

IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY

an

comhchéachta



THE STARRY PLOUGH

NO 2

IRELAND

30p

BRITAIN 40p



Palestinian

Uprising

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Marxism

and

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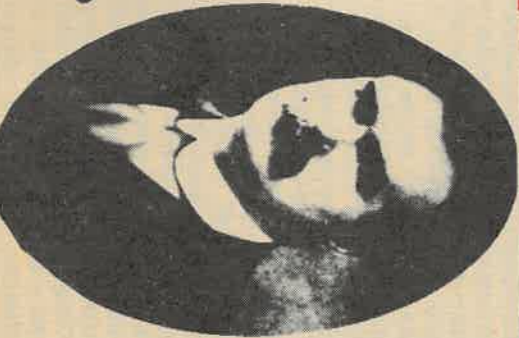
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STARRY PLOUGH EDITORIAL



1988 sees the 20th Anniversary of the birth of the Civil Rights Movement in the occupied six counties of Ireland. On October 5th 1968, 500 people took to the streets demanding the right to vote and an end to discrimination in housing and jobs. These were met by all the power and forces of the State determined to brutally smash the infant movement before it developed. Pacifism was beaten off the streets that day in Derry.

Given the nature of the Northern Ireland State created by imperialism to divide and subjugate the Irish nation as a whole, the simple demand for one person, one vote was a revolutionary demand and shook the very foundation of the imperialist created state.

The Northern State was based on the sectarian division of the working class binding the protestant working class to imperialism by the use of economic bribes and by the creation of a labour aristocracy. Any demand that undermined this was explosive, hence the reaction.

Having failed to baton the Civil Rights Movement off the streets, imperialism planned the ultimate solution, mass murder. On the 30th January, 1972 14 people were slaughtered by the parachute regiment.

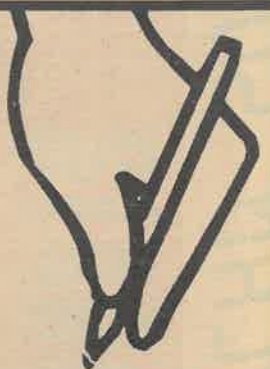
This drew the final line of demarcation between those who had illusions of reforming the 6 County State and those who believed that it was irreformable. It is a modern day tragedy that physical force republicanism had already grasped this fact long before the left as it existed at that time. This ensured that the leadership of the national liberation struggle from the early 70's onwards was firmly in the hands of petit-bourgeois republicanism.

During the last 20 years, the basic nature of the six counties has not changed. British imperialism still tries and maintains a sectarian division in the working class (hence their fanatical opposition to the McBride principles). Minor reforms have been won but the real gains have been among the working class nationalist population who will never accept an Orange Unionist state as it existed pre 1968. It is only an occupying army that enforces the status quo which has kept the northern state intact.

The national liberation struggle as we have stated many times before is at an impasse. Unable to mobilise the social forces necessary to go forward its floundering. Signs such as the emergence of the Communist League in the H Blocks shows that there is a basic desire to rethink the strategy of the last twenty years.

The I.R.S.P. believes that only a revolutionary party can guide and lead the struggle for national liberation and socialism. It is only by harnessing the power of the working class North and South can there be any hope for a social revolution in Ireland.

At this time, with the establishment of the anti-extradition committees and the series of planned debates around the "20th Anniversary" raises the question of the long term effects of single issue campaigns. In the past these campaigns have come and gone whilst not raising the consciousness of the working class one iota. The I.R.S.P., while participating in these campaigns sees the vital necessity for an all encompassing anti-imperialist front. Imperialism has shown unity of purpose in attempting to crush anti-imperialist and proletarian struggles on a worldwide basis. In order to combat this, it is important that the anti-imperialist forces forge the same unity of purpose.



Broad Front

A Chara,
In light of the recent savage health cuts in the Free State and that government's bankrupt class biased economic policy, the importance of the class struggle is again most relevant. Only through a Broad Front of genuine socialist and anti-imperialist forces can the class struggle be tackled in Ireland, or as Lenin says "We must draw the line of demarcation and unite". This struggle must be a multipronged one and encompass every aspect of capitalist oppression, be it the national question, unemployment, state oppression of minorities for eg. gays, foreign nationals etc. The important thing is that each aspect of the struggle must be pursued with equal vigour and involve constant agitation and propagation to raise the level of awareness among the people.

For too long has the national question been placed to the fore to the detriment of all other parts of the struggle. The struggle is only as strong as its weakest link and to surge forward while neglecting this link will lead to a break in the overall chain of revolution.

This does not mean that the struggle against British occupation is not important only that it is of equal importance to any other aspects of the struggle. To quote Seamus Costello "Along with the national question there exists many strands to the anti-imperialist struggle, to hold the national question above all other issues is to isolate the people and result in inevitable defeat".

Only through a heightened social awareness among the people can every aspect of British occupation (be it colonial or neo-colonial) be defeated. The maximum effect of the military confrontation of the Brit occupation forces can only be achieved within the confines of an evenly progressive class struggle. This view may seem an over simplification and to lack the intricacies of tactics and strategy, however only by going back and defining the basics of what to be done can we surge forward confident of a solid foundation on which to build a lasting revolution in this final phase of our struggle.

Do chara
Dermot Kearney
Republican Socialist POW

Leisure Centres

Dear Editor,
Privatisation is the term the British Administration apply to their policy of "Profit out of people's needs". We are supposed to live in what appears to be a democratic system, yet we do not govern ourselves. An elite few decide how we are to be educated and if we are to live in good or bad health. If this is not bad enough, our "Freedom of Choice" system is going to dictate how we spend our leisure times.

One of the central aims of the British Government is a fundamental re-structuring of leisure and sports creating a two tier system of private and public services. Their aims could take shape from the 1st April 1988, with the introduction of the Local Government Bill. Belfast Leisure Services plan to hand over our Leisure Centres to private

Letters

contractors, to take the Service out of the hands of the workers, not only as employees but as users. This will be of no benefit to anyone but the elite of the North, thus adding more to the deprivation that already exists.

In May, 1969, a Belfast Urban Plan recommended that Leisure Centres should be built in Belfast. However it was not until the arrival of direct rule did any such planning for the service be put forward. In March 1977 the "areas of special needs" report highlighted the massive sale of the social, economic and physical deprivation which exists in parts of Belfast. District Councils then recommended the Recreation and Youth Service (NY) Order - 1973. Under this order, District Councils have to secure for these areas the provision of adequate facilities for recreational, social, physical and cultural activities. The Department of Education was also committed to place 100% capital project grants in areas of great need and 75% grants in other areas. The British administration do not hand over money to schemes like these unless it can be specifically proven to the world that there is a case of extreme deprivation.

Despite gaining more jobs, better working conditions etc in the Leisure Service over the past ten years, the Trade Union Movement has not gained any real control over the running or the quality of the service. The Trade Unions at present can see that the Department of Leisure Services have a relatively clear vision of what they are aiming for, ie cuts in jobs, wages, revision of all contracts. The big push towards privatisation hasn't just appeared - it has occurred before in catering and has been fought and can be fought again.

In the Leisure Services outright are pinning all their hopes on the Alternative Economic Strategy (A.E.S.). This A.E.S. was introduced by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. This strategy mentions little on public services and does not even include Leisure Services at all. The strategy they are dependent on calls for State and Foreign intervention.

A taste of privatisation is already coming into form at a Belfast Leisure Centre. It will not be 'publicly' called privatised but it has all the inclinations towards the private sector. The centre in question is situated between two areas of deprivation with high unemployment levels. The centre has just introduced a Hi-Tech Fitness Suite at a very high cost. There was supposedly a survey done to justify the need for a Hi-Tech Fitness Suite. The results of the survey are not fully known, (nor was the survey I hasten to add) but one point which I feel is of strong significance was the cost per half

hour sessions. The people who were privileged enough to answer the questionnaire found the price to be of an acceptable level which is currently three times the price of a concessionary day ticket for the unemployed. This is surely a blatant class discrimination, the first step towards phasing out special concessions for the unemployed, old age pensioners and disabled.

In May 1986 Connolly agreed and eventually put forward a ten point programme on workers control. It is this view we must always bear in mind in our campaign to save the Belfast Leisure Services from the clutches of privatisation. In the twenty six local authorities in the North of Ireland there will be little or no opportunity for Trade Unions to be formally involved. Therefore propose Trade Unions wake up to these facts and scrap the Alternative Economic Strategy and adopt the proposal of the following seven point strategy consisting of:

- (1) Developing alternative ideas and demands to improve services.
- (2) Education and propaganda.
- (3) Building stronger work place, organisations and making links with workers in other places.
- (4) Developing joint action and user committees.
- (5) Tactical use of industrial action and negotiating machinery.
- (6) Direct action by workers and users.
- (7) Counter offensive against contractors in public services.

