennet might eulogise maintains that in order to court respectable, i.e. middle class, opinion in the south, the issue of armed struggle must be talked down and 'compartmentalised'. The result is that SF is then left with a platform devoid of even a hint of radicalism, and so indistinguishable from anybody else. The delivery of national unity is still presented as a panacea for all social ills, and so in the meantime the working class are instructed to return to their slums and be patient. Not unexpectedly, putting the argument that the British are solely to blame for

**'Equally should the Republican Movement delay 'the settling of accounts' until the national 'crisis' has passed, and the prerequisite for that is the political and economic system is secure, then it would be advocating revolutionary change only when capitalism is stable; that is - while it could not win!'**

social deprivation in Ballymurphy, has little resonance with the residents of Ballyfermot or Ballymun. So the people sulk and deposits are lost.

All politics is based on perceived self interest, rather than idealism, patriotic or otherwise. The lack of influence of SF in the 26 Counties is primarily due to its lack of relevance to the working class. As things stand, the recent council results notwithstanding, Sinn Fein looks to have achieved near its optimum electoral return in the 6 Counties. It is logical to assume therefore that the decisive blow will be dealt in the 26 Counties. If national unity is to be achieved then those social forces that must be mobilised, will form up, but not on the basis of a united Ireland, but in pursuit of their own self interest. In the '70s, the 26 Counties counties had the fastest growing economy in Europe. The unprecedented growth was accounted for by the arrival of 900 foreign firms. From the beginning the bourgeoisie insisted

that the big foreign companies that wanted to invest, should first pass through its hands. Through this arrangement it discovered its own historic mission; that of intermediary or business agent to international capitalism. The Algerian Frantz Fanon remarked on his own national bourgeoisie that what distinguished it was the 'innermost vocation to keep in the running and be part of the racket.' In Ireland too, corruption is rife, scandals constantly erupt and cynicism among all classes is rampant. In the circumstances for SF to continue to regard Fianna Fail as a possible ally on the national question is irrational if not just perverse. Fianna Fail/Fianna Gael is representative of the class who have the greatest investment in the maintenance of the economic and political status quo, which accepts that the continuing partition of the country is a condition both of and for its continued dominion. In his autobiography Dr Garret Fitzgerald admitted as much. In 75-76 the Provisionals and the Ulster Unionist Council Co-ordinating Committee (UDA) held a series of meetings with Desmond Boal, a longtime associate of Ian Paisley and Sean Macbride (former IRA chief of staff) as 'technical advisers'. One matter both sides had agreed on was a British withdrawal. The initiative collapsed when the Dublin government learned of it and denounced it. So by saying 'socialism must wait' the Republican movement turns it's back on the class with nothing to lose in favour of the class governed by the fear of losing everything. The tinkering with the constitution i.e. articles two and three should be seen in that light. Not simply an attempt at some juridical solution, but evidence of some recidivist instinct to loosen the bonds of sovereignty, in readiness if necessary to assimilate with the old colonial master. In retaliation, SF proposes a little constitutional tinkering of it's own. A new constitution, it declares, would contain a "charter of rights," which would "protect the individual rights of the people of the nation in regard to social justice, including the right to an adequate income, to a job, to housing, to education etc." That is simply eye wash. What for instance constitutes an adequate income? Even if there was a

consensus on the subject how could the constitution guarantee it? What SF wants to do as Marx pointed out "is to abolish the abuses of bourgeois society on the basis of the same laws of capitalist production that gives rise to those abuses." Marx also arrived at the conclusion "that the decisive blow against the English working classes.... cannot be delivered in England but only in Ireland." In a similar fashion today, revolutionaries can only conclude that in the divided country the weak link in colonial influence is in the 26 Counties rather than in the six. In the Six Counties the Republican movement is a rad-

**'In the Six counties, Sinn Fein addresses the problems with the State from the viewpoint of it's constituency, while in the 26 Counties it addresses it's constituencies problems from the viewpoint of the State. Therein lies the real explanation for the vast discrepancy in the level of support.'**

ical movement the catalyst for change because it goes to the root of the problem. British armed occupation. So force is met with force. The Republican Movement is a revolutionary movement though not overtly left wing. The organisations on the left like the Communist Party of Ireland or the Socialist Workers Movement who preach social revolution are also vociferous opponents of the armed struggle. They do so not because they are left wing as some would have you believe but because they are not revolutionary. Neither are they a left wing loyal to the Republican demands. They should be seen rather as the radical wing of those who form the rearguard of the national struggle. That section of the Irish people who have never ceased to be on the other side in the fight. As always for them, armed struggle proves to be the point of departure. (Incidentally are these the 'friends' Bennet insisted the IRA should be listening to?)

So it is not simply a case of saying to the working class here is the red flag, kneel here. It is not a case of Marxist dogma over common sense, rather the reverse. For if the class struggle is continuously pushed aside as an unpleasant, crude and divisive phenomenon, nothing remains as the basis for Republicanism in the 26 Counties but empty phrases about 'justice, freedom, peace'.

Inherent in the SF strategy is the unstated assumption that the 26 Counties bourgeoisie are, for the most part, neutral in the struggle between the colonists and the colonised, and if they cannot be convinced to play the role of 'honest broker', then neither should anything be done which might cause them to be needlessly provoked. Consequently nothing that might threaten their hegemony should be countenanced, lest they are driven into the arms of the British. In return, the Republican Movement remains for the most part neutral in the struggle between classes; shuns it's natural working class constituency and in the process pulls it's own teeth. Ireland is a colonized country. It is colonized in the 6 Counties by guns, in the 26 Counties more subtly by the thought and institutions left by

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In defence of Owen Bennet, 'Poblachtanach' (AP/IRN 13th May) urges the Republican movement "to embrace a programme to which the people the length and breadth of all thirty two counties can more readily relate." Implicit in this is the suggestion that such a programme is ready made and simply needs to be adopted and implemented. Curiously neither he nor Bennet give the slightest hint of what it might contain. Like Owen Bennet, who states that the armed struggle has "utterly failed.... and is deeply unpopular with the bulk of the Irish people," the call for a programme that relates to people of all thirty two counties, ignores the fact that the island of Ireland is divided by more than a border. The Six Counties is under armed occupation by a foreign power. Those who oppose the British politically and physically are forced to kill and are killed by other Irish nationalists, who have taken up arms in defence of the British presence. The 'bulk' of the urban and rural

the coloniser, so Ireland needs to be 'de-colonised' and not just north of the border. De-colonisation is always a violent phenomenon. However if armed struggle is considered inappropriate to the situation in the 26 Counties counties, then neither can a 32 County Republic be presented there as the ultimate goal. The history of the 'Tan War' has shown that national liberation cannot be divorced from social emancipation and to create an artificial division between the two runs the very grave danger of achieving neither one nor the other. If the Republican Movement maintains that socialism is not on the agenda then it must accept that as long as this remains the case national unity isn't either. In the Six Counties, Sinn Fein addresses the problems with the State from the viewpoint of its constituency, while in the 26 Counties it addresses its constituency's problems on the whole from the viewpoint of the State. Therein lies the real explanation for the vast dis-

crepancy in the level of support. The very existence of the 'Orange State' is considered to be the cause of the conflict while the existence of the 'Free State' is accepted as essential to its resolution; i.e. the 'peaceful' incorporation of the one into the other the former into the latter. This analysis 'forgets' that both partition states are colonial creations. If one must be smashed why is it assumed the other can be reformed? The Six County State can be smashed beyond repair, but as long as there is no revolutionary challenge in the 26 Counties, the establishment there remains stable. As long as it remains smug it will be strong enough not to concede to the Republican agenda. The total collapse of the Loyalist veto would simply lay bare the existence, of possibly its more formidable 'Free State' twin. The bourgeoisie fear that a Republican victory, might channel the radicalism, hitherto focused on the national question in a new but equally ambitious direction - their own! A victory for revolutionary nationalism could, they believe bring

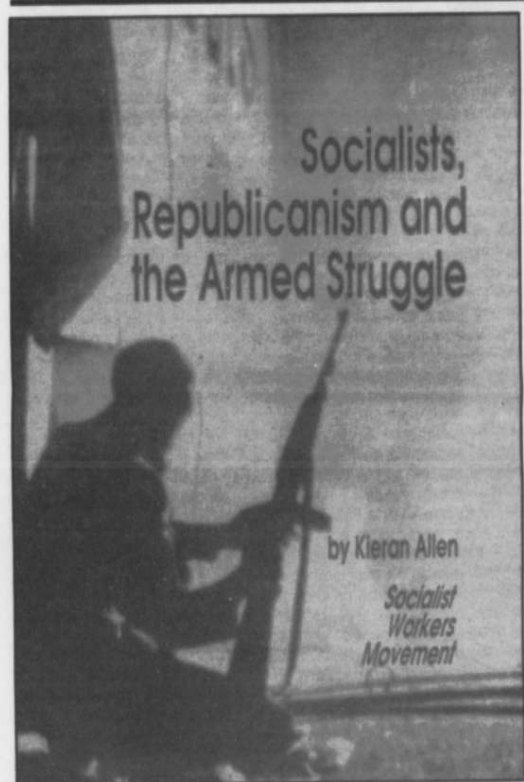
in on its coat-tails the seeds of revolutionary socialism. A perspective they share with some Republicans. So as long as the bourgeoisie feel immune they are happy for the war to continue, and the war will continue and continue to be acceptable to them until the republican moratorium on class struggle is lifted. Otherwise the national question will be concluded only under terms and conditions acceptable to their class, i.e. a settlement that carries within it no threat to their continued political dominion. It is only within this frame of reference that Bennet can argue that *"the armed struggle damages the cause... and is moving us further away from the goal of Irish unity."* Decoded it reads as follows.... As long as revolutionary nationalism of which the armed struggle is the embodiment, carries for "gomben" guardians of the free state a tangible air of menace, any prospect of a 32 County Republic is curtailed. As that is indeed the case then on those terms, it can be concluded that the single greatest barrier to a united Ireland is in fact

**'no further progress can be made by continuing with the pretence, that in political terms the border means everything, but in tactical terms nothing.'**

the existence of the Republican Movement itself! Equally should the Republican Movement delay 'the settling of accounts' until the national 'crisis' has passed, and the prerequisite for that is the political and economic system is secure, then it would be advocating revolutionary change only when capitalism is stable; that is - while it could not win! From a revolutionary outlook far from being a 'failure', the armed struggle is in fact the Republican Movement's only success! Rather than a retreat from the military sphere, the armed struggle needs to be complemented by, and coupled to, an equally revolutionary strategy in the economic and political sphere. The same passion, ingenuity and commitment which has confronted the issue of colonialism in the north, needs now to be re-

focused on it's neo-colonial surrogate in the south. No doubt there are many who would argue that to set a course for total social change; for social as well as national revolution; for starting from scratch, is neither practical nor desirable. They may reassure themselves that such a notion is not something which *"the bulk of the people would readily relate."* So is talk of revolution impractical? Of course! But, it must not be forgotten that revolution changes everything except perhaps those of limited ambition and horizons. James Connolly put it this way, *"Revolution is never practical until the hour of revolution strikes then it alone is practical, and all efforts of the conservatives and compromisers become the most futile and visionary of human imaginings."* In 1922 Free Staters proclaimed that the acceptance of partition was a *'a stepping stone'* to a fully independent Ireland. Seventy years on, the view is promoted that a united Ireland is *'the stepping stone'* to a working class Socialist

Republic, when in reality it is the 26 County working class which is the stepping stone to a united Ireland. In the south, class has primacy over the national question. For the working class in the Six Counties, protestant and catholic social considerations are transcended by the British occupation. Similarly, while the united Ireland is not the precondition for the *'socialist republic'*, agitation on social issues alone is not the basis for a united Ireland. Ultimately no further progress can be made by continuing with the pretence, that in political terms the border means everything, but in tactical terms nothing. The revolutionary struggles for total national and social change are not mutually exclusive but interdependent. Only a tactical symmetry which is in harmony with this reality can create the necessary empathy between the national and social struggles, between the national aspirations of the colonised and the class ambition of the 'free'.