Only through unity can strength be achieved and only through strong organisations can their voice be heard. The people in the North of Ireland are not fooled by privatisation, but they need to be advised on what action to take. Today more than ever before, Trade Unions in Ireland must come to realise that they are political, all aspects of economics or social life here are political. I feel the Trade Unions must come towards Socialist Politics so as not to isolate them from their role as representatives of the working class. We are told Leisure Centres belong to us, but they may belong to us, but they are governed not by the elected representative or indeed by any section of the working class, but by the "Capital" class who pull the puppet strings of the Northern Ireland Office.

J. TORNEY (A.T.G.W.U.)

Unemployed Action

A Chara
Loss of self-respect, despair, feeling of uselessness, alcoholism, gambling, marital breakdown, are just some of the symptoms that any person who is unemployed will recognise.

The impotency felt by unemployed people is understandable, the economic catastrophe

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Letters cont.

created by Thatcherism and its "get on your bike" policy on unemployment is not very relevant if you can not afford a bike in the first place. The British Government have created mass unemployment on a scale not seen since the 1930's. In the occupied six countries this mass unemployment has been inflicted especially in nationalist areas with a savagery unsurpassed, unemployment figures of 70% to 80% are the norm rather than the exception in places like Ballymurphy, Divis and Bogside.

In creating such a large mass of people the British government has made a fourth class, the unemployed! No longer are we a small ineffectual group, but a strong force!

The unemployed must do as any oppressed group of people do, that is organise themselves into a strong and vibrant pressure group to expose the imperialist politics that have left them stripped of dignity. This loss of dignity is every bit as bad as crime against the people as strip searching, shoot to kill, internment, rubber bullets and the Diplock courts and the root problem of capitalism should be addressed by the people with the same vigour.

Unemployed people in many areas have organised themselves into action groups, one such example is Rathenraw in Antrim.

Rathenraw is an estate of nearly 500 houses and flats with a population of approximately 2,500 of which 90% are nationalist. It is situated on the outskirts of Antrim Town and was built in the early 1970's in response to the development of Antrim as a "New Town". In that period the town grew from a population of just 3,000 to the 36,000 figure of today.

In the earlier period this influx of population found work in the many multi-national companies who set up in the area, but when the multi-nationals due to the economic recession, and having exploited the area and the people, packed up and left with a corresponding exodus of people from the area and a soaring unemployment rate.

The Rathenraw Estate suffered greatly in this process with nearly 10% of the housing being left unoccupied and a rising unemployment problem and a realisation among those left that the Estate lacked many facilities while containing housing of a

reasonably high quality.

Vandalism has become a problem and the area has become stigmatised, there are high levels of poverty and debt in the area and isolation through the lack of public transport facilities into Antrim Town Centre.

The Rathenraw Unemployment Group was set up in early 1987 by a group of unemployed people who felt that unemployed people when motivated had a valuable and constructive role to play in the community - they were people who were tired of being stigmatised as a burden on the society they lived in. The group has presently 60 members most of them male though they have been actively seeking to redress that imbalance through work with local single parents, creche work and childrens art and craft classes.

The Group operates entirely on a voluntary basis, has no paid workers or a regular source of income. It has managed to get premises outside the community in an old barn which they have been renovating slowly though it is still in need of many repairs and it is here that they hold meetings, events and classes, whilst any premises are welcome the groups at present in negotiations with the NIHE to get a house in the estate. The aims and objectives of the group are presently directed in three areas: Firstly to develop educational and recreational programmes for the unemployed of the area. Secondly, to develop strategies for a local co-operative in the estate with the aim of creating real employment. Thirdly, to act as an advice and pressure group for the unemployed.

The current programmes the Group are involved in are a) refurbishing and renovating our premises. This includes the construction of a coffee bar/meeting area in the centre as well as space for classes etc. b) the development of networks with other groups and agencies working in the area of unemployment c) the development of a programme of classes in the centre d) researching the possibilities and potential for the setting up of a local co-operative. e) developing an advice centre for local unemployed people.

Unemployed Youth

Letters Welcome

If you have any comments, questions or you want to reply to any of these letters. Please write to the Editor, *Starry Plough*, 392 Falls Road, Belfast 12, Ireland.

Meats

For the past few months workers at the **United Meats Plant** in Lurgan have been on strike against what they view as management's attempts to back track on agreements made between them in settlement of an earlier dispute over better conditions, more pay and bonus payments.

The workers were forced on strike when management in a blatant attack, disregarded their earlier agreements and offered an increase in pay of 3%, a princely sum. Not surprising the workforce refused it and remained solid apart from one token scab.

On Friday the 16th December, the workers of **United Meats Plant** held a meeting to vote on their union recommendation to return to work. The management had offered a £2.40 increase in wages. The strikers had been seeking £10.00 increase.

At the meeting, with only half of the 100 strong work force present. The resulting vote, 30 to 21 in favour of the union recommendation was greeted by anger and disbelief among young strikers who after 14 weeks on strike felt let down by their union.

The Lurgan/Craigavon/Port-

reasonably high quality.

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Dispute

adown areas has a number of so-called industrial estates with numerous small factories, the majority of which have no union at all or at least an ineffective one. Indeed it isn't unheard of for those attempting to join or form a union to be summarily sacked and in the recent Denny meat factory takeover the bosses forced the workers to accept less pay, longer hours and shorter holidays threatening to withdraw from the deal unless the workers agreed.

The bosses at **United Meats** have also attempted this ploy without effect but in an area with such chronic unemployment, recruitment of scab labour could not be ruled out in the future. But the problem cannot be seen in isolation to one plant; workers in these industrial estates must stand together. Where there is no union, organise one, where there is, attack and defend above all don't scab.

It is clear that the trade union leadership will always sell-out the working class, Trade Unions are not revolutionary organisations and workers should be under no illusion that they are. However, the Unions should be pressurised at all time to conform and to serve the interests of their rank and file.

FIGHT THE HEALTH CUTS



WOMEN

Harsh cuts in health, education and social welfare have worsened the situation of most women in Ireland and put Women's groups and organisations in crisis.

The Council for the Status of Women stated in a letter of protest to the Taoiseach, that the Government funding for Women's affairs, which has been slashed by 25% now puts women's affairs on a par with 'stray dogs' and 'cats' homes, the prison laundry service and censorship of films and books.

In order to press its case the Council has sought a meeting with An Taoiseach and complained formally to the EEC Commission at the Government's failure to honour the commitments it undertook in the EEC action programme on equal opportunities.

In the meantime however, the current cuts are having a devastating effect across the broad spectrum of Irish Society, with women, especially in the lower paid brackets, paying as usual, the hardest-brunt of these cuts.

Listed here is a brief outline of the health cuts to date:

- Hospital beds have been closed, not including the 500 beds in St. James' Hospital and 92 beds in Dr. Stevens Hospital. The axe is falling most heavily on the acute medical & Surgical sector.
- In the Southern Health Board region cost cutting programmes have closed four hospitals, with another due to close shortly.
- In the Mid-Western Health Board area, the Board has abandoned its plan to re-open some of its recently closed acute hospital beds and has decided to further close another hospital.

- National public units have been severely affected. The main public cardiac surgical unit at the Mater Hospital has had its bed quota reduced by one third, leaving only 27 beds to meet the national demand for heart operations. It is estimated (according to the Irish Medical Times) that 600-650 operations will take place this year compared with 1,000 in 1986.

- The National Children's Cardiac Unit at Crumlin Hospital has lost one quarter of its beds. Total operation time has been reduced to fifteen and a half hours per week and one of these complex operations takes between

four to five hours. Children born with congenital heart disease can die while waiting for an operation.

- The National Burns Unit in Dr. Stevens' Hospital faces closure thus another Stardust type disaster would be a catastrophe where no treatment would be immediately available.
- The National Haemophilia Treatment Centre, which deals with haemophiliacs, monitors bleeds and looks after AIDS patients also faces closure.

It is however, in the area of community and preventative medicine that these cuts affect women more directly. St. Luke's Hospital, which holds one of the main laboratories for testing cervical smears is no longer taking routine smears, and local health centres have abolished cervical smear and breast cancer tests.

The "walk-in" breast and smear

Fighting Fund

The republication of **An Camchéachta** (The Starry Plough) has from initial reports been met with a positive response. This is good to know.

It is hoped that **An Camchéachta** can become the Iskra of Ireland and help build the revolutionary party which is essential to the success of the struggle for socialism in Ireland. We realise at this time that **An Camchéachta** is not of the same calibre as **Iskra** but it is a step in that direction. To change an essentially Republican paper to a vanguard paper does not happen overnight.

In Ireland today there is a barrenness of political theory, a complete lack of direction and leadership which is reflected in the low ebb of the struggle at this time. We hope that **An Camchéachta** will fill this void

by stimulating debate and fierce polemic.