## Socialists, Republicanism and the Armed Struggle

by Kieran Allen

Socialist Workers Movement

### Socialist Workers Party pamphlet, reformism in theory and practice

How is reformism illustrated in terms of the actual political practice of current 'revolutionary' groups? The struggle in northern Ireland is the central and most graphic example. After a few ritual tributes, the armed struggle is routinely bad mouthed by the left as 'counter revolutionary' and as impeding the (non-existent) unity of Catholic and Protestant workers! A brief case study can tell a great deal about the character of these 'revolutionaries' and their analysis. The SWP provide a good specimen - not because they are particularly notorious offenders but because they have a high profile on the left and take considerable theoretical trouble to defend their politics. In the pamphlet, *'Socialists, Republicanism and the Armed Struggle'* they declare their position as being, *"for unconditional but not uncritical support"* of the armed struggle. It continues, *"We give support because of the FACT that they are fighting imperialism. We support them as a genuine anti-imperialist force..."* Or as John Molyneux puts it in

his column in *'Socialist Worker'* (8.2.92): *"The IRA are representatives of an oppressed people seeking to challenge that oppression."* In rhetorical terms then, the SWP is clearly distinguishable from say, the Labour party. Many people will understandably be under the impression, from reading this and similar material, that the SWP 'supports' the IRA. This impression will be reinforced when it announces a page or two further that, *"The SWP is not a pacifist organisation. We believe that if our rulers are willing to use violence to cling onto power, they must be met with insurrection organised by the working class."* But here is the catch - *"organised by the working class"*. It is a case of mass action - or nothing. So nothing it is. John Molyneux reckons that, *"only a mobilisation of the whole working class"* can challenge British rule. If the class as a whole does not rise as one and in unison - an unlikely, unprecedented, if not impossible, contingency, then all bets are off. But the processes of revolution and

# WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

class struggle cannot be piled up like so much money which can then be spent all at once. Consciousness, determination and experience - *"revolutionary passion"* in Marx's phrase - will never be evenly spread throughout the class. The inevitable consequence follows: cheek by jowl with the pledge of 'support' comes the statement;

*"We oppose the tactic of armed struggle and believe that it has become counter-productive from the point of view of the working class and the fight against imperialism."* [RA's emphasis]

It is not necessary to embarrass the SWP by asking when, precisely, the armed struggle was productive and when it became counter-productive. That is obviously an impossible question to answer. If the IRA were 'productive' in 1972, then they are 'productive' in 1992. As John Molyneux asserts, although as a result of the Civil Rights movement of the late sixties the Brits said they were in favour of equal rights, *"so institutionalised had the Protestant ascendancy become that discrimination and oppression continued in practice. It remains entrenched to this day."* For what has changed? Has the British state reformed? Are its policies less oppressive? Has the balance of state power in northern Ireland changed in favour of the Nationalist population? The questions need only to be posed for the answers to be obvious. It is only necessary to ask, what in practice, does the declared support of the SWP

for the IRA amount to? If you are against the armed struggle, then you are against the IRA. Simple. Your 'support' amounts to nothing more than the call for the IRA to disband. In Molyneux's terms, *"while we side with the IRA against British imperialism and its allies, we are strongly critical of their nationalist politics and their terrorist tactics which inhibit and divert from the task of mobilising the working class."*

We all know what being *"strongly critical"* of the IRA means in practice. Would the SWP please explain what, in this context, *"siding with the IRA"* means?

The SWP is evidently uneasy about this. They ask themselves, why do we not issue our own call for a ceasefire? They reply, *"we as socialists never align with the right wing!"* So having aligned themselves with every Unionist, British cabinet minister, member of the security forces, and the Protestant and Catholic Churches by denouncing the armed struggle as 'counter-productive', they save their revolutionary honour by refusing to *"call for a ceasefire"* How is such a singular example of political cowardice rationalised? By urging the substitution of workplace mobilisation! The SWP explains that it, *"opposes the armed struggle because it is a substitute for mass mobilisation."* This uncritically echoes Brit propaganda about the *'isolated psychopaths'* of the IRA (the counterpart of the *'isolated fanatics'* of the BNP perhaps!) and to overlook the fact that in the past twenty years 10,000 nationalists have been charged with paramilitary related offences! But what examples do they give of the mass workers' mobilisation they wish to

replace the armed struggle? For the twenty years of the Irish War they list, one small or medium sized march (13,000), one *'workers' committee'* in Dundalk, sundry unspecified *'workplace stoppages'* in the South, *'stoppages'* (unspecified) in the town of Waterford and *'a leaflet'* in Dublin! They round off by proclaiming, *"Organising for that type of working class mobilisation is our alternative to the tactic of armed struggle."*

This is the revolutionary torrent that the armed struggle is holding back! If the northern Ireland state were on the brink of economic paralysis as a result of the mass industrial action of a united Protestant and Catholic workforce, then there would be basis upon which to argue. But when the only significant political strikes in living memory have been organised and enforced by the loyalist paramilitaries, the strategy loses something of its attraction. Rather apologetically the SWP explain that, *"in conditions of downturn, workers often lack self-confidence."* If this is the case, what do you then say to the nationalist population in the north who are being attacked and killed by security forces and their paramilitary allies, being turned out of their homes and imprisoned by a legal system so bent that it is the envy of South Africa? Wait for the 'uptum'?? In effect, the SWP call for the return of the Civil Rights movement of 1968-1972. That of course, was shot off the streets on Bloody Sunday. Yet, says the SWP,

*"It was precisely because of the level of mobilisation that the British government were forced down the path of reform."* This is the crux of the matter - *"the path of reform"*. Not the path of revolution - but *"reform"*.

**'But what examples do they give of the mass workers' mobilisation they wish to replace the armed struggle? For the twenty years of the Irish War they list, one small or medium sized march (13,000), one 'workers' committee' in Dundalk, sundry unspecified 'workplace stoppages' in the South, 'stoppages' (unspecified) in the town of Waterford and 'a leaflet' in Dublin!'**

*"The crucial point was that it was MASS mobilisation...that forced the concessions."*

*"Concessions"* that is, granted courtesy of the British state and their Unionist allies! Is this really the final word of a *'revolutionary socialist'* organisation on the subject of the armed struggle? Not quite. A lingering respect for the truth forces the inevitable acknowledgement that:

*"Of course, many of these concessions were later turned on their head, when for example, the B Specials were replaced by the UDR."*

There is the apparently shameless recognition of the upshot of the SWP's concept of *'mass mobilisation'*: being beaten into your place by the UDR instead of the B Specials - as a *'concession'!* Actions and strategies involving direct action are frequently attended by risks threatening the liberty or even the life of those engaged in it. The state however, is not slow take action against those it perceives as endangering its fundamental interests and hegemony. Alternatively, you can be a life-long, stalwart member of the SWP or Militant and still lead a life as quiet, in the immortal words of Peter Wright, as that of ducks on a pond.

It frequently appears that the obsession of the left with workplace mobilisation and the 'system', as opposed to merely tokenistic excursions in other spheres, functions as a disguise for reformist postures masquerading as revolutionary practice. The above analysis of the SWP's attitude to the armed struggle will hopefully have illustrated the theoretical rigmarole and doubletalk which attends the substitution of one for the other. There is absolutely no justification in the writings of either Marx or Engels for the substitution of agitation at the level of the workplace and allied forms of *'peaceful protest'*, for direct and forceful action in the immediate political arena.

# Beyond the Pale

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## TO HELL WITH CONTRACTS!

There is a theory prevalent in Irish political circles which states that whatever happens in Britain will also happen in Ireland, only five years later! If this is to be believed a good example would be the attacks on Trade Union rights in both countries. In Britain the attacks come from a more ideological position. The Tories wanted to weaken the Unions for a long time, especially in the light of the miner's part in Ted Heath's downfall in 1972. The anti union stance of the Tories and Maggie Thatcher's determination to extract revenge, coupled with the lack of confidence among working class people and their organisations due to the levels of unemployment, gave the government the advantage of being able to choose the time and place for its showdown with the unions. With the stockpiling of huge amounts of coal and the introduction of the new anti union legislation the government was in a position to provoke a confrontation. When the miners struck in 1984 the Tories used the full powers of the state to defeat them. Police powers and tactics never seen before in Britain, but long in use in Northern Ireland, were employed to crush the strike. The key strategy used to defeat the miners was to isolate them from any supportive actions, especially those involving the steelworkers and railworkers. This was done by conceding to wage claims by both the steelworkers and the railworkers with the intention of taking on these unions individually in the future. Within the Labour movement the defeatist policy of 'New Realism', which was being promoted by the right of the Trade Union movement, was given a significant boost after the Tories' landslide victory in the 1983 Election. This policy of defeatism played its part in the failure of the miners strike in 1985 and in doing so gave credence to the belief that the unions could not take on the employers, including the government, and win using industrial action. The legacy of the miners defeat has carried on right up to the present day.

In Ireland anti union legislation almost identical to the British provisions was facilitated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). This amazing occurrence was part of the deal involved in the 'social partnership' agreement, the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP), signed by the government, the employers and trade unions. The 1990 Industrial Relations Act, while replacing the 1906 Trades Disputes Act, actually increases the hurdles a union must overcome to take effective strike action. This Thatcherite attack on union rights drastically increases the odds in favour of the employer in relation to industrial action by virtually outlawing the practice of secondary picketing, insisting that only those in dispute with the employer involved can picket the workplace. Therefore supportive actions, such as mass pickets, are deemed to be contrary to the Act. It also demands that at least 7

days notice must be given before any strike action can take place. Under the 1990 Act a union cannot call for the boycott of an employers products as this would be seen as interfering with the employer's 'commercial contract'. The Act also makes 'political' strikes illegal, this means that actions such as those in support of the Hunger Strikers in 1981, the famous Dunnes Stores strike against apartheid and work stoppages in protest at health cuts can no longer legally take place. The basic union philosophy of "an attack on one is the concern of all" is challenged by section 9 of the Industrial Relations Act which disallows industrial action in the case of an individual worker unless exhaustive procedures have been followed. Employers know very well that these procedures can take up to 6 months and that the vast majority of workers cannot afford a lengthy fight.

It was only in the months after the 1990 Act became law, as part of the PESP, that most Trade Unionists realised the powers that it contained. It was not long before the employers were using its provisions to attack workers. In recent times there has been a spate of disputes in which the 1990 Industrial Relations Act has been used to tie the hands of the unions.

In the strike at the clothing boutique 'Japan' the union, IDATU, was forced into the High Court to fight an injunction preventing picketing of the shops. An injunction was granted against members of the National Bus and Rail workers Union at Hueston Station after two days picketing because Irish Rail claimed that 7 days strike notice had not been given and that no ballot had taken place. During the strike for union recognition at the 'Body Shop' the fact that there were only six regular picketers meant that they could only cover one shop and not the others. The strikes for union recognition at the 'Pat The Baker' bakery and Nolan Transport have been seriously hampered by the 1990 Act. At Pat The Baker the strikers union, SIPTU, will not call for a boycott of the firm's products such as their fear of the 1990 Act. SIPTU could also put serious pressure on Nolan Transport if they called on their members elsewhere to refuse to handle Nolan's trucks. But again SIPTU have been found wanting.

The employers have demonstrated their willingness to use the Act to attack union rights and with the recession biting even deeper into their profits we can expect them to try even harder to make workers bear the cost. Trade Unionists must face the employers on this issue or the rights fought for over many years will disappear. Trade Unionists must not be afraid to break the law, let us remember that union rights were only gained by breaking the law.

Irish Trade Unionists must learn from the mistakes of the miners strike in Britain in terms of solidarity from other unions. They must be prepared for legal attempts to have their assets sequestered and

and the army, against them to break strikes. New methods and tactics must be called into play, such as the establishment of 'independent' strike support groups which in turn can organise mass pickets, boycotts of employers products, the ostracising of scabs, etc. If the Trade Union leaderships are not willing to fight back against the employers, which they clearly are not, then it is up to the union activists to do so.

If Trade Unions are to retain any attraction for workers they must be seen to have something to offer. Increasing numbers of people are beginning to view trade unions as just another part of the establishment, willing to barter their members rights and livelihoods for a place at the table with the bosses. We see the leaders of the main unions, with salaries of £80,000+, calling for wage restraints from workers. The 'logic' of this position is that the 'Social Partnerships' of the Programme for National Recovery (PNR) and the PESP would enable the unions to have an input into the economic strategy of the government, especially in the areas of Job creation, social welfare and taxation.

How a social partnership had been conceived between two sections of society whose interests are totally opposed to each other remains a mystery to all but those involved. The aim of all employers, including the government, is to keep their costs, including wages, to a minimum. The aim of Trade Unions (supposedly) is to get the best pay and conditions possible for their members. By entering into the PNR/PESP the Trade Unions were firmly tying themselves to the Government's economic strategy which included savage cutbacks in public service employment, the health service and social welfare, thus effectively silencing trade union opposition to these attacks on their members.

The Trade Unions continued down the New Realist road of partnership with the government by signing the PESP, even though the increased profits for employers during the earlier PNR did not result in significant job creation, the main tenet of both programmes. The major indictment of the PNR/PESP is the fact that since the PNR was signed in 1987 unemployment has risen from 237,962 to 330,198 today. This fact alone indicates the disastrous effects of the unions aligning themselves with the employers. Added to this the attacks on trade union rights, the rationalisation plans for Aer Lingus (and no doubt privatisation of some sections), McCreavy's Dirty Dozen Social Welfare cuts and the privatisation of the government's remaining shares in Greenore you could be forgiven for thinking that the unions would not even consider another 'social partnership'. However in union circles a new PESP is being discussed as a distinct possibility, ironically it could be the employers who decide not to enter into a new deal.

It is time for the Trade Unions to get back to basics - fighting for workers rights and conditions. While understanding that Trade Unions only work when capitalism works they are still the first line of defence for many working class people. Even though by their nature trade unions tend to be reformist organisations ordinary people involved in strikes get first hand experience of the states' role in keeping working people down. This creates a politicisation process that many would not normally otherwise be exposed to. An example of this politicisation were the parallels drawn by the British miners between their experiences of state repression during the '84/85 strike and the experiences of the nationalist people of Northern Ireland.