The importance which we, as revolutionaries, attach to the up-keep and survival of **An Camchéachta** must be recognised. However, papers do not produce themselves out of thin air, furthermore no left-wing publication runs at a profit. Therefore in order to ensure that **An Camchéachta** can continue to appear regularly every month, a monthly fund of £600 needs to be realised, comrades. We need you to send in regular donations. Help maintain the raised banner of revolutionary **Send whatever you can to:**

An Camchéachta Fighting Fund, 392 Falls Road, Belfast 12.

THE I.R.S.P.

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PRISONERS

WHOSE DEMOCRACY?

To properly understand and assess any social phenomenon, event, accepted attitude etc. it is important to examine its class content and to ascertain which class gave rise to it and whose interests it ultimately serves. Thus, when we speak of 'freedom', we must define exactly what we mean by it and examine it from our own working class perspective: an essential part of the Marxist system of thought and analysis.

The socio-economic system we live with at present is often termed "Western Pluralist Democracy". The mass media etc. portrays "Western Pluralist Democracies" as the sole guarantors and defenders of freedom. Repeated references to the "Free World" illustrate this! But how much credence can we give to this claim? The mere absence of external restraints does not, in itself, constitute or guarantee freedom.

Elections

As a rule, Western "Democracies" are based on the capitalist system of production, and, usually, derive their 'legitimacy' from the electoral system. This electoral system itself raises questions about genuine democracy, in that, a Party may be elected to public office by gaining a greater share of the vote over other competing parties, and yet the majority of the electorate may have (taken as a whole) voted for alternative Parties and policies from that of the incoming government. After the elections the 'representatives' thus elected, invariably proceed to renege on the promises and pledges given in their election manifestos, after all, they aren't usually subject to immediate recall by their electorate. They rarely consult the electorate when instituting new policies, etc. even when these policies are sure to have a profound effect on the people. Instead they see their 'electoral mandate' as a mandate, not to 'represent' the electorate, but to think for them, thus projecting ignorance on them, and in effect, de-barring them from the democratic process.

All this is largely academic, however, since the real essence of the issue is class rule and relations of productions and property. "The class that rules economically, also rule politically." In the words of V.I. Lenin, "To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people in Parliament - such is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentary - constitutional monarchism, not only in the most democratic republics" (State and Revolution).

Political parties and individual MPs may well be subject to eventual recall, but not so the whole system of production, distribution and exchange around which society is based, nor indeed the whole state machinery and institutions (military, police, judiciary etc) whose role it is to secure and defend the interests of the ruling class. The electoral system is simply to give a semblance of legitimacy to a government and state which then act as the guarantor of capitalism and will readily jettison democratic processes if the capitalist system is perceived to be 'under threat' from the working class movement and working class politics, as Lenin recognised "A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital

has grasped this very best shell it establishes its power so securely, so surely, that no change, either of persons, of institutions, or of parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake this power." So much for pluralist democracy!

'Rights'

The capitalist system itself is built on inequality and class divisions. It is based on the false promise that people are by nature self-seeking and keen to exploit others. Fly-by-night entrepreneurs and self-profiteers are encouraged to make the largest possible profits in the dubious 'logic' that some of this will 'rub off' on society and that everyone will benefit through the creation of jobs, re-investment etc and that the "right of the individual to free enterprise and competition" will be protected.

What this really amounts to, when deciphered, is the right of a privileged minority to 'freely' exploit the majority. The much vaunted 'freedom of the individual' therefore means simply that they are 'free' to accept the terms of their employer - or starve! They are free to sell their labour power to the employer for a fraction of its real worth, the remaining "surplus value" going into the coffers of the employer, thus increasing his/her wealth and material advantage and adding to the workers' own alienation. This is the essence of 'wage-slavery' and is hardly conducive of freedom in the broader social context.

This situation brings another 'freedom' under question: dependence. Security of employment of course is non-existent, workers in class-based capitalist society are largely dependent on wages obtained from 'private' employers to provide for themselves and their dependents with the necessities of life. Hence, a worker in constant fear of losing his/her job cannot be said to be free in any true sense. They are, in fact, being held to ransom by a parasitic class who themselves do not toil.

When a dependency such as this is created it matters little whether or not workers have the 'right' to buy and sell as they please, the 'freedom' to travel abroad on holiday etc, if they are barely able to obtain food, clothing, shelter, health care etc. Even petty bourgeois reformers recognise this fact, as is illustrated by the words of the late Martin Luther King (Jr) when addressing the issue of the integration of 'blacks' and 'whites' in American society: "Of what advantage is it to the negro to establish that he can be served in integrated restaurants or accommodated in integrated hotels, if he is bound to the kind of financial servitude which will not allow him to take a vacation, or even take his wife out to dinner? What will it profit him to be able to send his children to an integrated school if the family income is insufficient to buy them school clothes?" In short, we may ask: of what use is it to have 'rights', if you are not realistically able to fully exercise those rights?

How is this economic dependence created and maintained? Briefly, it is created by the means of production, distribution and exchange being appropriated by an exploiting minority to the detriment of the majority. As to its maintenance, this is achieved through the use of

the state and its institutions (judiciary, police, military, civil services etc.) who are the active agents of the bourgeoisie.

Unemployment

The economic dependency of the working class is also largely maintained through the creation by capitalism, within the working class, of yet another oppressed section of the working class: the unemployed, or "reserve army of labour". The economic hardship (and social stigma) of unemployment, entails the abrogation of a number of rights; the right to security of employment; the right to be able to provide adequately for oneself and one's family; and the right to constructive input and contribution to one's society.

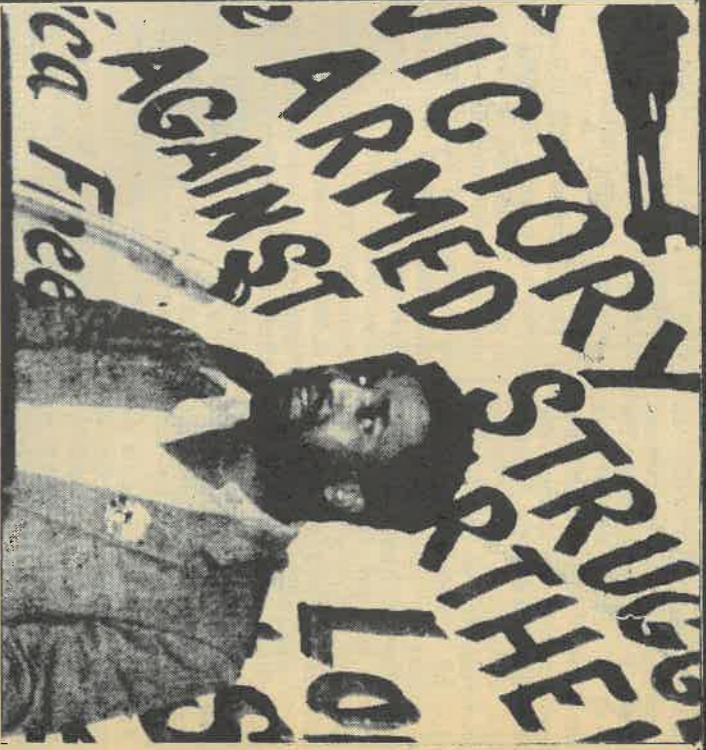
Unemployment is endemic in capitalist society due to the anarchic and chaotic nature of capitalist production and the uneven economic development engendered by monopoly capitalism. The capitalists' primary concern is profits and the accumulation of more capital, so any fall in profits, for whatever reason, means that workers will be "laid off" since the capitalists will not accept the loss of profits to tighten whatever remains of their belts while the capitalists continue to count their profits. The threat of dismissal is then used to freeze or even reduce the remaining workers wages and wage demands.

Another use of unemployment is to nullify any attempts at working class unity through the use of strike-breakers, 'blacklegs', etc. who would rather under cut their fellow workers than stand with them in pursuance of their commonly held class interests. Hence, we can see that the injustice of unemployment and the creation of the "reserve army labour" is essential to capital's accumulation and indispensable for the development and perpetuation of capitalist relations of production.

'Equality'

We hear much of "equality of opportunity" but this equality is also being largely denied. The capitalist/state controlled media emphasises the occasional "rags-to-riches" stories of those in the working class who have, through merit, climbed the 'ladder of success' - to instil in people a misplaced faith in 'the system'. Thus we have the phenomenon of the 'upwardly mobile' white-collar/salaried workers shoring up and defending the capitalist system and ideology to the detriment of their own real class interests. Indeed, through ability (and luck) the individual worker can become wealthy, but the ability of the workers, as a class, to do likewise is impossible without the complete dismantling of the class system itself.

The child of a wealthy capitalist has obvious advantages over the child of a labourer by having ready access to the very best of food, healthcare, education, job opportunities and choices etc. whereas the labourer's son/daughter has to make do with what is available or affordable. If, even with these disadvantages, the abilities of the labourer's child is still equal to the child of the capitalist, the balance is tipped in favour of the latter as a result of "inherited wealth." 'family connections,' 'social status' etc. In this respect we can say that capitalism and its attendant inequalities are self-perpetuating



Themba Ntinge, a member of the A.N.C. and Chairperson of its Cultural Boycott Committee was presented with a "Portraoise Hankie" as a gesture of solidarity by Republican Socialist Prisoners of War.

The presentations were made in and the inability of the working class, as a whole, to "rise above their station" is ensured so long as the working class movement remains docile and devoid of principled revolutionary leadership. Clearly, bourgeois notions of 'equality of opportunity' do not stand up to close scrutiny!

Capitalism

Throughout its bloody history capitalism (under the guise of pluralist democracy) has robbed untold millions of the 'freedom' to live in peace with their fellow beings, the freedom from war, indeed, robbed them of life itself. When the stage of monopoly capitalism has been reached it results in crises of over-production. The production of goods outstrips the ability of the 'native' consumers to buy up, or consume, these goods. Capitalism must then find a 'foreign' market for its surplus goods and capital. Access to raw materials necessary for the maintenance of capitalism's vast production complex also presents a problem.

Capitalism's answer to these problems was the creation of "colonies" through the economic and military suppression of other nations - the birth of imperialism! The competition for markets and conflict of interests between imperialist nations and the conflict between oppressor and oppressed within the colonies, results in wars, even war on a global scale (WW1 and WW2). No-one needs to be told of the sheer brutality of war and the legacies it leaves. The waste of human life, the agonies of the maimed and bereaved, the destruction of material resources, the shattering of hopes and dreams! Even in 'justified' wars of liberation everyone is robbed of something, not least of which is their own humanity, unless jealously guarded - war being a brutalising thing! A pertinent question here is: How many 'freedoms' go to the wall during imperialism's many wars?

Marxists see individual freedom as being inextricably linked to the freedom of society as a whole. Since we cannot build a programme of action around each individual, we must of necessity address ourselves to the broader scene while of course remaining conscious of the needs and rights of the individual. Marxists contend that the interests of the working masses are best secured and defended by the establishment of socialism, a system in which the interests of the individual are not seen as separate and distinct from,

or taking precedence over the interests of society in general and where relations of production, distribution and exchange are tied to the needs of the masses and are not the possession of a privileged minority.

Vanguard Party

The question is: how to secure this "dictatorship of the proletariat"? Marx recognised that the bourgeoisie and their institutions of state will not readily hand over their ill-gotten wealth and privileges to the workers but must have it wrested from them by a united working class acting, not only as "a class in itself" but as "a class for itself." However, as Lenin pointed out, the workers' mission is not to "immoralise" themselves as a class, but to liquidate the class distinctions and to build a classless society - communism!

To properly dismantle and replace the existing system and relations of production etc. the working class must be guided by the more advanced section of the workers - the vanguard party. A party having "no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole." A cleverly reformist state may concede certain reforms of the system in order to dupe the working class movement and to make void their demands for its complete dismantling and replacement by socialism. But it is ultimately incapable of resolving its own inherent contradictions and crises. This is where the need for an enlightened vanguard party of the proletariat is highlighted. A party, which by unearthing and emphasising these contradictions etc. can guard the working class movement from confusion and from being side-tracked into 'containable' forms of trade unionism, reactionism, reformist parliamentarianism - and ultimate defeat.

P. McPhillips

One of the functions of the Starry Plough is to encourage debate amongst those involved in the anti-imperialist struggle. We especially welcome contributions from P.O.W.'s and to this end we are leaving a page (more if necessary) open to prisoners, letters, articles, poems etc.

prisoners



PO.W. Social

On Friday, 15th January a very successful social, organised by Red Action, was held in London in aid of Republican Socialist Prisoners. A member of the I.R.S.P. POW Department, Liam O'Loingsigh was invited from Belfast to address the audience.

"It is an honour and a privilege to be invited here tonight to speak to British Socialists on behalf of my imprisoned comrades. I bring you revolutionary greetings and solidarity from Republican Socialist Prisoners in jails throughout Ireland, Britain and France and I bring you their heartfelt thanks for the support and encouragement you have

given to them and to their struggle.

Unfortunately, I stand before you tonight to ask you for even more support and commitment, but I know my pleas will not fall on deaf ears.... Last year we took the decision to ask friends and supporters throughout Europe, America and Canada to help us by forming themselves into groups and undertaking to sponsor a prisoner.

To date this campaign has been responsible for gaining financial aid to help our jailed comrades' families, but we still have over twenty comrades still not receiving the help they so richly deserve.

...I will finish by thanking all the Red Action members for organising tonight's social in aid of our prisoners and I think it only fair to say that Red Action have been instrumental in making the success it has been up to now. They have set up four groups each of which sponsor a prisoner."

The Republican Socialist Movement would like to extend eternal thanks and gratitude to all those people who made the social such a success, to the organisers, to all who attended and gave their support and a special word of thanks to the group 'Folk in Hell' who played free of charge and who made the night very enjoyable and entertaining. On behalf of our jailed comrades and indeed our whole movement, many thanks.



Sir John Hermon



John Stalker



Sir Patrick Mayhew

the stalker farce

In the British House of Commons, 25th January, Patrick Mayhew the British Attorney General made public his decision not to prosecute any members of the RUC on the grounds of the Stalker/Sampson investigation into the shoot-to-kill incidents of November/December 1982 which resulted in the deaths of five unarmed Republican/Republican Socialist activists and one civilian. This was despite his admission that there was evidence "...of the commission of offences of perverting or attempting or conspiring to pervert the course of justice..." Labour MP Ken Livingstone, to his great credit described the decision for what it was - complicity in murder, and was suspended for his pains.

A few days later we had the not unpredictable decision of the British judiciary to turn down the appeal of the Birmingham Six. New evidence was thrown out, old discredited evidence was accepted and the "appalling vista" of mass conspiracy, corruption and perjury on the part of the British "legal process" was avoided.

There is nothing surprising about these decisions. What is

surprising is that so many Irish politicians actually appear to have been surprised. Alan Dukacs was even "astounded" by the Mayhew decision! What did they expect: all through the Shoot-to-kill investigation there was excessive stalling for time, the suspension of Stalker under very suspicious circumstances, the "losing" of the M15 tapes, the acquittals (and praising) of the RUC personnel involved etc.,. Extracts from Stalker's book reveal that Stalker himself saw that right from the very start there was a difference of opinion between Sir John and him over the purpose of his being in Northern Ireland. Before we left the golf club he said to me: 'Remember, Mr. Stalker, you are in a jungle now,' he added.

Stalker believed that he was removed from the investigation following a decision made at Cabinet level. He was removed five days before he was due to question Hermon. There is a possibility that the "King Of The Jungle" could have faced charges of obstructing the course of justice. Under Hermon, Assistant Chief Constable McAtamney was responsible for an investigation

which Stalker suspected was carried out in such a way that the full stories were not made available to the D.P.P. Concerned about the 12 officers holding the rank of Assistant Chief Constable and above, Stalker writes: "I felt I had grounds for belief that some offences might have been committed by one or more of those senior police officers."

Those who are most to the fore in their condemnations of the two decisions are those who hoped for something different. It boils down to a severe kick in the teeth for those who support the Anglo-Irish Agreement and see it as a viable means of solving the "problems" of the 6 counties.

The SDLP in particular have put their shirts on the success of the agreement, part of which (Article 7) dealt with the need to improve relations between the "security forces" and the nationalist community - something the Workers Party also set store by. The blatant disregard by the Brits of this point horrifies these parties not only because of the impossibility of reconciling nationalists with the RUC/UDR but also because their "importance as constitutional parties and "the voices of reason" is

Ex prisoner speaks

The following article is my own first hand account as a recently released Republican Socialist Prisoner of what the Magilligan regime is like for those incarcerated there, and to enlighten readers as to the prisoners daily hardships under the oppressive enforced integration policy.

Firstly Magilligan camp is different in many ways to Long Kesh, but most overlying is that, opposed to the Kesh where segregation exists in each H Block, Magilligan H Blocks have no segregation. The N.I.O. authorities have consistently refused any separation of nationalists and loyalists in Magilligan even though there has been a whole catalogue of disturbances there ranging from bomb explosions and shootings in workshops and blocks, the firebombing of prisoners' cells, scaldings in canteens, and prisoners being physically assaulted by screws and loyalists alike.

These series of incidents by their abundance and ferocity expose the N.I.O.'s slur and fabrication that segregation has been denied to protect prisoners from so called 'brutal paramilitary command structures.'

Although there is usually an attitude of non aggression and peaceful co-existence between both traditions, the inevitable fights occur occasionally and are immediately exploited by the sectarian screws who are all too willing to make the nationalists feel the full brunt of the injustice that will await them in a prison Diplock court.

Controlled movement is also implemented excessively by the screws as a means of subjugation, whereby six men only are allowed on the wing at any time, even two prisoners are forbidden to converse together in a cell during an association period, consequently confrontations take place as prisoners defy this petty harassment.