## GOOD BOMB, BAD BOMB

The failure of right wing politicians and their media mouthpieces to create a peace movement in Ireland has only been surpassed by the inability of the so-called revolutionary left, despite its rhetoric, to organise, sustain or support a viable anti-imperialist movement, especially in the occupied country itself. The willingness of Red Action alone to confront the hard issues, as exemplified by our support for the IRA's armed struggle and militant anti fascism, is what distinguishes us from the rest of the left who are happy to write endless polemics about working class unity and rallying behind "concrete political slogans". However these groups fail to realise that the IRA are the very people, working class, that they speak about. It is ironic that the majority of these soft left groups are led by middle class intellectuals whose understanding of the thoughts and needs of the working class are clouded in theory rather than grounded in reality.

"It is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland"

(K Marx)

and

"I have sought in every way to provoke this manifestation of the English working class in support of Fenianism" (K Marx)

The lack of any anti-imperialist movement has more to do with the political goals of many groups rather than public revulsion or apathy towards the armed struggle. This public revulsion, so widely reported in the media, has failed to materialise. Media based campaigns, coupled with anti Republican groups bankrolled by the British, have all failed to create 'peace' movements. Peace rallies have been hyped or badly attended. The 'Peace '93' group had almost collapsed in two weeks while the Peace Train organisation tried to manipulate for its own ends. When this failed it tried to isolate 'Peace '93'.

On the other hand, at a time of increased political and physical pressure on Republicans in the 6 counties the Republican vote has increased. IRA actions have not alienated their supporters as some would like us to believe. Support for the IRA remains as strong as ever within the communities of which they are a part, a fact conveniently ignored by the media and the soft left.

The temporary involvement of the soft left in anti imperialist single issue campaigns, such as anti-Extradition, is never maintained. Their idea of building mass movements are never realised as the long term commitment involved is alien to such groups who usually drift from issue to issue trawling for membership.

While regularly calling for working class direct action to defend communities they then go on to denounce the IRA, the living embodiment of the self same working class direct action. However these soft left groups argue that they support the IRA but do not support its actions, a farcical political position if ever there was one. The debate over whether some IRA actions are murder or manslaughter shows how far from reality some of these groups can be. The repeated implication that the IRA are hampering working class unity is false, during previous periods of IRA inactivity workers have never united in sizable numbers. Loyalist workers will never consider working class unity as long as they have the veto to maintain the connection with Britain, which guarantees their minor economic advantages. Loyalism, not Republicanism, is the barrier to working class unity and it has been carefully developed as such by both the British and Unionist upper classes. For true working class unity the supremacist and racist ideology of Loyalism must be smashed. Loyalism is a form of imperialism that has strong parallels with the imperialism of white settlers in Zimbabwe and the division of the black and white working class in South Africa. The soft left groups who readily support anti-imperialist armed struggle abroad (FMLN, ANC, etc.) are unwilling to support a similar armed struggle on their own doorstep. By calling for an IRA ceasefire, as many of these groups have done, they are ignoring the Loyalists, and, more importantly, their British paymasters. Such spurious ceasefire demands align these groups with the imperialists as such a course of action would succeed in crushing all opposition to their occupation of Ireland. The willingness of the soft left to shift blame from the British government onto the IRA, by claiming that the IRA are keeping the communities apart, ties in with the state's attempts to vilify Republicans by portraying them as the root of the problem and that their elimination, both politically and physically will provide a solution.

The claim that the IRA will never succeed is belied by the fact that every attempt at a state sponsored settlement is in fact an anti Republican settlement, brought about by the IRA's campaign and its continued support among working class nationalist communities. The IRA does not expect to achieve an outright victory but states that it will be a catalyst for a peaceful settlement acceptable to both communities, once they have achieved their stated aim of British withdrawal and Irish self determination.

The current attempts by the soft left to attribute a 'good bomb, bad bomb' label to IRA actions shows gross hypocrisy. The current IRA campaign in Britain, the largest and most successful one yet, is a financial and political embarrassment to the British. It has highlighted to the international community that the heart of the British establishment is open to attack. The cost of the bombings has frightened the financial community, who see their profits literally going up in smoke. The bombing of economic targets is a revolutionary act.

"The banner of Fenianism was upheld by the stalwart hands of the Irish working class of the day, as the military organisation of the same class today is the only body that without reservation unhesitatingly announces its loyalty to the Republican principle of national freedom for which the Fenians stood." (James Connolly)

The British capitalists must be shown that they are not immune from retribution while their political mouthpieces, the politicians, continue their campaign of murder and repression in Ireland. Would Lenin, Trotsky or even Durutti hesitate to strike against the capitalist state? Connolly certainly wouldn't, he accepted the need for military action to achieve the aims of the militant working class. His socialist message was not subsumed by nationalism, as the soft left would have us believe, but was a highlight of the aims of the 1916 rebels, responsible for the socialist strand in the republican movement.

The soft left's continued references to Sinn Fein's error in pandering to the SDLP to form a pan nationalist alliance would be a valid criticism if only they were willing to attempt to build a viable alternative. Rhetoric about workers unity is empty unless genuine socialists are willing to undertake a serious anti-imperialist campaign against the British occupation of Ireland, both in the military and political spheres and to end the discrimination and hardship that has ensued from this. Mass mobilisation will also stretch the enemy. Red Action reiterates that the primary aim of any anti-imperialist struggle is the education and mobilisation of the working class against the imperialists if real working class unity and a 32 county socialist republic are to be achieved. We also state that the military campaign of the IRA, a working class volunteer army, is part of that anti-imperialist struggle.

fully realise that the employers will be only too willing to use their hired thugs, the police



# SPA PRAC

The first war against fascism was fought in Spain. Following the collapse of the proto-fascist government of Primo de Rivera in 1930, a short-lived restoration of monarchy was followed by a republican government in June 1931. Attempts to dismantle the still powerful semi-feudal elements in Spanish society were strongly resisted by the conservative forces on the Spanish right. Eventually, at the end of 1933, a right-wing government replaced the liberal reformist administration. The political crisis developed into peasant and worker revolts the following year. In October, the Asturian soviet in the north of Spain was formed, only to be crushed by the army after a few weeks. Widespread repression followed, coupled with a vicious offensive against workers' living standards. The left responded with the formation of the broad-based 'Popular Front', and in fresh elections held in February 1936, won a decisive majority. Its hesitant and reformist measures were soon outpaced by the tempo of the social revolution. Peasant revolts and land takeovers multiplied; socialist workers and the fascist Falange fought daily battles in the city streets. In July, 1936, General Franco led a military coup against the republican government. Workers' organisations of all shapes and sizes sprang into being overnight not only to defend the Republic, in the form of the Militias and the 'dual government' of the Anti-Fascist Militias Committee, but to impose a social revolution in the form of factory, district, justice and village committees. More than any other period in history, Spain 1936-7 illustrates the inexhaustible range of proletarian self-organisation and democracy, and with it, the truth of Marx's fundamental assertion that the emancipation of the working class will be performed by the working class itself. The centre of the revolutionary struggle was Barcelona in the Catalan region of Spain, where anarchist, communist and the semi-trotskyite forces of the POUM were all strongly represented. George Orwell's 'Homage to Catalonia' is the best known version of the events examined here.

## Make a Choice!

The Spanish revolution of July 1936 continued on an upwards trajectory through the months of August and September. The initial impetus of the fascist backed military coup had been halted. Elementary forms of workers power had effectively been established throughout the areas held by the Republic. Yet the decisive move to establish mechanisms of wider political control - a 'soviet' system - were blocked by the anarchist's insistence on operating solely through the trades union bureaucracies. The power vacuum could not continue. The Catalan state apparatus, under its president Companys, began to make an insidious comeback. As Kurt Landau, the POUM liaison officer for foreign dissident communist elements, summed it up: "The July revolution did not seize state power, so the old state apparatus was not destroyed, but reformed." The Catalan state - the 'Generalidad' - began to take over functions previously controlled by the Madrid government. Customs posts, frontier guards, the railways and the docks, the Bank of Spain, all became subsumed under the Generalidad - without opposition from the anarchists. An unstable form of dual power resulted, which in the absence of a determined political agenda on the part of the anarchist leadership, could only, in time, be resolved one way. Landau predicted that: "The Council of the Generalitat was a mixture of a bourgeois government and an organisation of dual power...Such a combination cannot last. Either the revolutionary forces will take power...or the Stalinists and their allies will create a bourgeois government..." Landau warned: "There is no greater danger for a revolution than a long period of stagnation whilst the proletariat, restrained by its leaders, refrains from seizing state power...During a period of stagnation ever increasing numbers of workers relapse from a condition of activity to one of passive expectation." He touches here on a refrain heard consistently from the entire spectrum of those involved in the conflict on the side of the revolutionary left: the contrast between the revolutionary will and practice of the rank and file, and the hesitation and opportunism of their respective leaders. The crucial question centred on the nature of the militias. A CNT-FAI bulletin (CNT = anarchist trades union; FAI = Iberian Anarchist Federation, represent-

ing the anarchist 'left') declared: "We cannot be uniformed soldiers. We want to be militiamen of liberty. To the front certainly, but to the barracks as soldiers not subject to the popular forces, certainly not!" The POUM, while supporting the formation of a politicised 'Red Army', continued to maintain its separate militia. The Generalidad predictably opted for a conventionally structured army, with officers of unknown political persuasion appointed from above. The communists and socialists, now united in the PSUC (United Socialist Party of Catalonia), supported the government. The communist position was that "political adjustments between comrades" would have to wait upon the successful conclusion of the war. The entire revolutionary process was to be put on hold 'until the war was won'. The communist's preferred strategy was piecemeal infiltration of the existing government apparatus. They dissolved their own 5th Regiment into the state's 'Popular Army', which subsequently formed its political centre. The Generalidad made the first moves towards disarming the anarchist militia organised in the 'control patrols' which had replaced the police units. It desisted in the face of fierce resistance from the CNT rank and file. The revolutionary momentum at the base of the workers' organisations was still a force to be reckoned with, but was to a steadily increasing extent, becoming out of step with the party-bureaucratic conservatism of their leading strata. Landau continued to insist that: "The substantial left wing of the CNT and FAI...has no faith in bourgeois democracy, or the revolution from above, and is a revolutionary force of the greatest historical significance...The POUM has the task of regrouping the revolutionary forces on the basis of a socialist programme." The CNT leadership kept the POUM at arm's length, refusing to allow any of its unions to fall under POUM control, distrusting any form of marxism. The process of political assimilation to the existing state apparatus of the bourgeois republic was fatefully extended. At a meeting of the federations of the Catalan libertarians, the anarchist leader, Garcia Oliver confronted his members: "Either we collaborate or we impose a dictatorship. Make a choice!" The communists had made theirs. While the Spanish Central Committee opposed entry to the Madrid government, Moscow insisted. In line with the dogma that only the completion of the

bourgeois revolution was on the revolution's agenda, two communists including Hernandez, editor of 'Mundo Obrero' the main communist newspaper, joined the cabinet. Other communist dignitaries took posts within the war ministry. This reshuffle was named the 'Government of Victory' and made history of sorts, being the first western government to include the communists. On 27 September, the anarchists formally resolved the dilemma presented to them by Oliver the previous month. The anarchists found themselves in the position where although doctrinally opposed to any forms of state authority, even the most democratic, they were confronted with the reality of a full blast class war which demanded some form of cohesive direction. As M Bortenstein, a Polish dissident communist, commented, "For the first time in history Anarchists had the possibility of applying their theories on a grand scale." They were to find that theory and practice were irreconcilable. As one member of the FAI put it succinctly: "Although we were anti-authoritarian, we were suddenly the only authority there." Being unable or unwilling to countenance the institution of a consistently democratic workers' state, they were forced to accept the only alternative. Parity, the anarchists were inhibited by their traditional rejection of any form of state 'dictatorship'. As their paper declared at the outbreak of the revolution: "Against fascism, yes, but also against any form of dictatorship because, whoever exercises it, dictatorship is also fascism." For them, this applied equally to the dictatorship of the class. Franz Borkenau, author of a contemporary account much admired by Orwell, explained why: "the attitude of the CNT is explicable by the fact that it holds the factories through its powerful trades unions organisation, and that soviet elections could contribute nothing to its power, but would, inevitably, give every other party a chance to test its strength in the factories." The Catalan CNT held a meeting from which representatives from other regions were excluded. They decided to join the Catalan state administration, but kept the decision secret. While continuing to oppose joining the Madrid government, the Catalan CNT then sprang its surprise: three anarchists accepted posts in the bourgeois state apparatus of the Generalidad. In the arbitrary anarchist fashion, one of them was appointed simply because he was passing by as the names were being chosen! As cover for this stupefying about turn, in which 'anarchists' were to exercise political authority in the name of the state, the Generalitat was renamed the 'Regional Defence Council'. Three weeks later, in mid-October, the anarchists announced that four CNT ministers were joining the central government of the Popular Front in Madrid. Bortenstein's scorn was well merited: "The anti-statists were transformed into ministers, the bomb-throwers into police prefects, the terrorists into prison governors...Of course Durruti, Ascaso and thousands of nameless heroes will, like the Paris Commune, remain forever inscribed in the hearts of the proletariat; but as for the policy of the...so-called leadership of the CNT, it was grossly reformist, petit-bourgeois and objectively criminal towards the proletariat and the revolution." Wilebaldo Solano, the secretary of the POUM's militant youth wing, the JCI, alleges that the POUM suggested forming a bloc with the CNT; the CNT refused. "The CNT had the mass of workers, it was a tremendous popular