The root cause of the unrest in Magilligan is that Republican and Loyalist prisoners are accommodated in the same wings together, they both share a dining hall at association periods, though the two groups sit at opposite sides of each other. Association periods can only be described as extremely tense, indeed I reflected in the consideration given to them by the Brits. Being "media darlings" means nothing more than being a tool in the British armory against revolutionary potential. The British might at least take better care of their tools since they are much more useful when looked after and last much longer!

As for the cries of anguish from the twenty six counties resulting in a special sitting of the Anglo-Irish Conference, could there be a few tears of relief at the non-publication of the Stalker/Sampson report? After all wasn't there a danger that the levels of Garda/RUC complicity (not to mention the possible exposition of the extent of British Intelligence penetration of the Garda) would prove extremely embarrassing to say the least.

Haughey has certainly done much sabre-rattling in an attempt to placate the grass roots of Fianna Fail. He has threatened possible serious implications for cross border security, in relation to extradition and rethinking on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The British believe (quite rightly) that the Haughey Government will not reduce the level of Free State commitment to "security" and the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

witnessed myself how relieved some of the men looked when lock up was called.

Another vulnerable place for nationalists is the prison workshops were again loyalists and republican integration is pushed to the fore. This is a 'high risk' area as there is a significant array of heavy tools such as hammers, chisels and other instruments such as iron bars available. "What is there to stop a group of 'ultra right' loyalist bigots from rendering a lone nationalist senseless"? Unfortunately this is not difficult to comprehend when as I mentioned earlier that explosions had taken place in the same workshop and carried out by the very loyalists that nationalists are expected to mix with. "Is this the harmony the N.I.O. claim to be promoting"?

If analysed, the N.I.O.'s statements on prison policy are not only hypocritical when contrasting the Magilligan situation with that of the Kesh, but have been proven as downright lies. What you the oppressed people must know is that this failed regime is but another obstacle for political POW's, another opportunistic form of British imperialist tyranny, their objective has been to eradicate any radical republican socialist aspirations the men may have, to 'grind' them down so to speak.

However, this has failed miserably. One example is the setting up of a Republican Socialist PRO Department, although only a small nucleus of Republican Socialist POW's are there due to the ceasure of moves from the Kesh, it has proved successful in conveying their plight by using the medium of newspapers to print letters. I will include this brief account with this defiant message from Magilligan Republican Socialist POW's.

"British imperialist oppression either in her jails or on our streets will not succeed in breaking us, instead it will have an adverse effect, strengthening our resolve to resist British 'exploitive imperialism in all its manifestations. Capitalist oppression breeds resistance, and from resistance stems revolution." "Victory to the POW's!" "Victory to the Irish Republican Socialist Movement!"

Despite his "greener than thou" projections, Haughey certainly will not allow the possibility of a spread of "unrest" into his domain. The status quo will be maintained.

The result of the Birmingham Six appeal has not brought about any concrete action such as the rejection of extradition warrants from the perpetrators of British justice, nor has it hindered in the least the increased repression of Irish political activists, trade unionists, even social workers, in the 26 counties.

Free State condemnation of the British decisions stem from what it sees as a blatant disregard of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. As cuts, poverty and disillusionment increase and the objective conditions for revolution become more and more developed, the ruling classes of the Free State see the Anglo-Irish Agreement as an essential counter to the spread of the subjective conditions from the six counties. Their condemnations do not stem from any sense of morality or justice but from self-preservation.

It is hard to see how the proponents of the Anglo-Irish Agreement will have any success keeping the floundering vessel afloat especially when the captain keeps knocking holes in it!

MARXISM AND RELIGION:



perfection into an ideal supernatural realm. This perfect 'being' then comforts and reassures 'believers', and what is more important directs them away from the struggle to eliminate the reason for man's alienation i.e. the exploitative capitalist system. Religion, despite its adherents' rhetoric, has no real objection to exploitation on this planet - after all everything will be squared up in 'the other life'. Essentially, religion deludes people and acts as a protector of the ruling class. "To abolish religion" wrote Marx "... as the illusory happiness of the people is to demand their real happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears, the halo of which is religion." ²

This brings us to our second objection, which is that religion as a supporter of inequality perpetuates bourgeois hegemony through its various organisations e.g. the Catholic and Protestant Churches. Theology, by handing supreme power to the supernatural, legitimises the present chaotic state of affairs. Mankind is told that it cannot hope to control its socio-economic system to any great degree, and as such people must accept severe hardships. Capitalism and bourgeois society are portrayed as the ultimate stage of socio-economic development. People are trained to accept things as they are. Religion acts as a diversion from the material and spiritual struggles of the working class. To quote Marx: **g. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world just as it is the spirit of the people."** People turn to religion in an attempt to partially escape the realities of life. It means that instead of living and dying in an exploitative world, you live, die... and go to 'Heaven'. Why fight the system? There is a better life coming - after all, poor people will be first into Heaven and all that! Marxists know better, we know that you live, die and then are consumed by worms (or flames, whichever you wish). We only have so long on this planet, shouldn't we avoid dangerous superstition which consigns us to a life of hardship?

The fact that religion is used to escape the hard realities of life is something which some socialists latch onto in order to justify their non-opposition to religion. Thomas MacGiolla, in a recent interview, declared that religion is something that people 'need to uplift their spirit'. **4** As stated already this position is bankrupt, from a revolutionary viewpoint, because of the concurrent acceptance of the status quo. **Religion serves to pacify the working class.**

Despite the comfort which is received from the belief in an omnipresent all-powerful protector, man does not in reality isolate himself from the world when he embraces religion. Man does not eliminate the alienation which an exploitative world produces. "It is not..." said Marx "...by atheism but by **supersition and idolatry that man debases himself**" Theism acts, in a sense, as a negation



of the intellect, it retards mankind's struggle against spiritual alienation - a struggle which can only be won under communism. The end enslavement, under capitalism, is material conflict with society and nature. Through work and unity with the community under communism, man will discover internal peace and unity. Through the medium of collaboration and fraternity which communists will produce, man achieves a reconciliation with himself. He/she will no longer be a wage slave but a genuinely free human being. This is the philosophical aim of Marxism. The transformation of reality is the central motif of Marxist thought, and it is this that marks out most clearly from idealist philosophies such as theology. It is a philosophy of **praxis**. Where idealists simply analyse and interpret the world, Marxist materialists aim to change it. Marx 'philosophy' will become reality under communism.

CATHOLICISM

In Ireland the Christian Churches play overtly reactionary role, acting as 'mo policemen' for the bourgeoisie. The Catholic Church, in particular, is always more than ready to intrude into the political sphere

"BLESS ME, EVEN ME ALSO, O MY FATHER"

Religion and its precise relationship to the social and political spheres, within the capitalist system, have been recurring themes for Marxian socialists ever since Karl Marx's rejection of idealist philosophy. In Ireland, because of the existence of two religiously sectarian states, the 'religious question' is one which must be tackled both openly and lucidly. Ignoring or avoiding an exposition of the Marxist position for tactical reasons amounts to nothing more than unprincipled opportunism. In a land where statues walk, talk and bleed, where parish priests can build international airports, where pulpits can swing referenda etc. etc. many socialists are seemingly struck mute when religion is under discussion. The Catholic Church may be verbally assaulted for possessing too much influence or for making unwelcome incursions into the political arena, but generally the assault involves nothing other than a demand that the Church stick to religion and leave politics to the politicians.

The Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches role as protectors of the status quo (i.e. partition) is ascribed by most nationalists to the hierarchy. "Ah, they should replace **yer man Daly with Des Wilson!**" and "Ireland has always suffered bad bishops" are two comments offered by Republicans to the scribe within the past month. Both

comments are, in essence, crude illustrations of the attitude of the Republican Movement to the Catholic Church. Similar to all petit bourgeois movements, it falls abjectly to identify the position of the Catholic religion within capitalist society, it overestimates the role of the individual in history, and consequently is unable and unwilling to recognise the inherently reactionary nature of the Catholic Church in contemporary Ireland. Essentially, Irish Republicans view the failure of the Church to consentently support their struggle as the consequence of individuals. Marxists, in contrast, view religion as an important prop for the bourgeois status quo which it protects and feeds off. The established organisations of religion, in modern capitalist countries, act as a hegemonic, hence

INCOMPATIBLE

During the past half-century there have been many attempts, by clerics and Marxists, to bring religion and socialism towards some form of conciliation. In some countries a synthesis of sorts has occurred - always to the detriment of the Marxist movement e.g. the Left in Iran. Those who attempt conciliation are guilty of either totally ignoring, or of total ignorance, of Marxist philosophy. The differences are fundamental. Communism and religion are **absolutely incompatible.**

Revolutionary socialists centre their opposition to religion on two basic interrelated objections. Firstly, theistic beliefs place the 'spirit' above 'matter', the supernatural above the natural. Religion, as an idealist philosophy, refused to recognise class antagonisms as the motor of historical change. It refuses to accept the determining influence that the socio-economic situation plays in the moulding of man's consciousness. It is in direct opposition to the Marxist concepts of dialectical and historical materialism. Forces outside the control of mankind are bestowed with the power and responsibility which mankind itself possesses - the power and responsibility to direct our own lives as we please. 'God' becomes our ruler, our overseer, our crutch. In simple terms, 'God' takes from human beings their spirit for self-determination. In order to believe in religion, humans take something from themselves. 'God' exists as a product of an alienated people who abstract the best, or rather what they perceive as the best, human qualities and project this artificially constructed



MATERIALISM V IDEALISM

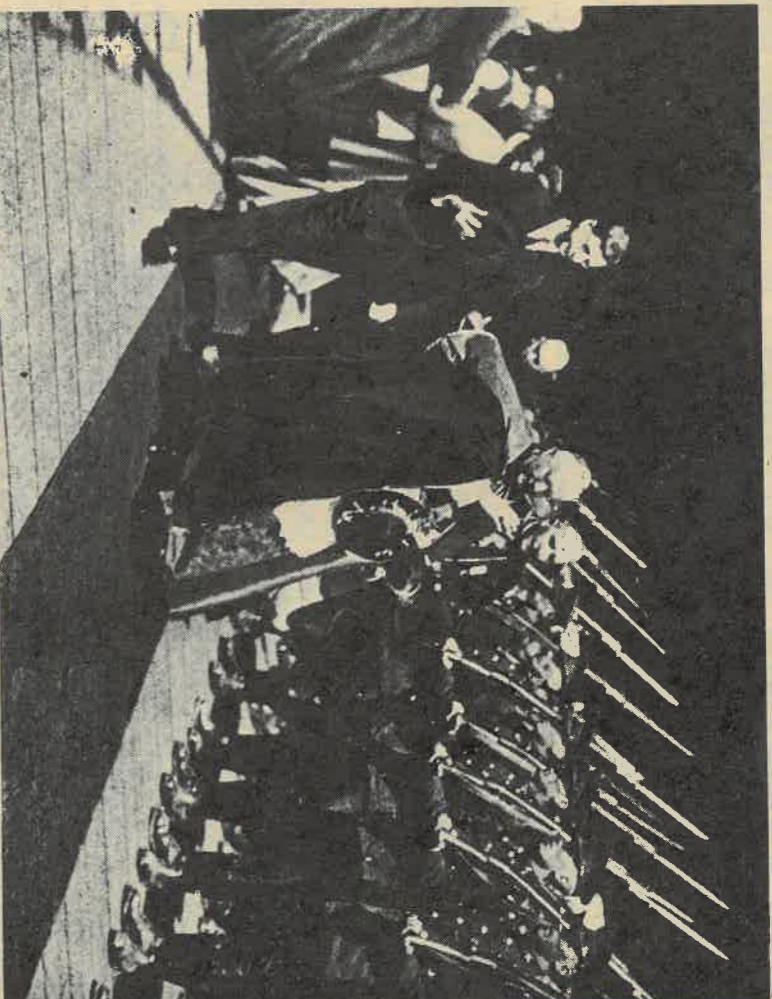


them to live up to their Christian persuasions." Marvellous, but what about non-Christians and atheists who are also affected by civil law?

"Private property must be safeguarded" wrote Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical. This was later backed up in the *Quadragesimo Anno* which told the 'flock' that "mans natural right of possessing private property... must remain intact and cannot be taken away by the State; for Man precedes the State." The Q.A. did attempt to keep abreast of developments within capitalist society, and hence sanctioned State control and/or ownership of its own private property. The *Mater et Magistra* later again brought the Church to an acceptance of Social Welfare.

Overall it must be said that the Catholic Church is profoundly anti-working class. It believes that "inequalities are inevitable" and that "it must be... recognised that the conditions of things inherent (sic) in human affairs must be borne with, for it is impossible to reduce civil society to one dead level. Socialists may in that intent do their utmost, but all striving against nature is in vain. There naturally exist among mankind manifold differences." We are also informed that "to suffer and endure is the lot of humanity." This reactionary nonsense is transmitted to masses of workers every day through numerous religious organisations. Socialists must state clearly that inequality exists because of a particular economic system not because it is the natural way of things. The working class is capable of creating and managing a new economic system which generates material equality.

Social and economic conditions, however, affect individual clerics just as they affect other human beings. This has led to the inevitable growth of 'liberation theology' especially in badly oppressed areas such as exist in Latin America. What attitude should revolutionary socialists adopt towards adherents of this humanistic trend within Catholicism? Exactly the same as we adopt towards other petit bourgeois elements. We can unite with them on a principled basis in the struggle for reforms, but never assimilate ourselves into their ranks or allow them to assimilate into ours. **Socialists must always organise and act as a distinct trend.** We fight for working class emancipation. The petit bourgeoisie does not. In the final analysis we must realise that there is no chance of 'liberation theologians' joining us in the fight for a communist society, unless they discard their theology and take up Marxist materialism.



THE CHURCH, THE STATE AND THE ARMY IN THE IRISH FREE STATE

work elsewhere and had to eventually emigrate to England. He castigated Connolly afterwards and labelled him 'Catholic Connolly'. In his controversial debate with Daniel DeLeon in 1904 Connolly declared "that Socialism is a political and economic question and has nothing to do with religion" and that it was "absurd..." to claim that "...the Catholic Church was a barrier to Socialism and should be fought as a church". Connolly appears to have considered a confrontation with religion as something socialists should avoid especially in Ireland where religious sentiments ran deep. Religion was, for him, a private matter which had nothing to do with the capitalist system. **He was wrong, absolutely wrong!**

James Connolly's position on religion is in total opposition to the Marxist position but it was a relatively common position for socialists to take at that time. Most took it for tactical reasons, others like Connolly because they found it hard to make that final break with the religion that they were brought up with. Rosa Luxemburg, the great Polish-German revolutionary, is another major Marxist figure who took the view that religion was a private concern.¹¹ "Never do..." revolutionary socialists "...drive the workers to fight against the clergy, or to try to interfere with religious beliefs, not at all", she wrote in 1905. A socialist "...in no way fights against religious beliefs", she continued. Again, similar to Connolly, she was mistaken on this issue.

SOCIALISM

It has been said that it is possible to destroy movements but ideas never die. Using this logic it could be argued that religion will last forever, even under communism. Marxists disagree with this thesis. As I have already shown above, religion is the product of mans alienation under capitalism. This alienation will disappear under communism and if religion remains it will only be as the cult of a few. Religion is destined to whither away. The product of the human brain, it will disappear along with the fear that was its genesis - the fear of a seemingly chaotic and uncontrollable world. It won't, however, disappear quickly and it won't disappear as a result of physical repression. Socialists support the right to freedom of conscience and the right of people to practice whatever religion they adhere to. On an ideological level we must battle against what we perceive to be an erroneous doctrine, but we can never sanction the use of repressive or coercive measures. **People have a right to practice religion if they so wish.** Physical repression would be both tactically and principally incorrect.

It was not the downfall of the old religions that caused the downfall of the ancient states, but the downfall of the old religions.¹² So said Karl Marx, and thus the downfall of capitalism will cause the downfall of contemporary religions. This time none, I would suggest, will spring up to replace the fallen. All need for crutches will be eradicated.

Again, however, it must be stated that the ideological battle will go on for a long time. In the 'Soviet Union', for example, a state where religion is actively discouraged, theistic beliefs still maintain a firm grip on the inhabitants. In 1964, for instance, 58 per cent of all newly born babies in the republic of Lithuania were baptised, 38 per cent of all weddings were solemnised by the Catholic Church, and 61 per cent of the deceased were given a Catholic funeral. Secularisation of the State cannot, of course, by itself eliminate the 'need' for religion. Exploitation still occurs in Russia, so until the advent of genuine socialism in that country we won't see any appreciable gains in the struggle against religion.

Religion is a strong force in Ireland, and criticism is extremely unpopular. Despite this, there can be no dodging of the issue for tactical reasons. In fact the atheism of the socialist movement is a tool which can be used to cross the sectarian divide in Ireland. Materialists do not recognise any differences between religions. Socialism is capable of transcending the religious divide which British imperialism has created and maintained in the Six Counties. Socialism is capable of uniting Protestant and Catholic workers under a common cause - the achievement of working class emancipation. When the slogan is 'For a Workers Republic' fostered religious differences will become an irrelevancy.

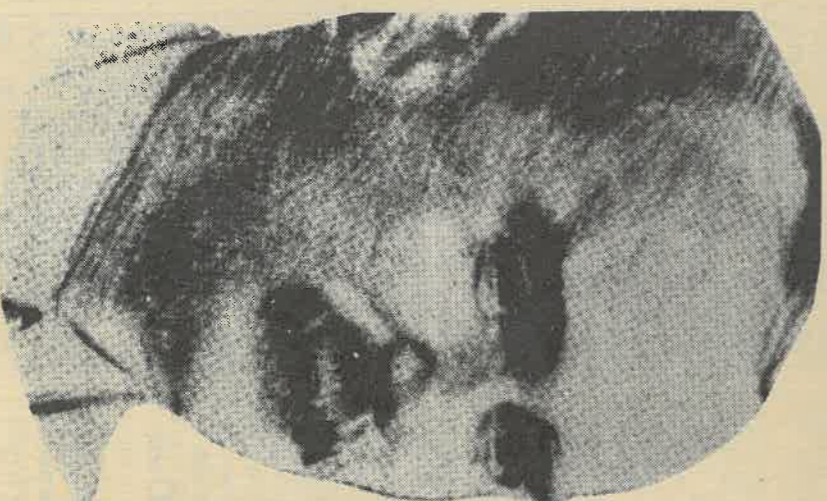
Robert Lake.