force, a mixture of primitivism and idealism. It hadn't evolved towards revolution; it was an organisation that had sprung from the country's guts with a fighting revolutionary spirit. A colossus, with a head of clay." It would provide a neat contrast if at this point it could be said that the anti-Stalinists of the marxist POUM denounced the anarchists and struggled consistently to establish workers' 'soviets'. In the wake of the July revolution, the POUM was stridently calling for a pluralist workers' state: "The dictatorship of the whole working class, the dictatorship of the popular classes. No organisation, whether political or trades unions, has the right to exercise its dictatorship over the other organisations in the name of the revolution." As Felix Morrow, an american trotskyite, insisted at the time: "The only authentic voice of the people today would be a National Congress of the elected delegates of the militia who are fighting, the workers who are producing and transporting, and the peasants who are providing the food." The reality is that the leaders of the POUM also joined the Generalidad. Despite having, in a rapturously received speech on September 7 1936, put forward the slogan, "Get the bourgeois ministers out", the most prominent of the POUM leaders, Andres Nin, became one of them - the councillor for justice of all things. Bortenstein commented: "This social revolution was criminally strangled by the leaders of the Popular Front, who along with the leaders of all the working class parties, preferred portfolios in the government and the Generalidad to the revolutionary road." (RA's emphasis) Only one of the POUM's executive committee, Juan Andrade, opposed joining the bourgeois government. Even he rationalised the move: "If we refused to join, the Stalinists would have used it as a pretext to outlaw us...We had no intention of outlawing ourselves in a revolutionary situation [i] cutting ourselves off in this way from influencing the masses." (RA's emphasis) From these events, it was a short step to the formal dissolution of the 'dual power' of the Anti-Fascist Committee on October 1. Its sub-committees were merged with the corresponding departments of the Catalan state. The leader of the FAI excused the capitulation by explaining how the anarchists were "old time and time again that to get arms we would have to abandon the Anti-Fascist Militias Committee and enter the government". Despite arguing for the preservation and broadening of the 'dual power' of the 'Anti-Fascist Committee' through the election of worker delegates, the POUM, having once followed the anarchists into the Generalitat government, then acquiesced in the dissolution of the Committee. Elements in the POUM opposed all these developments. Solano regarded abolition of the committee as a "tremendous mistake." He still excused his own party, adding: "The CNT must bear the responsibility. We didn't carry enough weight to prevent it happening..." The rank and file on the other hand, refused to dissolve the 'control patrols' which continued as independent powers. The 'dual power' on the streets was still a reality. At the front, Durruti and his men kept true to the apocalyptic anarchist faith. Told by a Canadian journalist that even if the anarchists were victorious, they would be sitting on a pile of ruins, Durruti replied: "We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall - we shall know how to accommodate ourselves for a time...We can also build. It is we who built the palaces and cities here in Spain and America and everywhere. We, the workers can build cities to take their place...The bourgeoisie may blast and ruin their world before they leave the stage of history. But we carry a new world in our hearts."

Firmly established in Aragon, the anarchist columns guaranteed the continued existence of libertarian political forms. Opposed by the communists and the Catalan government, the 450 collectives of the region held a conference in late September and set up a regional 'Council of Defence'. Composed of CNT members, its exercised supreme political authority throughout Aragon. They announced that Aragon had become the 'Spanish Ukraine' and would hold out against the communist forces that had crushed the Ukrainian anarchists in Russia in 1921. In November, the Council expanded to receive members of other parties. Aragon remained an independent workers' state with its own police force, control of production and people's tribunals in place of bourgeois courts. It accepted no political authority other than its own. Orwell wrote that in this area, where the POUM and the anarchists remained the dominant forces, even in the spring of 1937, "The revolutionary atmosphere remained as I had first known it. General and private, peasant and militia man, still met as equals, everyone drew the same pay, wore the same clothes, ate the same food...there was no 'boss class', no menial class, no beggars, no prostitutes, no lawyers, no priests, no boot-licking, no cap-touching. I was breathing the air of equality..." Morrow, writing in 1938, believed that: "A single example, in POUM controlled industrial towns like Lerida or Gerona, of delegates elected in every factory and shop, joining with delegates from the workers' patrols and the militias to create a workers' parliament which would function as the ruling body of the area, would have electrified Catalonia and initiated an identical process everywhere." The POUM leadership, however, conspicuously failed to put into practice its slogans calling for the formation of any such over-arching form of workers' power.

## Stalinist counter-revolution

After the republican victory in the battle for Madrid, the unity enforced by the immediate threat of the fascist forces receded, and was soon replaced by open antagonism between the revolutionary forces and the conservatism of the state and its communist allies. Orwell says that, "From about February 1937 onwards the anarchists and the POUM could to some extent be lumped together." The communists became the new party of 'law and order'. The ideological indecisiveness of the socialists drove many into the arms of the communists. By the end of 1936, the Communist party numbered 250,000. Of these the German dissident communist, August Thalheimer, estimates that less than a third were former communists. The communist leader, Jose Diaz, revealed that 76,000 were peasant proprietors, and that over 25,000 belonged to the urban middle classes. By June 1937, membership was up to 400,000. The communists had become the party representing the property and fears of the petty bourgeoisie. They formally recognised the fact by forming the GEPCI (Federation of Smallholders) which gave cover

to those capitalist elements which felt themselves threatened by the revolution. While communist propaganda continued to develop themes from the Russian experiences of 1917, its social base and practices were sustained by the small shopkeepers, farmers (who in Russia would be exterminated as 'Kulaks'), taxi drivers, minor government officials and low level army officers, who signed up en masse. It had become a radical party of the petty bourgeoisie, representing a policy of state regulation of capitalism in place of workers' control. Communists were particularly well represented in the army: if their own figures are to be believed, half the republican army by March 1937, belonged to the communist party. More sinister still, the communist party's infiltration of the state administration enabled them to replace "Either we a dictatorship (Anarchist) the anti-stalinist ministers, police prison gove

The socialists by contrast had dwindled to 160,000. The anarchists were divided over the entry of the four ministers into the Madrid government. How were the anarchist ministers any different from the leaders of other reformist or petty bourgeois factions? But the real target of the communists remained the independent marxists of the POUM. Only La Batalla, the POUM's national paper, and the CNT paper La Noche, run by the 'bol-shevik anarchist' group, the 'Friends of Durruti', criticised the Moscow purges and show trials. Even the CNT later disowned La Noche's article. Morrow felt that, "with no aid from the POUM leadership, a genuinely revolutionary current was crystallizing in the Friends of Durruti and the Libertarian Youth. If the POUM was ever to strike out independently of the CNT leadership, this



8. The POUM tentatively leaving Leticia

# ANARCHIST PRACTICES

was the moment" The POUM may now have numbered up to 60,000 members - a genuine 'mass minority' party. But as late as April 1937, the POUM Central Committee was advocating the formation of a government which would include representatives from the communists and the republican left. The communist's first strike was to manoeuvre the POUM leader Andres Nin, out of the Generalidad. He resigned in December 1936. The reconstituted Catalan government now included four anarchist ministers (one of whom was Abad de Santillan of the 'extreme left' FAJ). No protest was made at the expulsion of the POUM, although the anarchists continued to quarrel with the communist's drive to centralise control of the army and industry in the hands of the state

above in ratio to party strength. At their conference in March 1937, the communist leader, Diaz, praised the bourgeois republicans for joining the "anti-fascist movement hand in hand with the proletariat". He denied that the communists stood in opposition to the church. The most rousing speeches were saved for attacks on the POUM. The POUM continued to denounce the Stalinist regime and demanded the supersession of bourgeois democracy in Spain. To outsiders, the POUM were trotskysts, but Bortenstein, himself a member of the trotskyst 'Bolshevik-Leninist' faction, regarded them as "rabid anti-trotskysts". It made no difference to the Stalinists. Diaz denounced the POUM as, "agents of fascism, who hide themselves behind the pretended slogans of revolutionaries to carry out their major mission as agents of our enemies in our own country." Diaz was not caught up in the emotions of the moment; the communists now insisted that the POUM and

entrenched itself in the Chamber of Commerce.

## The May Days

The communists made their move at the beginning of May. For some time it had been apparent that anarchist operators in the telephone exchange listened in to calls. During one call between Azana and Companys, the telephonist interrupted telling them that the lines should be used for more important business than chats between the two presidents! On 3 May, the chief of police entered the Telefonica building and announced he was taking it over. The anarchists on duty opened fire from the second floor. The civil guard appeared together with FAI chiefs. A crowd gathered outside; factories were informed by telephone and downed tools, the workers occupying their work-places or else converging in the main streets.

The POUM, the Friends of Durruti and the small Trotskyst 'Bolshevik-Leninist' group took up positions. Within hours, all the political organisations were an armed presence on the streets. An Italian trotskyst, Domenico Sedran, described what happened:

"after the first day of protest demonstrations by the working masses...on the second day, 4 May 1937, only a minority of the dissident anarcho-sindicalists led by Badius continued the struggle...The POUM militants also put up resistance, and for three days barricades were erected almost everywhere in the city..."

The communists were by no means guaranteed of a victory. The anarchist forces in the Barcelona streets remained a formidable adversary.

On May 4, street attacks by the rival factions escalated. It was July 19 all over again, a second revolution. Police versus anarchists and the POUM, except the police were now controlled and joined by the communists. The communist PSUC and police controlled the area around the Generalitat building, the anarchists controlled the rest. Orwell, who himself took part in the fighting, wrote:

"The issue was clear enough. On one side the CNT, on the other side, the police. I have no particular love for the idealised 'worker' as he appears in the bourgeois communist's mind, but when I see an actual flesh and blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on." The CNT and FAI leadership were rapidly losing control of their own militants. Some sections of the CNT threatened to go over to the POUM. Orwell again:

"On the anarchist side the action was almost certainly spontaneous, for it was an affair mainly of the rank and file. The people came into the streets and their political leaders followed reluctantly, or did not follow at all."

Bortenstein too, was careful to distinguish the political weakness of the POUM tops from "its strong point, the courage and devotion of its militants." These POUM militants were joined by the legendary 'Friends of Durruti'. They consisted of a group of ex-Durruti columnists who had refused to be 'militarised' by the state and had returned to Barcelona. Their proposal was that a provisional revolutionary council should be formed from amongst the combatants on the barricades. Bortenstein considered that "they were evolving, however slowly, towards revolutionary marxism". Morrow supports this:

"The Friends of Durruti were organised to wrest leadership from the CNT bureaucracy. In the last days of April, they plastered Barcelona with their slogans - an open break with the leadership. These slogans included the essential points of a revolutionary programme: all power to the working class, and democratic organs of the workers, peasants and combatants, as the expression of the workers' power."

The Friends of Durruti however, carried little weight with the CNT neighbourhood defence committees, who were the driving force behind the mass mobilisation on the barricades. Morrow again confirms that:

"the workers were pouring into the local centres of the CNT-FAI and POUM, arming and building barricades. From the dungeons of the Rivera dictatorship [1925-39]...the CNT-FAI have always had their local defence committees, with a tradition of local initiative. So far as there was leadership in the coming week, these defence committees provided it."

Morrow was convinced that the barricades alliance of the friends of Durruti and the POUM could have been crucial:

"The Friends of Durruti had forged to the front...calling upon the CNT workers to repudiate the desertion orders of Casa CNT [CNT HQ] and continue the struggle for workers' power. It had warmly welcomed the collaboration of the POUM. The masses were still on the barricades. The POUM, numbering at least 30,000 workers in Catalonia, could tip the quivering scales either way. Its leadership tipped the scales for capitulation."

The POUM paper refused to call for the overthrow of the government, confining itself to calling for defence of the barricades, and withdrawal of the decrees abolishing the control patrols. Morrow felt sure that:

"Limited as this programme was, it contrasted so with the CNT Regional Committee's appeals to desert the barricades that the prestige of the POUM soared among the anarchist masses. The POUM had an unparalleled opportunity to come to the head of the movement."

## Shoot the Radio!

The CNT also had 500 well armed men in Barcelona - all that remained of the famous Durruti column - under the command of Ricardo Sanz, Durruti's former lieutenant. Sanz went to see Garcia Oliver, the leader of the constitutional anarchists in the government. The outcome was that, as Sanz reported, "None of my troops moved to decapitate the reactionary movement which was the cause of it all. Our representatives in the central

government called instead for a cease-fire."

At this critical juncture...with their militants on the barricades, the POUM leaders privately proposed an alliance to their wavering anarchist counterparts. Solano went with Nin to the CNT HQ. Solano described how he explained that: "We believed we had to take the offensive, demand the Generalitat's resignation, confront the problem of creating a government of the working class organisations - to seize power."

They argued that the Generalitat should at least be taken with an eye to future negotiations. The anarchists refused. They told the POUMists that: "the situation will probably change, become more radical - then we'll confront the PUSC".

The anarchists thanked the POUM leaders for coming over, saying that, "It's been a pleasant evening together."

The anarchist leaders, Garcia Oliver and Federica Montseny, caught by surprise by the uprising, broadcast an emotional appeal to their followers to lay down their arms and return to work. Andrade, a top POUM leader, was at the CNT headquarters at the time:

"The CNT militants were so furious that they pulled out their pistols and shot the radio...They were absolutely furious - and yet they obeyed."

Units of the Durruti column, which was preparing to march on Barcelona, obeyed the leadership and remained where they were. POUM front line elements were only deterred from marching by the threat from the communist head of the Aragon air force, that they would be bombed from the air if they proceeded. On May 5, the anarchist leaders came to an arrangement with the Generalidad; the existing administration resigned and a new one installed. Sporadic firing in the streets continued. The basis still existed on the streets for a 'POUM-CNT-FAI revolutionary workers' front'. At a joint CNT-POUM committee, Solano described how the order had been given to march to the centre of Barcelona, when Nin came on the line:

"He told me not to give the order...A revolutionary government backed by an army and controlling the radio could have explained the situation to the combatants at the front; even then, even if the CNT had unanimously agreed with us, it would have been a risky affair..."

The following day, the anarchists proclaimed a truce, but refused to return to work. In the afternoon, fighting broke out once again. On 7 May the CNT leadership once again appealed for a return to 'normality' and the next day called for the barricades to be dismantled. Some 500 had been killed in the fighting and double that wounded. The Generalidad reformed as before. The second, and last revolutionary attempt was over, crippled by an insulated leadership that had become reconciled to the bourgeois order. For them, any revolutionary attempt, even under the optimum conditions available, was to be rejected as, in Nin's words, "too risky".

Bortenstein concluded that: "The situation called for the leadership of the CNT to play the role of the leading centre in the proletarian insurrection, but it played the role of an enemy agent." In the midst of the crisis, the anarchists had shown that they simply could not ensure unity of action. In particular, the gulf between the older leadership and the street fighting younger elements proved unbridgeable. In Bortenstein's unanswerable words:

"The problem of power was posed for the CNT and FAI during the July Days and in an even sharper fashion in the May Days. Take the power or leave it to others: in other words, to the left bourgeoisie and the Stalinists, there was no escape from that." Unfortunately, the POUM leadership was incapable of taking a decisive lead in their place. Orwell commented:

"In reality the attitude of the POUM leaders was hesitating. They had never been in favour of an insur-

rection until the war against Franco was won; on the other hand the workers had come into the streets and the POUM leaders took the rather pedantic marxist line that when the workers are on the streets it is the duty of the revolutionary parties to be with them. Hence in spite of uttering revolutionary slogans...they did their best to limit the workers' action to the defensive."

Once again, a decisive split was observed between the revolutionary practice of the rank and file, and the political conservatism of the revolution's 'leaders'.

A sense of sheer political self-preservation should itself have inspired firmer leadership from the POUM tops. For despite the weakness of its leadership, the POUM was the main target of the communists, and amongst the POUM, its youth wing (JCI) in particular, which had steadily repeated its calls for the establishment of an assembly based on the committees. Andrade points out:

"The revolution in Spain began just as Stalin's crimes were beginning to be known...The POUM represented the new revolutionary current that could stem the Stalinist tide, it challenged the Comintern and the Soviet Union. That was why Stalin had to liquidate the party..."

By May 1937, there was no question that a showdown with the communists was on its way. The only question was whether the POUM leadership would ever summon the resolve to make a fight of it, or be content to be eliminated quietly. By refusing to back the fighting stance of its militants on the streets, the POUM tops threw away the last chance of saving themselves - and the revolution.

The counter-revolutionary elements on the contrary, communist and bourgeois, had shown that they were able to combine to enforce a common agenda.

Attacks were renewed on the remaining collectives. On May 13, the government once again ordered the surrender of all arms. The communist SIM (Military Intelligence) set up a network of private prisons for interrogation and detention. The control patrols were dissolved on 7 June. In the wake of the May Days, the communists took over the direct command of the police and army.

Throughout the summer, conventional court procedures were substituted for the popular tribunals; new career prison directors were appointed to replace the political nominees. Municipal councils replaced all CNT-FAI committees. The anarchists themselves were still too numerous to be liquidated; in any case, although in June they resigned from ministerial positions in the Generalidad, the leadership continued to collaborate with the government and to occupy positions in the bureaucracy. Bortenstein commented:

"The CNT was therefore not consigned to illegality like the POUM, instead they spat in its face every day."

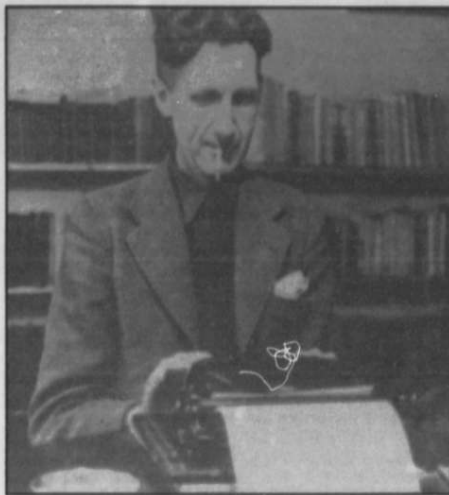
## Death of the POUM

The POUM were soon under a sustained and decisive attack. Most of the interrogations, arrests and torture were carried out by foreign communists, with the craven and slightly guilty applause of the Spanish party. Documents 'proving' the POUM leadership to be Francoist agents were fortuitously unearthed. The POUM paper, La Batalla, had already been banned after the May events. On 14 June, Orlov the GPU chief (Russian Secret Police), gave orders for the arrest of all the POUM leadership. Two days later, the POUM headquarters, the Hotel Falcon, was closed and appropriately, turned into a prison. The POUM was declared an illegal organisation. Its central committee of forty members was arrested. POUM battalions at the front were disbanded. Andres Nin and his friends were removed to various secret dungeons: Nin himself was never to reappear. He was subjected to the standard GPU torture routine but resisted, refusing to sign any

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CNT barracks, Barcelona, January 1937 (Orwell in the rear)



George Orwell, Civil War veteran and author of 'Homage to Catalonia' working at his home in Islington after his return from Spain.

**SPANISH PRACTICES**  
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'confessions'. The communists said he was in Berlin. The communist party and press in Britain and elsewhere supported the allegations against the POUM. Torture of other POUM tops continued in the convent of St Ursula, "the Dachau of republican Spain" as a POUM survivor described it. Another dissident communist, the German worker

Waldemar Boize, described how the communist run St Ursula camp at first held nationalist sympathisers:  
"Soon, however, the picture changed completely. The bourgeois elements gradually gained their liberty. Active fascists were also released...Proletarians took their place, long-standing members of the socialist party, syndicalists and POUM members." Foreign sympathisers with the

POUM, Kurt Landau among them, were murdered in obscure circumstances. During the autumn and winter of 1937, POUM rank and file militants were executed after hearings before communist courts martial. Around 1,500 were held in the Model Prison in Valencia. The leaders of the CNT stood by. When the communists began the persecution of the Friends of Durruti and 'extreme' elements of the FAI the CNT leaders, in Bortenstein's words, "permitted the persecution of...even its own militants." Not satisfied, the CNT tops launched their own witch hunt. Bortenstein records:

"In spite of anarchist 'ultra democracy'...the regional Committee decided...to expel from the CNT all the members of the Friends of Durruti...because they told the truth about the treachery of the CNT leadership."  
The Spanish revolution was systematically butchered not by the nationalist forces, but in the name of 'communism' itself. When the Francoist forces finally took over in March 1939, only the corpse of the revolution remained. An American Trotskyist who interviewed escaping revolutionaries in France, wrote:  
"The tough veterans who had grimly stuck out two and a half years of a bloody and losing fight weren't fighting for any abstract concept of democracy, and even less for the maintenance of cap-

italism...Tricked into grudgingly accepting the abandonment of the struggle for socialism, 'until the war is won'...they suddenly saw at last how they had been trapped and tricked into fighting the battle of their class enemies, and realised that whoever won, the Spanish workers had lost. And the heart and fight went out of them."

In March 1939, the communist leadership airlifted itself out of the way of the victorious nationalist forces and out of Spain, leaving its rank and file militants to be arrested, imprisoned and executed. It is worth recalling today that there are still those who call themselves 'revolutionary' socialists or even 'marxists', who defend the Stalinist regime and its international agencies as a (degenerate) 'workers state'. The history of the Spanish revolution from July 1936 to May 1937, offers a devastating insight into the realities behind these claims.

But the most striking lesson of all, is the treacherous potential inherent in the structure of a revolutionary organisation where the leadership, the executive or 'Central Committees, are insulated from the initiative and control of the rank and file membership. The epitome of anarchist organisation, its extreme wing, the FAI, operated, in Morrow's words, "a highly centralised party apparatus through which it maintained control of the CNT."

Where wider democratic mechanisms were not in place, a closed and secretive web of control inevitably grew in its place. Despite all the froth about autonomy and freedom, the tens of thousands of anarchist militants were manipulated by an unaccountable, undemocratic and corrupt leadership of the CNT, from a position where they possessed total control over the areas which were at the heart of the revolution, to one of passive acquiescence in the communist run counter revolution. Bortenstein tells how, after May, "The rank and file of the CNT literally hated the anarchist leadership...even the middle cadres talked with contempt about the Regional Committee."

The position of the POUM was little better. The militancy of the 'POUMistas' at the front and on the barricades could not be transmitted through the 'bolshhevik' party structure to the POUM leadership. Throughout its short history, the POUM tops consistently developed the correct 'line' in theory, only to abjectly betray it in practice. The closed and unaccountable central committee and executive derailed the revolutionary impetus of the working class militants - and its own programme - at each decisive juncture. Sincere marxists and personally courageous though most of the POUM leaders certainly were, the deliberations of a committee can never harness, expe-

rience, or even assess the revolutionary passion of a mass movement that alone decides the success or failure of a revolutionary attempt.

In the deliberations of an isolated 'centre' of individuals that unavoidably abstracts itself from the essentially collective momentum of the mass movement, the revolutionary 'moment' will always appear premature, "too risky" or 'adventurist'. For it is the collective momentum of the mass movement alone that transforms a social crisis into a social revolution. Where this factor is not directly experienced, it remains out of the equation of social forces pondered by the individuals composing the 'Central Committee'. The consequence is that in all situations, the equation will appear to be balanced in favour of the counter revolutionary status quo. The reformist instincts of the Central Committee will always therefore, tend to dominate over its revolutionary impulses. In the singularly few exceptions to the rule, as in the 'March Action' of the German Communist KPD of 1921, the pendulum swings widely the other way, and the initiative of the Party executive is left stranded by the absence of support from real social forces. The lesson to be drawn from the Spanish events by socialists today, is above all, the necessity of unconditional democracy within the revolutionary organisation.

# THE TAIL WAGGING THE DOG!

Saturday June 5th saw the centre of Edinburgh come to a standstill. The scale of the disruption, had been predicted by the organisers of the march, called to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the birth of the revolutionary fighter James Connolly. As a consequence of the march being banned for the second year running by the Lothian Regional Council, police mounted a huge operation to smother any public display of defiance by the James Connolly Society, and failed. Police were forced to seal off the city centre area and a total of forty eight people were arrested in subsequent confrontations.

To add insult to injury, the Labour controlled council, then approved an application to march just two weeks later from the Independent Loyal Orange Lodge on a similar route to that denied to the republicans.

The latter moreover, an organisation whose main claim to fame is its public and unabashed allegiance to the death squads of the UVF, an outfit that still reveres the deranged serial killer Lenny Murphy, as its favourite son. This resulted in a role reversal. While the initial march which was banned had the support of republicans and anti-fascists, and was attacked by the police, the loyalist procession which had the blessing of the Labour group and was protected by the constabulary, was attacked by anti-fascists and republicans. A further ten people were arrested. The public controversy surrounding the Connolly Commemoration '93, began as far back as April. Within a day of Red Action being sold in Scotland, carrying the banner headline 'WE MARCH IN EDINBURGH!', The Sun informed its readers "that pro-republicans have vowed to defy any ban". Councillors were said to be particularly 'incensed', as the James Connolly Society had as yet not even made a formal application! Shortly afterwards, a previously unknown group, trading under the name Concerned Citizens Against Terrorism, opened its account in the propaganda war. Accompanying copies of the offending Red Action article which was made available to all the councillors, was a press release which denounced Red Action as 'fascists'. "As you will see from the material attached, Red Action and its misnamed front organisation Anti-Fascist Action are regarded as fascists by most other groups on the Left and surround themselves in a cult of violence. It is important to note that Red Action uses violence, or the threat of it not just against the neo-nazi right but against those whom it disagrees with on the Left. In any case its support for the IRA is well documented." In a clear attempt to counter the RA call for a national mobilisation, by "individuals from every party and no party," the press release was also directed at the Left, and circulated among anarchist circles in particular. The objective was as stated, "to isolate the Connolly Society and Red Action." In a further attempt to sow confusion a K. Rutherford insisted in a letter to the local Evening News that... "this years march while formally under the auspices of the James Connolly Society is in fact controlled by Red Action, a group expelled from the SWP in 1982 due to their propensity for violence and unconditional support for the IRA". James G. Maclean the front man for the concerned citizens group, and former candidate for Protestant Action, then denounced Connolly in a letter to The Herald "as a backstabbing religious bigot". Rutherford it later transpired is both an accomplice of James G., and a regular contributor to the UVF magazine The Red Hand. Small world. So long before the council was due to meet on the 18th of May to discuss the march application the battle lines had already been drawn up along traditional lines of Right and Left or so it seemed. Nevertheless, it came as something of a surprise when the councillors saw fit to invite 'the tearful sister of a Scots squaddie murdered by an IRA sniper' to offer her opinion. June Dickson 'who in a trembling voice' according to the Daily Record told the meeting, "These [the JCS] are the same cowardly people who hid up to a mile away with a high powered rifle, who didn't give my brother a fighting chance...why should they then be allowed to march." The Labour councillors, offered their condolences and banned the march. From the public gallery a JCS spokesperson denounced the Labour group for "bowing to loyalist and fascist pressure." In 1992 the council justified its decision to ban the commemoration by citing the trouble of the previous year. But as Red Action pointed 'all