NOTES

1. See the 'New Left Review' No 166 (Nov/Dec, 1987) pp 5-28 i.e. V. Moughnadan's 'Socialism or anti-imperialism? The Left in Iran'.
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3. MECW Vol. 3 page 175.
4. Published in the *Sunday World* (29/11/87).
5. MECW Vol. 4 page 127.
6. Marx K. and Engels F. 'The German Ideology' page 64 (New York, 1978).
7. Pope Leo XIII. 'Workers Charter' page 35 (Oxford 1938).
8. Newman J. 'Ireland must choose' page 67 (Dublin, 1983).
9. Quoted in Newman J. 'Change and the Catholic Church' page 177 (Dublin, 1965).
10. Pope Leo XIII *ibid* page 20.
11. Pope Leo XIII *ibid* page 20.
12. Pope Leo XIII *ibid* page 21.
13. Cronin S. 'Young Connolly' page 59 (Dublin, 1983).
14. 'The Connolly - De Leon Controversy' page 9 (Cork, 1986).
15. *ibid* page 32.
16. See Neill P. 'Rosa Luxemburg' page 221f (London, 1969).
17. Waters M. 'Rosa Luxemburg Speaks' page 132 (New York, 1980).
18. *ibid* page 152.
19. MECW Vol. 1 page 189.
20. Lane C. 'Christian Religion in the Soviet Union' page 21 (London, 1978).
- 21.

whenever it sees its increasingly anachronistic values being challenged. Divorce, abortion etc. are dissected at the pulpit whenever there is a 'danger' of their introduction and good Catholics are shown which way to vote. Allied to this is the constant dissemination of bourgeois propaganda. As Marx put it; 'the ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas; i.e. the class which is the dominant material force in society is at the same time its dominant intellectual force'.¹ This intellectual dominance is greatly assisted by the Catholic Church in this country. As perpetrators of bourgeois hegemony they constitute a major prop for the capitalist system. The power of the ruling class is maintained, to a large extent, by its ideological predominance over all classes in capitalist society. The working class has the physical power to overthrow capitalism but because of this capitalist hegemony, it does not have the will. Ultimately the 'will' to overthrow will form as a result of intense class struggle, but there must be a preceding and concurrent struggle in all realms of culture and ideology against their hegemony. This is why socialists must consistently point out to workers the role that the Christian Churches play in the world. They support the system and are consequently anti-working class.

Support for private property is an intrinsic part of Catholic doctrine (as it is of Protestant). Socialisation of private property, i.e. the placing of the means of production and distribution under workers control, is anathema to the Roman Catholic Church. In the famous 'Workers Charter' issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 we are informed that "there are not a few who are imbued with evil principles and eager for revolutionary change, whose main purpose is to stir up disorder and incite their fellows to acts of violence. The authority of the State should intervene to put restraint upon such firebrands, to save the working classes from being led astray by their manoeuvres, and to protect lawful owners from spoliation."² The use of the State to protect bourgeois society and property is, of course, a popular stance within the Christian Churches. They simply do not trust their 'flock' to live up to their Christian values, so a bit of coercion is deemed necessary. Bishop Newman of Limerick, writing in 1983, declared that "regarding the sale of contraceptives, abortion, divorce and homosexuality in the Republic of Ireland, should there be radical change in the law respecting these? My argumentation leads to a categorical 'No'... I believe that the ordinary people of our country... need what help a supportive framework of law can give them to enable



CONNOLLY

The ardent Connollyite is no doubt wondering where this leaves James Connolly. Connolly, after all, refused to permit the Cork branch of the ISRP to defend itself effectively against the anti-socialist rantings of Bishop O'Callaghan in 1902. Con Lehane, the local organiser, was forced out of his job as a direct result of the Bishops preaching, couldn't obtain

IRON FIST OF ZIONISM

The imperialist fostered image of Israel is that of a tiny little state surrounded and threatened by hordes of fanatical Arabs, but who, have courageously against all odds defeated these foes time and time again.

This image has been completely smashed by the scenes of extreme brutality and ruthless exploitation of the Israelis towards their Semite brothers, the Palestinians. The complete hypocrisy of the British Government who joins in the condemnation of the Israeli administration for using the exact same tactics of the "Iron Fist" as she is using against the nationalist people in the occupied six counties of Ireland.

The special emergency laws that Israel is operating now are the same ones that Britain created and used in Israel when she was given the Mandate to administer Palestine after the first World War.

Internment was used here to imprison hundreds of people in the early seventies likewise in Israel it just goes by another name "administrative detention". Plastic bullets, tear gas, shoot-to-kill policy, torture, have all been used in order to smash the national liberation struggle here in Ireland.

The explosive revolutionary situation which we are witnessing developing has a long history and dates back to imperialist designs in the Middle East.

Founding Of Zionism

Herzel known as the founding father of Zionism believed that the answer to anti-semitism was the creation of a separate Jewish state based on the colonisation of an existing inhabited land. (He wasn't too fussy at the time whether it was Uganda or Palestine, though later Palestine became the firm favourite). This stemmed from the belief that man was inherently evil and that anti-semitism was a natural phenomenon, a normal attitude of gentiles to the presence of Jews which was never going to change.

To talk as Zionists do that Zionism is "the national liberation movement of the Jews" is obviously absurd as firstly Jews do not constitute one national entity and secondly the very essence of a national liberation movement is the fight against its oppressors whereas Zionism's answer was colonisation of Palestine and so took on the role of the oppressor against the Arab indigent population.

Unlike most colonisation programmes based on using and exploiting cheap native labour, Herzel outlined the Zionist programme "The poorer section of the population we shall transfer across the border, without creating too much fuss, by giving them employment in the transit countries, but in our own country we shall deny them all work." (This policy of denying the Arabs work changed when it was later realised that it was in their own economic interests to have a cheap labour source to exploit). It was clear to the early Zionist leaders that in order to colonise Palestine they would need the backing of the imperialist powers. So what did Zionism have to offer imperialism?

Palestine was under the thumb of German imperialism, but after Germany's defeat, Britain became the dominant force in the Middle East. In order to protect her interests in the Suez Canal, Britain saw the advantage of using the proposed Zionist colonisation as

part of the rainpart against the growing threat of Arab nationalism.

The Balfour Declaration

In 1917, Balfour, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs (friend of Carson and Ulster loyalism) declared that Britain "would help to establish a 'national home for the Jewish people in Palestine without prejudice to the rights of the existing Moslem and Christian Arab population.'" In fact the latter part of this declaration was to be totally disregarded by the British government and their true intentions are to be found in Balfour's memos of that period "we deliberately and rightfully decline to accept the principle of self determination In short so far as Palestine is concerned, the Powers have made no statements of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate."

So every pledge given to the Palestine Arabs regarding the future of their country was to be 'violated' as a deliberate act of policy, and Zionist colonisation started to develop and thrive under the protecting wings of British imperialism, based on a framework of lies and broken promises given to the Arab population.

British Mandate

Because of Britain's occupation of Palestine during the First World War, in 1922, she was granted a mandate by the League of Nations to administer Palestine on two conditions, firstly Britain would administer the country but should lead it to independence and secondly that Britain would fulfil the Balfour declaration of 1917 for the establishment of a 'national home' for the Jewish people.

Pro-Zionists found themselves in leading positions both in the British Cabinet and the British administration in Palestine and so the policy of discrimination against the Muslim and Christian Arab majority began. The Arabs were not allowed any representative institutions although the Jewish minority had been permitted in 1920 to hold elections for a Jewish Assembly to deal with matters affecting their community.

The Zionist movement started buying tracts of land in Palestine which were mostly large estates, owned by Arab landlords and inhabited by tenant farmers. The Zionists would only buy if the land was unoccupied. The rich Arab landlords complied and evicted the peasants in order to sell their land. Thus the Palestinian Arab ruling class collaborated with the Zionists in the destruction of their own people (similar to the ruling class in Ireland collaborating with the British during the famine and letting millions of Irish people die or be forced to emigrate).

In 1936, the Palestinians, with no other avenues, opened to them, initiated an armed rebellion against the British mandatory government. This was to last for three years. There started to develop a conflict of interest between Britain and Zionism. Zionism was moving too fast with the result that Arab resentment was being translated into a fierce nationalism which was creating instability, something Britain didn't want.