eleven arrests were fascists...nevertheless it was the march rather than the counter demonstration that was banned.' An editorial in The Scotsman was equally unimpressed by the council's logic and commented "The threat to order discerned in relation to the James Connolly Society, did not come from the march organisers, and participants, but was felt to arise because the event would provoke those for whom Republicanism is anathema...in short Loyalist sympathisers..." The Herald went a little further "What has happened in Edinburgh has been an attempt at blackmail, successful as it turns out. The council rightly wishes to avoid the threat of trouble; thugs offer the threat. Before you can say 'tomorrow belongs to me' the simians succeed in their aim and the march is halted." Despite the impeccable reasoning and elegant prose neither analysis grasped the fact that while the motive offered by the council to impose the veto had relied on the law 'n' order ticket in '92, it was sustained by arguments had that become overtly political by '93. For instance, the Labour group concluded, without debate, that the holding of a procession by an organisation 'perceived as sectarian' [JCS?] would likely promote intolerance (b) That sectarian murders [Cpl.Dickson?] have increased public revulsion at processions; (c) that James Connolly, [backstabbing religious bigot?] is perceived by the public at large to promote sectarianism. (Comments in brackets by Red Action). The political argument that the Labour council should stand up to the blackmail of the loyalist/fascist gangs is not being contested. To do otherwise is to allow the far-right to set the agenda. This is as true for Edinburgh as it is for Rostock. But this is no longer the issue. There has been a subtle shift in emphasis apparently undetected by the liberal left. In '92 political principle was considered subordinate to public order, but by '93 the issue of public order had been made subordinate to a political bias.

The Herald states "that the council wished to avoid trouble," but all the evidence points to the opposite conclusion. Once the JCS had announced its intention to hold the commemoration regardless, and all things being equal i.e. the loyalist counter threat; then some form of 'disruption' to the community was already guaranteed. The prospect of a retaliatory JCS counter demo two weeks later, provided an added emphasis. A move subsequently supported by AFA, and even the ANL. Once it was accepted that the threat existed, in any case, then from the councillors' point of view, if avoiding disruption was indeed their primary concern, it should have been simply a question of to what degree the threat could be nullified. It was a straight forward choice between minimum disruption over one weekend or maximum disruption over two? Armed with all the facts they opted for the latter. So you then had a situation where a march perceived to be sectarian only by Loyalists is banned, and its counterpart perceived to be sectarian by everybody bar Loyalists is licensed. The first one largely bigot free the latter undoubtedly bigot only. The only possible explanation is that the councillors concluded that if large numbers of police would be needed to maintain order in any case, then they would be better employed confronting republicans.

In a belated attempt to deflect some criticism they even told the Irish World which it duly reported "that police chiefs recommended that the republican march be banned." However, a careful reading of the police report reveals no such recommendation. So to continue to accuse Labour of a cowardly retreat; of adopting the course of least resistance in the face of fascist terror is to do them a disservice. The massive disruption on the 5th and again on the 19th was not a consequence of them adopting the course of least resistance, rather its precise opposite. The statistics bear this out. Over five times as many people were arrested in '93 as against '91, (when the march was legal) the principle difference being of course, that now instead of being 100% pro-Loyalist, 80% are perceived to be pro-

Republican! (A convenient basis for the ban in '94 no doubt).

The political reality which the council's critics have shut their eyes to, is that while republicanism is anathema to loyalism, loyalism is not anathema to either the Labour Party or the 'labour movement'. Prior to the march the media announced that the Connolly Society intended to address and leaflet the Times strikers in Dundee. At the emergence of the trade union movement, Connolly had been a prominent organiser, in Dundee involved in agitating for free speech through illegal marches, and was involved in many confrontations with the police over the use by the employers of scab labour. So there were clear historical parallels with the contemporary situation. The convener responded by saying they would be 'unwelcome'. Post march, two members of The Connolly Society, having been identified as republicans, were ordered off the Miners Gala by the police on the explicit instructions of NUM general secretary Ricky Wilson. That the Lothian Regional Council is in fact part of the problem rather than part of the solution is of course resisted by many on the liberal Left, including even those elements who identify with the march itself. Even the report in Republican News, castigated Labour for selling out "its principles." In reality the problem arose

because they refused to do so. Regardless of the condemnation from sections of the press and its own party, (The Labour Party Irish Society) disruption to the community, or financial cost. The furore was not a result of some identified anomaly in the councils principles which were entirely consistent throughout. The continuing conflict arises simply from the fact that its advertised principles once scrutinised are inescapably loyalist ones! Of course its no secret that the Labour Party in Scotland has always enjoyed a working relationship with loyalism, it accommodates it courts and cheerfully exploits the ideology whose lifeblood is bigotry. Nor is it the case that they feel the need to be coy about it. Martin O'Neill M.P. and former shadow minister for defence, commented in the Times recently, "There is no evidence that Scotland is a hot bed of republicanism, ... the only correspondence I have dealt with concerning Northern Ireland, has come from the local protestant community, in the form of letters of sponsorship by Orange lodges." If hitherto the relationship was assumed to be one of fraternal exploitation, you scratch my back I'll scratch yours, the antics of the Lothian Labour Group convey the distinct impression that here at least the Loyalist tail, is now vigorously wagging the Labour dog.



Loyalist bandmen in complete disarray, after a confrontation with republicans/anti-fascists in Princes Street. The march was held up for 40 minutes. There were ten arrests.



# dispatches from a war zone



This month saw the Ulster Volunteer Force finally admit that their organisation was responsible for the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in 1974. The bombs that exploded that day, 17 May - three in Dublin and one in Monaghan - claimed 33 innocent lives and maimed and injured almost 300 others. No other explosion in the 32 Counties of Ireland has claimed so many lives or caused so much injury to so many men, women and children. Surprising then that the only ones who relive this horror every anniversary are the families of the dead and mutilated.

The television programme, *First Tuesday*, who screened an investigation of the bombings, which took many months research, asked one vital question: did the UVF have help in the bombings from British intelligence, namely MI5? This question has angered British and unionist politicians alike who as usual have thrown up their usual denials of any dirty tricks department in the Crown armoury. Didn't they do the same after Death on the Rock?

The truth, yet again, is much more complex, though admittedly it lacks the subtlety and finesse of the dirty tricks carried on today in the Crown's name. Perhaps in those early days British intelligence found it inconceivable that the Irish struggle would last 20 years and more.

The Royal Engineers 4th Survey Troops were based at Castledillon in County Armagh. In 1988 the British government in answer to a question as to the role of this troop replied: "The role of a Royal Engineer field survey group is to provide or process aerial photographs, ground survey and mapping for the army as required." All very innocent and above board. But an ex-member of this troop gives a clearer picture of what went on in Castledillon.

"We were a specialist unit with training in surveillance and anti-surveillance, silent weapons, breaking and entering. We were also trained in weapons for sabotage with explosives and assassination. We also crossed the border with explosives to booby-trap arms dumps and for other missions."

Merlyn Rees who was Northern Ireland Secretary during the time of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings openly admitted to having knowledge of this unit and that it had his approval. He stated: "I would certainly not worry too much if they found arms buried in the ground that they left them in a condition that would cause harm to those picking them up ... one lives in a harsh world." All this from a man who labelled every act by the IRA during his stay in Ireland as an act of terrorism and an atrocity!

Mr Rees has admitted then that he knew of, and approved of, the acts carried out by this unit. Is it conceivable then that he did not know that one of its officers, Lt Robert Nairac, later Captain and later still executed by the IRA, was running a group of local terrorists, not just gleaming information from them as Mr Rees would have us believe, but for more sinister activities? RUC, military and loyalist

sources have confirmed that in May 1974 Nairac was meeting with the leadership of the Portadown UVF, the people responsible for the bombings in Dublin and Monaghan. "He was supplying them with arms and helping them to plan terrorist acts against republican targets." Three of the UVF members he was running, both before and after the bombings, were Robert McConnell, a farmer from South Armagh, Harris Boyle, second in command of the Portadown UVF, later blown up by his own bomb during the 'Miami Showband Massacre', and a loyalist murderer still at large and now in charge of the Portadown UVF, known as the Jackal.

These three UVF members along with a fourth, Billy Hanna, the commanding officer of the UVF in Portadown, are known to have been the planners of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings. All four were also members of the British army's Ulster Defence Regiment; a fact known to Nairac and therefore to Rees and the British government!

**'...the explosives detonated so efficiently there was no residue remaining that could be traced back to source. This indicates that the explosive mix was consistent and had been made up by people of a highly sophisticated level...the loyalists were basically pretty primitive...'**

Merlyn Rees would have us believe that this unit, which had his blessing in its duties, did not have his permission to cross the Irish border, if they did so they were acting in a rogue capacity. Was Nairac acting in a rogue capacity when he supplied known murderers with arms, ammunition and explosives? Or when he turned a blind eye to the murders committed by his 'sources'? It would appear not. The army's top secret training manual used by the SAS, 'Counter Revolutionary Operations' states: "They [the SAS] are particularly suited to liaison with and organisation, training and control of friendly guerrillas operating against the common enemy." the friendly guerrillas operating in Ireland were perceived by Nairac and his masters to be the loyalist murder gangs.

When asked by the *First Tuesday* team if loyalists would have had the capability of a concerted and well-planned bomb attack on Dublin, Lt Col George Styles, former head of the British Army's Bomb Disposal network worldwide and who served in the Six Counties between 1969 and 1972, burst out laughing and stated: "I have no high regard of their skill in 1974. I don't believe they were at a level that would equate to the techniques that were used in Dublin."

Commandant Patrick Trears of the Irish Army's Bomb Disposal Unit agreed with Styles: "It was a very sophisticated operation, military-type operation." The bombs contained 400 pounds of explosives which detonated so efficiently there was no residue

remaining that could be traced back to source. This indicates that the explosive mix was consistent and had been made up by people of a highly sophisticated level.

Hardly the view of loyalist bomb-makers held by Captain Fred Holroyd, a former undercover agent and informant handler with military intelligence in the Six Counties: "At that time the loyalist bomb-making capability was pretty limited. They mainly used beer-kegs full of explosives with a black powder fuse ... They weren't as sophisticated as the IRA who were using electrical detonators, trembler switches and anti-handling devices. They [the loyalists] were pretty primitive basically."

Lt Col George Styles in his report for the *First Tuesday* programme said of the Dublin and Monaghan bombs: "... it could be a covert military operation by UK armed forces ... in my view, which is based on experience of such operations, this is extremely unlikely." So did the British army go around detonating their own devices when they thought it necessary? Styles again: "Without getting someone to break the official secrets act you will never find out about operations carried out covertly. If somebody said to me we want you to set off a bang tonight so we can go and get a look at whatever, and because the bang would be allied to an IRA explosion and therefore wouldn't be anything other than a regular occurrence it would be unthinkable to use anything but captured IRA materials." Well done George. Now we know the reason for all the unclaimed bangs which get nationalists evacuated from their homes in the follow-up operations. It's only the lads collecting intelligence from our empty homes.

There are many witnesses to the fact that British army personnel and materials were behind the 1974 explosions in the South. A high-ranking member of the RUC special branch, five leading loyalists from Portadown, Fred Holroyd and Colin Wallace, another ex-Brit spook, have all given evidence to the *First Tuesday* investigation. Wallace says: "It was believed by certain people at army headquarters, Lisburn, that the explosives used in the Dublin bombings had emanated from security force sources. Also that the planning and some of the organisation of that operation had been done with the assistance of someone in the security force community."

A lot of British nationals will no doubt believe that this is all speculation or propaganda and will ask why would our boys do this? Well, usually it is at the bidding of their political masters as when SAS members detonated two car bombs in 1972, killing two civilians, so as to influence a debate in the Dail the same day to consider tougher measures against terrorists. The car bombs did the job - tougher laws were introduced. The 1974 bombings, however, were different. It was orders given by the extreme right within the army itself that deemed that 33 lives were to be snuffed out.

When Harold Wilson's Labour government came to power in

February 1974, many within the army believed he would head towards reunification of Ireland and give in to the IRA. Colin Wallace believed that many within the army believed that their intelligence war with the IRA would be undermined: "The army seemed in the early days much less involved but they became increasingly concerned by statements by senior Labour people about withdrawal from Northern Ireland." By April, Merlyn Rees was phasing out internment, cutting troop numbers and considering handing over the army's power to the RUC. He believed that these policies were being undermined by a right-wing faction within military intelligence. "It was a section, a unit out of control. It had no doubt it reflected the views of a number of soldiers - 'Let's go in a fix this lot' - and so on. That it went on from the Army Information Service and those associated with it, I've no doubt at all."

On 15 May the loyalist-led Ulster Workers Council strike brought much of the Six Counties to a standstill. Our televisions were full of pictures of masked men and armed loyalists standing toe-to-toe with the British army without a finger being lifted to disarm them. Three days into the strike, the bombs exploded in Dublin and Monaghan.

There is no doubt in the minds of many Garda officers involved in the investigations following the bombings that, even though they supplied the RUC with a detailed list of suspects picked out by eye-witnesses, they could not get the co-operation of the RUC. Although officers came North with specific details the RUC refused to arrest or question those involved. One Garda officer said: "You were dealing with a protestant force and there was definitely a lack of co-operation. Our investigation had to end because we couldn't get any further in the North. The well just ran dry." Chief Superintendent John Paul McMahon who led the Monaghan murder hunt wrote in his final report: "These investigations were greatly hampered by reason of the fact that no direct enquiries could be made in the area where the crime originated. There was no access to potential witnesses in Northern Ireland and there was also the disadvantage of not having been able to interrogate likely suspects and put them on identification parades."

The RUC Special Branch officers have stated that they were detailed to investigate the bombings by their superiors. When they were finished they had a list of suspects which tallied exactly to that of the Garda. Although they passed this information onto RUC headquarters they were never asked to arrest or interrogate any of the suspects. Were this atrocity to take place in the Six Counties today and were the suspects to originate from and flee back to the 26 Counties there would be a wild hue and cry from the British to have the perpetrators extradited. Occasionally I read of people being so ridden with guilt they have given themselves up for atrocities they have taken part in in the early seventies; these people are jailed. There is no statute of limitation in Ireland, so why can't the surviving members of this murder squad be arrested, faced with the evidence and made to stand trial? Many people have been tried and jailed in the 26 Counties for crimes allegedly carried out in the Six Counties. So why can't the



rest be tried by the British? Granted, these are only the pawns but there is no way on this earth anyone could ask the British government to root out and chastise the right-wing officers from their 'peace-keeping' army who manipulated the murder gang, is there?

I congratulate the *First Tuesday* team for bringing to light much of what the British establishment would prefer to remain buried. The programme ruffled quite a few feathers. That is apparent by the UVF's admission of guilt accompanied by his denial of any help from British intelligence. It would be well to remember at this point that Mr Jackson, the Jackal, is still at large, despite carrying out some of the worst atrocities carried out in the name of loyalty, and remembering also that he was controlled then by Robert Nairac. Who is controlling him now? Whoever it is must have started him reminiscing when they told him to claim the 20-year-old bombings.

**M. Collins (Belfast)**

Footnote:

It would appear that today's Tory government would have

no qualms about backing a loyalist/Brit intelligence bombing mission in Dublin. This week saw Lord Tebbit say on Sky News: "I suspect that the only thing that will take that [Articles 2&3] out of the Irish constitution is when the bombs begin to blow in Dublin in the way they have been in Belfast." Tebbit's sentiments were defended and echoed by Derry DUP councillor, and archbigot, Gregory Campbell, who said the remarks were, "very understandable... What he was saying, and we would agree with this, was that until the people of Dublin get a taste of what Belfast and the rest of Northern Ireland have been suffering over the last 25 years, then the Republic's government will not look at any changes to Articles 2 and 3."

How little things change! No doubt this time around the technology of the bombs and timers will fit perfectly with that of the UVF/JUDA murder gang who will front the operation. Be vigilant Dublin! England expects, and England has ways of getting what it expects, regardless of how many Irish lives will be forfeit.

## Death Sentence

On Tuesday 6 July, 22-year-old John Mathews, a Liverpool-born Irishman, was cleared of causing an IRA explosion in London. John was arrested 10 weeks prior to his acquittal at the home of his 57-year-old aunt, who was also arrested and interrogated for 33 hours after the 3am raid by armed police.

The evidence offered to, and accepted by, the court against John Mathews consisted of a controversial identity parade and a claim that traces of explosives were found on his hands. It later emerged this forensic evidence involved minute traces of a substance which could be found in articles such as the heart tablets his aunt, with whom he was staying, used.

John Mathews was hardly what one would call a classic republican activist. He lived openly in London, worked under his own name, paid income tax through PAYE, paid his national insurance contributions and had a bank account.

Letters of character were sent to the court on John's behalf by Cardinal Cahal Daley and SDLP leader, John Hume, in addition to one written to John Hume by an RUC spokesperson saying that John Mathews had never been arrested or suspected of having any links to republican paramilitaries.

John Mathew's acquittal of the Downing Street bomb was not allowed to be seen as another Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, Judith Ward type of affair outside the court. John would not be allowed to stroll jubilantly out of the court to vent his anger on the British police, British court system or British establishment. Instead he was rearrested, taken to the high-security Paddington Green Police Station in the back of an armoured van and held there until Home Secretary Michael Howard signed an exclusion order banning him from Great Britain.

Michael Howard said that he believed John Mathews was mixed up with IRA terrorism and therefore would be excluded. When pressed as to the evidence to substantiate the accusation he said his evidence would not be admissible in court. Perhaps he's just a believer in the old adage: there's no smoke without fire. There are quite a few people in the Six Counties who are believers of that adage and many nationalist people have been murdered by loyalist death squads on less of an insinuation. Michael Howard, with his unsubstantiated finger-pointing has effectively pinned a target on John Mathew's back and knowingly, or unknowingly, given loyalists the go-ahead to murder an innocent man.

# THE BLUEPRINT SYNDROME?

In the last Red Action (65) an article by F Gordon has a section that implies that Marx was opposed to the idea of a workers' party having a definite programme. This is supported with quotations from Marx's writings on the International Working Mens Association. We [Red Action Glasgow] feel that this is only a partial presentation of Marx's views on programmes, and that if we look at some of his other writings both before and after the formation of the IWMA a rather different picture emerges.

## EXAMPLE OF THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO:

"...the first step in the revolution by the working Class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees all capital from the bourgeoisie to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible. Of course, in the beginning this cannot be effected by means of despotic inroads on the right of property and the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, by which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads into the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production. These measures will of course be different in different countries. Nevertheless, in the most advanced countries the following will be pretty generally applicable..."

This quote from the Communist Manifesto shows that Marx places the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat at the head of the programme of the workers' party. And that very clearly he proposes the ten-point programme contained in the Communist Manifesto as internationally applicable. Marx's ten points clearly go beyond Gordon's assertion in RA 65 that Marx laid the emphasis "on immediate aims and practical activism".

## EXAMPLE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

As a result of the defeat of the revolutions of 1848 the revolutionary workers movement disintegrated, with activists fleeing to America and Britain. By November 1852, Marx had reached the conclusion that there was no point in the Communist League continuing, and he proposed that it should be wound up. When a new workers' movement emerged in the 1860s it was under the influence of bourgeois ideology and pre-marxist utopian socialism. But due to Marx's theoretical and practical activities his ideas were already gaining an international reputation. The unifying principles were not as Gordon states solely around common practical objectives. It is clear that the International drew extensively from Marx's economic writings in its programme on factory legislation, the combination of child labour with education, cooperatives, the replacement of indirect taxes with income tax, and the future trades union movement. This is a programme, a limited one admittedly, but these limitations were imposed by the reactionary times. Nevertheless, it was drawn upon by the drafters of other programmes.

## EXAMPLE OF THE PROGRAMMES OF CLASSICAL SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

This is illustrated by the way that when new workers' parties were formed in the 1870s, they drew extensively from the 10 point programme of the Manifesto and the Rules of the International. When Marx had cause to make criticisms of the programme adopted at the Gotha Congress of the German Workers Party, he did not attack the idea of a programme nor did he criticise it for being insufficiently practical and immediate. He attacked it for lack of theoretical rigor, imprecise and meaningless phrases and concessions to bourgeois ideas. He repeatedly criticises it where it is inaccurate in its repetition of points from the rules of the International or the Manifesto. For instance, on point 5 of the Gotha programme which reads: "the working class strives for its emancipation first of all within the framework of the present day national state, conscious that the necessary result of its efforts which are common to the workers of all civilised countries will be the international brotherhood of peoples."

Marx criticises the national chauvinism of this formulation, and twice cites the programme of the Manifesto and once the work of the International. Repeatedly in his criticisms of the Gotha programme, he counterposes the Manifesto. Whilst it is true that as Gordon states neither Marx nor the International dictated to the class on programmatic matters, it would be untrue to suggest that Marx himself did not engage in polemical exchanges in order to try and persuade sections of the International working class to adopt the points of the Manifesto and the Rules of the International.

## A PROGRAMME FOR RED ACTION? (F. GORDON REPLY)

How does this relate to the situation of RA? It doesn't mean of course that there isn't a need for analysis and debate concerning the situation, history and prospects of the class, its direction, interests and strategy. Numerical dominance in a society, even in a bourgeois democratic republic, does not guarantee political dominance or independence. Not every apparent tendency or movement within the class is a 'real' class tendency or movement. Not every tactic or strategy has a true class content or is truly in the interests of the class. Debates both within and between socialist organisations are indispensable in deciding these questions. The 'programme of principle' contained in the Manifesto has long been superseded in both content and form, but the class analysis and political philosophy it contains endures as brightly as ever. The RA paper carries analytical/theoretical articles, but has never attempted to formulate them into a 'programme of principles'.

The instinct behind this practice is correct. To formulate its own 'programme' would imply that RA is offering, in the style of Militant or the SWP, to act on behalf of the class: these are our proposals, vote for us/build the party, and we will implement them for you. On the contrary, RA has always stood for the self emancipation of the class. RA does not ask the masses to flock to its own sectarian banner; it puts its banner behind the 'real movement of the class' in whatever sphere it exists. From the point in history that sections of the international working class consciously form their own political organisations and movements, and thus represent an independent social force, the demand for a consistently democratic workers' state - the dictatorship of the proletariat - overrides all other partial programmes. As Marx put it in 1871:

"From the moment the working men's class movement became real, the fantastic utopias evaporated..."

We have seen that Marx himself calls a quasi-legislative list such as the Gotha programme, "a programme of principles". He opposes it to "an agreement for action against the common enemy" or "an organisational plan for common action" or more simply still, "a programme of action". Marx is right in treating the two as fundamentally distinct. What is the difference? The programme of principles is designed to unite all those belonging to a particular ideological tendency to join together for a common purpose, and to exclude those of other tendencies - even other class tendencies. The programme of action, on the contrary is designed around a specific objective and seeks to unite all tendencies within the class in common action to achieve that objective, despite differences of principle.

As part of its opposition to "programmes of principle", RA has consistently supported "programmes of action". AFA is the most prominent example: what is AFA's programme if not a 'programme of action' - i.e. physical and ideological confrontation. Considerable energy has been expended by RA AFA delegates in opposing the proposals of sundry 'revolutionary' malingers who have sought to introduce a 'programme of principle' into the AFA arena. Similarly, RA has consistently sought to build an Irish Solidarity movement around a programme of action irrespective of the principled programmes and demands of sectarians. The industrial 'Solidarity Network' followed a similar path during its short existence. No-one thought of issuing, in either case, a programme of principles to be adopted and acted on by 'the workers'. In both cases, support was on offer to the existing revolutionary/progressive movement amongst the class. Even RA's statement in the "We are RA" column is not an attempt to sketch a programme in a 'what is to be done' style; it is a simple distillation of RA's practice and theory to date. It is analytical, not prescriptive. The mainspring of all revolutionary activity, including RA's, must be to convert the existing political consciousness and

independence of sections of the class, into the political independence of the class as a whole.

Compare the 'programmes of principle' of the conservative left. Instead of participating in the activities of working class elements in direct action against the fascists, groups such as Workers Power or Militant call for 'workers self defence groups' or for 'trade union intervention'. Both are the ideological figments of groups seeking to impose their petty bourgeois visions on reality. Everyone knows that workers are not, in present conditions, going to organise factory 'defence groups' against the fascists, and that trade union bureaucrats will never organise interventions against the BNP. But in the eyes of the groups concerned, this does not affect the 'correctness' of the programme.

Examples of these prescriptions for a "ready made utopia" could be multiplied. The SWP calls for the IRA to disband and for catholic/protestant worker alliances to throw the Brits out. Everyone knows that this is not going to happen, and that there is not the slightest chance of it happening. But this does not mean that the programme is incorrect. The programme is always correct, it has been ideologically fine tuned by experts. The workers of course don't follow the programme, but its still the right programme. In response to the closure of the pits, virtually the whole of the left calls for a 'General Strike'. Everybody knows that there isn't the slightest chance of a General Strike, and there hasn't been any chance of it when the SWP etc. has called for one a dozen times before. But in the utopian visions of the left, this doesn't affect the correctness of the call.

The conservative/reformist left is stuck in this 'blueprint syndrome'. The blueprint is perfect; reality is at fault. What enables the left to carry on this game, is the conscious division of revolutionary labour between the mental labour of leading and directing the revolution, which is the prerogative of the party, and the manual labour of revolutionary practice, which is the prerogative of the working masses. It is this 'mind/body' split, translated from, and back into the realm of social forces, that creates the total absence of co-ordination between the party programme, and the action of the class. Locked up in its own sphere of blueprint-forming, programme-building, utopia-devising 'mental' labour, the left not surprisingly, has completely lost the ability to transform its messages into the 'manual' activity of the class. It has even lost the power to perceive that this is the cause of its own paralysis. Fundamentally, this is because the conservative left is predominantly composed of petty bourgeois elements. The 'mind/body', mental/manual split is ultimately only a reflection of a class split. RA's role in life then, is not to devise a recipe for revolution, or dictate or even to 'blueprint' a course of action to or on behalf of the 'workers', or still worse, the 'masses'. It is to analyse the forms and course of class conflict, and to offer effective solidarity in relation to those elements of the class where the conflict is sharpest and most abrasive. Marx warns against working class movements,

"being forced to accept as dogmas ideas which may have made some sense at a particular time but which are now only a load of obsolete verbal rubbish...the realistic outlook instilled in our party at the cost of immense effort, but now firmly rooted in it, is to be perverted by means of ideological, legal and other humbug so common amongst the [petty bourgeois] democrats..."

RA, almost exclusively on the left, is an organisation of working class people. It doesn't need a 'programme' because RA is not offering to carry out a programme on anyone's behalf. Or if some people find being 'programmeless' insupportable, it could be said that RA's 'programme' is precisely the unconditional extension of democracy to the class of which it is a part. But this is not a 'programme of principle' or even part of one, since the majority will of the working people expressed through the institutions of direct democracy (soviets, workers councils etc.) supersedes all programmes. It is a 'programme' which when implemented, immediately dissolves itself. The will of working people in this sense is not responsible to anyone or anything beyond itself; it cannot therefore 'owe' anyone the fulfilment of a programme.

Hacks from the Leninist/Trotskyite traditions will call this 'tailing' the class; an option which is available to them because they are not themselves a part of the class. 'Tailing' something is only possible if you are not a part of it. For the vanguards and their hangers on for whom 'being in the lead' defines their revolutionary vocation, mere following is automatically a sin. For all those who genuinely believe in the self emancipation of the class, following the lead of working people need not be a crime. The petty bourgeois intellectual Marx for example, was 'tailing' the class when he joined the International, and when he recognised, after the fact, the Paris Commune as the 'newly discovered form' of the class rule of the proletariat. This rejection of the traditional 'programmatic' function of the left is bound to seem very 'unleftish'. But doesn't that reflect exactly what RA has been in the process of discovering for the past few years, i.e. that it is totally different from virtually every other group on the left?

## 80th Anniversary of the 1913 Lockout

The 1913 Commemoration Committee has recently been established in Dublin to mark the 80th Anniversary of the 1913 Lockout, the general strike for unionisation rights led by Jim Larkin and James Connolly, which lasted for 6 months and laid the basis for later growth of the trade union movement.

The 1913 Lockout was, and is, important because it was the first major class confrontation in Dublin when unskilled workers fought for union rights that had already been won by British workers. The Dublin employers and nationalist politicians fought savagely to defeat "Larkinism", attempting to starve the strikers into submission. The tactic of the sympathetic strike was widely used and the Irish Citizen Army was set up as an armed workers' defence force to protect strikers against scab and police attacks.

The Irish Transport And General Workers Union had been founded in 1909 specifically to organise unskilled workers and its membership soon ran to tens of thousands throughout Ireland. The ITGWU was led by Jim Larkin and later by James Connolly. The Lockout started in August 1913 when tram drivers refused to work for their anti union employer William Martin Murphy. They were soon joined by many more industrial workers until up to 25,000 workers throughout Dublin were on strike. 400 employers formed a federation to starve the locked out workers, already suffering grinding poverty and low wages, into submission. The strike eventually ended in early 1914 as strikers were forced by poverty to return to work. However the principle of unionisation was largely conceded as most employers did not impose non union rules on their employees. Connolly later described the Lockout as a 'drawn battle'.

The 1913 Lockout and its importance to the history of the labour movement and the working class has been conveniently forgotten by current trade union leaders.

The 1913 Commemoration Committee was launched on May Day. The Committee has gained the support and sponsorship of a large number of left trade unionists and politicians including Tony Gregory, Joe Costello and Tomas Mc Giolla.

The 1913 Commemoration Committee is working in co-operation with the North Inner City Folklore Project which is planning a pageant to commemorate Larkin's banned meeting in O'Connell St.

# REFORM OR REVOLUTION REVISITED

For generations Trotskyists have proclaimed the concept of the 'General Strike' as the height of radicalism and the basis for revolutionary change. Marx and Engels on the other hand saw the mass strike as either a consequence of revolution or - an alternative to it.

One of the most glaring features of the left in Britain today is its isolation from the class it is supposed to represent. Both in terms of numbers and class composition, the socialist movement has failed to become relevant to large sections of its supposed constituency. Put bluntly, there are large sections of the working class that would never dream of joining the 'revolutionary' left. Amongst these sections are many whose alienation from the capitalist system and state is virtually complete. *Red Action* does not believe that the isolation is due to a 'downturn' or 'lack of confidence' in the class. The isolation is imposed by the ideology and organisation of the left itself.

The failure of the left to attract mass support from within the class stems from what Marx termed 'class instinct': the perception that the conservative left is not representative of working class interests or culture. Behind the rhetoric that appears to reject them, old class derived prejudices and attitudes still operate unchallenged within 'socialist' organisations - resulting in the dilution of revolutionary postures by reformist tactics and orientation. It's a fatal combination. Reformist tactics can never attract the allegiance of working class elements to revolutionary objectives.

## One Phrase - General Strike Now!

We have seen the tactics of the reformists in full cry in recent months. Excited as they had not been for decades, by the 'public sympathy' for the miners, the reformist left had only one phrase on its lips, on its placards, and in its papers: "General Strike". Just to heighten the impression that they are not of this earth, they add: "Now!". It's the basic

knee jerk response of the conservative left. Some groups must be well into their second decade with this particular reflex. Such rituals have no more relevance to the class struggle than rain dances have to thunderstorms.

The reformist tradition stems from the premise that the conditions of revolutionary consciousness would be automatically, that is to say, 'legally', generated by the objective economic conditions of the working class within advanced capitalism. The permanent economic struggle between worker and capitalist in the workplace would constitute an inexorable spiral of political consciousness, activity and organisation which would culminate in the painless expropriation of the capitalists. Guided by the ideological interventions and political authority of a 'vanguard' party organisation, this expropriation would take the form of state socialism. A form of state socialism, moreover, which preserved the essential political relations of bourgeois society.

This tendency was developed into a classic amalgam of economic determinism and political reformism by the socialists of the Second International. For the revisionists, bourgeois parliamentary democracy slipped seamlessly into a workers' parliamentary democracy through the instrument of universal suffrage and the election of radical representatives. In the classic formulation of German revisionist Eduard Bernstein:

*"The administrative body of the visible future can be different from the present day state only in degree."*

The main practical tendency deriving from this legacy has been for the parties of the left to identify revolutionary potential with workplace centred action focused on the economic objectives of the class. This remains the case even when,

as in the recent 'Timex' dispute so highly touted by the left, all the workers are fighting for is the right to work in shitty low paid jobs. The underlying assumption is that workers' victories in the economic struggle, the struggle for a standard of living, are identical with the revolutionary objectives of the class. The role of the workplace, as the site of these economic forces is then transformed from a vital pre-political element within the class struggle, into a self-sufficient revolutionary strategy. This is supposed to be what Marx stood for.

## Fight them in the workplace!

Examples are legion. Faced with fascists on the streets, exponents of this orientation will insist that the correct strategy - the only strategy - is to 'fight them in the workplace'. Faced with the task of constructing an anti-fascist committee, they will insist that the 'key people' to contact are trades union bureaucrats. In their newspaper, they will conclude that,

*"It is the organised working class in the trade union movement that has the force and potential to clear the fascists off our streets."* (Millant 1 May)

To point out that the trade unions have done absolutely bugger all to confront fascism, is for them, a remark in bad taste. Faced with forming an anti-fascist committee, they will circulate invitations to union branches without seeming disturbed or surprised when no one turns up.

The result is that forms of struggle that do not focus primarily on the workplace, such as direct action on the streets against the fascists, or community action against the agents of the Poll Tax, let alone in the form of armed struggle in the north of Ireland, are marginalised instead of being placed where they should be - at the top of the revolutionary movement's agenda.

Marxists rightly orientate themselves primarily towards the proletariat (the 'industrial' working class), which could perhaps be described as the 'core' of the working class in that it is upon this strata that the primary burden of exploitation falls, and on whose collective and socialised identity within the workplace, the prospects of a socialist society

relies. It is the social character of the mode of production that impels and lays the foundation of the social character of appropriation and distribution envisaged under socialism.

Yet it is significant that Marx himself lays no great emphasis on the potential of workplace action and the economic focus it inspires as a specific revolutionary tactic. The arena which forms the economic and political conditions of socialism is therefore not considered to be identical with the arena in which the revolutionary forces operate to enforce the overthrow of capitalism.

In the sections of volume 1 of *Das Capital* for example, dealing with contemporary labour struggles, strikes are always mentioned in the context of limited defensive actions against pay cuts, extension of hours etc. Marx's most common frame of reference for workplace action is as "resistance" against the "encroachments" of the capitalist boss as when he concludes that, "Trades Unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital."

They are the "indispensable means of holding up the spirit of the labouring classes", a form of "guerrilla war between capital and labour". Yet this "guerrilla war", Marx says, is in practice often a "limit" to revolutionary action since it is pursued "instead" of aiming at "the final emancipation of the working class."

For example, in his work on economics directly addressed to members of the working class, 'Wages, Price and Profits', Marx insists, "the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate effect of these everyday struggles...they ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects but not with the causes of those effects...They ought therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerrilla fights incessantly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital"

Elsewhere, he sums up by saying that "the apparent insignificance of the economical results" of workplace disputes is, however, overridden by "their moral and political consequences." That is, they must be regarded as preparing the working class for direct, conscious revolutionary action and organisation.

Engels reinforces this point in a letter criticising the programme of the Lassallean Social Democrats in Germany: he refers to the "organisation of the working class as a class by means of the trade unions." He continues, "this is the real class organisation of the proletariat in which it

wages its daily struggles with capital, in which it trains itself, and which nowadays...can simply no longer be smashed."

Once again, it is noticeable that Engels stresses, not the direct benefits to the workers of such activity or its direct role in the overthrow of capital: but its essential role in "training" the class in the struggle for revolutionary objectives.

Marx provides a general description of how he conceives defensive, or 'trade union' economic action being transformed into definite political offensives:

*"every movement in which the working class as a class confronts the ruling classes and tries to constrain them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt by strikes etc., in a particular factory or even in a particular trade to compel individual capitalists to reduce the working day, is a purely economic movement. On the other hand, the movement to force through an eight hour etc. law is a political movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say a class movement, with the object of enforcing its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general, coercive force."*

The content of the movement may be nominally identical in both cases (the eight hour day); yet the form of the movement, through adopting a conscious class wide basis transforms the struggle from a contest within capitalism into a contest between capitalism and socialism.

This transformation of the basis of the struggle, from particular to general, from factory or industry to class, is one of the keys to the elevation of social antagonisms from reform to revolution. The strike is a weapon directed at individual members of the bourgeoisie and so avoids the revolutionary clash with the bourgeoisie as a class. If this is not understood, it is otherwise surprising to find that Marx is almost dismissive of strike actions in the context of the wider class struggle, except where the individual economic movements coalesce into a general i.e. political form, which effectively transcends their original perspective.

Engels supports and sharpens Marx's opinion. Writing to Eduard Bernstein, in the days before Bernstein took to the revisionist road, he comments: "For a number of years the English working class movement has been hopelessly describing a narrow circle of strikes for higher wages and shorter hours, not however as

an expedient or means of propaganda and organisation, but as the ultimate goal. The Trades Unions even bar all political action on principle and in their charters, thus excluding all participation in any general activity of the working class as a class."

## Strikes are hopeless

He is severely critical of strike action that is not consciously waged against capital, or as part of a general movement of the class. Within the context of its intrinsically defined objectives, such as wages or the length of the working day, it is "hopeless".

In fact, Engels moves a step further in his criticism: such contained actions are, he implies, more or less irrelevant to the wider class struggle:

*"One can therefore speak of a labour movement only in so far as strikes take place here, which, whether they are won or not, do not get the movement one step further. To inflate such strikes - which moreover have often enough been brought about intentionally by the capitalists...strikes in which the working class does not make the slightest headway - into struggles of world importance...can in my opinion, only do harm."*

The impression is that for both Marx and Engels, where the content of the economic struggle is not definitely transcended through adopting the general form of a class struggle against capital, such 'defensive' actions are no more productive than work performed on a treadmill. In Engel's expression, economic actions are "circular". It even appears that limited strike actions, for higher wages or shorter hours as indicated by Engels, actually contribute to the domination of capital since such aims are seen as the "ultimate goal". By assuming the domination of capital and the social relations it entails, revolutionary objectives that seek to achieve the overthrow of capital are excluded.

This line of argument is pursued further by Engels in another letter to Bernstein a few years later. Here, he is concerned with the demand for the "right to work". He analyses its history in France and England and concludes that although it appears "so practical, so non-utopian", it only led to the formation of "nonsensical national workshops" which are no more than "starvation and flogging colonies for the workers". Engels explains:

*"Put forward as a separate demand, the right to work cannot be realised in any other way. One demands that*

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In the mid eighties the WRP held a conference around the slogan, 'Organise a General Strike for Jobs', only prolonged and collective solvent abuse could be responsible for a slogan of such political imbecility.