A white paper was produced whereby Britain agreed to halt Jewish immigration after a five year period unless the Arabs consented and agreed to set up a bi-national state of Palestine after a 10 year transitional period. This resulted in the Zionists forming their own secret paramilitary organisations and embarking on armed attacks against the British.

Partition Of Palestine

By 1947, Britain referred the whole question as to the future government of Palestine to the United Nations. The United Nations with the support of America and Britain decided on the termination of the British mandate and the partition of Palestine thus creating an Arab state and a Jewish state, the old city of Jerusalem was to remain neutral, administered by the U.N. Britain had learnt well from her strategy in Ireland when partition was imposed against the wishes of the majority in 1921 in order to ensure imperialism's domination of the country.

In terms of population, the Jews in 1947 constituted less than one third of the inhabitants of Palestine. Only one tenth of them were original inhabitants who themselves were totally opposed to partition or the setting up of a separate Jewish state. Even in the proposed Jewish state, the majority of inhabitants were Arabs. The Jews only owned 6.8% of the land but under partition they were to be given two thirds of the land, ten times what they owned.

Partition was greeted with overwhelming jubilation by the Zionists, but of course with horror by the Palestinians. The mandate was due to end on the 15th May 1948 but in the preceding six months the Zionists mobilised their secret paramilitary organisations which now consisted of 100,000 trained fighting personnel (trained by the Brits themselves).

The Zionists had two main objectives: firstly to seize as much land as they possibly could regardless of the limits set by the United Nations in the partition plan and secondly, the forcible displacement of the Palestine Arabs from the territories earmarked by the United Nations for the Jewish state and from any other land areas they could seize.

Zionism was not prepared to see a Jewish state with the majority of the population being Arab as well as their religious fanaticism they used to justify their expansionism - was not Palestine theirs by heritage? - and so to their final and most important objective that of creating a state religiously, racially and exclusively Jewish.

Massacre At Deir Yassin

One of the most horrific events which stand out during this period was the massacre on the 9th April 1948 of the village of Deir Yassin, a small peaceful village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. A Red Cross Delegate who witnessed the aftermath said "Three hundred persons were massacred without any military reason or provocation of any kind, old men, women, children, newly born were savagely murdered with grenades and knives by Jewish troops of the control and entirely under the control and direction of their chiefs." The



objective of this massacre was to terrify the Arab population and it resulted in a mass exodus of Palestinians. When Jewish terror didn't work they resorted to mass expulsions. During 1948 there were one million displaced Palestinians.

Israel's Expansionism

On the 15th May 1948, the British mandate ended and the Zionists proclaimed the state of Israel and formed a provisional government which was immediately recognised by the United States followed a few days later by the Soviet Union. Israel continued its expansionist policy by seizing more territory and by March 1949 they had incorporated 80% of Palestine into the Jewish state leaving the Arabs with one fifth of their homeland. One million Palestinians had been uprooted from their homes and turned into refugees living in poverty, destitution and despair. At the same time the Israeli Government committed one of the biggest acts of plunder by seizing all the property of the refugees, and of the Arabs that remained, leaving them with less than 1% of the land.

During the next 20 years, Israel set about imposing itself by force and violence in order to frighten the neighbouring Arab States by carrying out raids and attacks. They were far from satisfied with the territory they had captured and were setting their sights far beyond their own borders. They got their chance in 1959 when France and Britain were planning their joint attack on Egypt after Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal. In a secret meeting with Israel's Prime Minister, Britain and France agreed to allow Israel to occupy and annex Sinai in return for Israel's military assistance against Egypt. As it turned out, the war against Egypt was not successful due to American intervention and Israel was forced to withdraw from Sinai.

At that time America saw hostilities against Israel conflicting with their own interest in the Middle East. American Imperialism during this period was becoming more and more the dominant force in the Middle East whereas Britain's influence was declining. With the consequence that Israel switched its allegiance from Britain to America. In 1967, with tacit

American approval, they invaded Sinai, the Gaza strip, West Bank, and the Golan Heights. Israel's main objective was to expand their territory while America was more interested in causing such instability that both Nasser and Syria's radical regimes would be overthrown.

As in 1948 the 1967 6 day war resulted in the displacement of a large number of Palestinians, from the West Bank alone, there were over 410,000 people displaced. It resulted in a major defeat for the Arab world although it didn't have America's desired effect of overturning Egypt or Syria's government. Initially, Russia completely re-equipped the Egyptian Army in less than a year.

America more and more viewed Israel as a vital part of their strategy in the Middle East. In 1977 a well known American analyst stated "A strong and confident Israel is a vital factor in any programme to protect our own legitimate interests and those of Europe, Japan and many other countries in the independence and openness and stability in the region." In other words it means that Israel is vitally important in order to ensure that the Middle East remains dependent on the West, open to Western investment and ensuring the continuance of reactionary and corrupt regimes. In return Israel not only receives substantial military and political aid but also massive financial subsidies.

The aftermath of 67 was a total radicalisation of the Arabs and the creation of the Palestinian Resistance Movement which consisted of different political fighting organisations. The P.L.O. had been formed a few years previously, but it was not a front-like framework as it is today, led by the Armed Resistance Organisations. The P.L.O. had been established by the Arab Regimes and didn't represent the Palestinian people's will. (It is not possible here to analyse the growth and development of the Palestinian Resistance Movement and the different politics within it. This will be addressed in a future issue of the Starry Plough).

Black September

Given the nature of the Israeli state the real strength of the Palestinian Resistance Movement was to be formed, outside of Israel, in Jordan where the overwhelming

THE PALESTINIAN UPRISING

majority of Palestinian refugees lived. Commando raids were launched against the Israel State and were proving very effective. As the Resistance Movement grew in Jordan, they started to take administrative control over the refugee camps which spread to large parts of the Western territory of Jordan. Popular Militias and peoples councils developed. King Hussein of Jordan saw this development as a threat to his own power and control of the country and in September 1970, the Jordanian Army launched a war of Annihilation against the Resistance Movement, still remembered as "Black September." More than 9,000 Palestinians were brutally murdered, tens of thousands were imprisoned or managed to escape to Syria and Lebanon.

Shift To The Right

The defeat of the Palestinian Resistance Movement in Jordan led them to shift their operational base to Lebanon. Their defeat also opened up a general shift to the right in the Arab world. The Syria left Nationalist Regime was overthrown, the Sudanese and Iraqi communist parties massacred and the Reactionary Regime of Saudi Arabia began to play a more important role in Arab politics. In Egypt, in the early 70's, because of the worsening economic situation, there was a wave of strikes throughout the country. Sadat's (Nasser's successor) Regime was weak and unstable, his army was beginning to turn against him and in the summer of 1972 Sadat expelled all Soviet military advisers from Egypt in a policy re-orientation towards the United States and subsequently opened up the country to American and foreign capital. This failed to have any impact on America's policy of total support for Israel.

Israel had entrenched itself in the occupied territories and were moving in Jewish settlers, the Israeli Army was getting stronger and Sadat felt he was left with no alternative and so went to war in October 1972. This was very different from 67, in that, although Egypt suffered defeat on a military level, oil prices had gone up four fold giving some of the Arab Regimes enormous new financial reserves and an increased role in international politics; internal stability was temporarily ensured in Egypt and Sinai.

Israel had also suffered casualties were very high and internally they had to rearm. The re-equipping of the Israeli Army had cost more than the whole of its Gross National Product. In 1973, inflation was 40%, social expenditure was cut and taxes raised. American aid was not enough and Jewish workers were having to pay the difference. But this didn't result in a movement to the left but in an increasing national chauvinism. Colonisation aimed at the West Bank was embarked upon and organised by extreme right wing Zionist parties.

The P.L.O. had developed politically since its formation in the 60's. And in 1968, the P.L.O. became a front like framework, led by the fighting organisations. After 73, it embarked on a political and diplomatic campaign amongst the Arab Regimes and in 1974 the Arab summit proclaimed the P.L.O. as the sole legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people.

In 1975, America managed to get a partial Israeli withdrawal from the East Bank of Suez but in



return Egypt was forced to declare that it would never go to war against Israel ever again. This agreement left out Syria and was to signal future American strategy based on bi-lateral treaties with Israel and isolating the more radical Arab Regimes who were totally opposed to any form of recognition of Israel.

In Lebanon, a repeat of what happened in Jordan in September 1970 was about to happen as a civil war erupted between the Lebanese left Alliance and the right wing coalition. At first the P.L.O. watched from the sidelines but eventually involved themselves with the left Alliance. As the civil war developed, the left Alliance made considerable gains and at this Syria intervened being frightened of the possibility of a radical government in Lebanon which would have seriously undermined Syrian hopes for a negotiated settlement with Israel in the hope of improving relations with the United States. The Christians with support from Syria launched attacks on the two largest Palestinian refugee camps massacring countless Palestinians.

Camp David

President Sadat continued to move towards a peace settlement with Israel, travelled to Egypt in 1977 and addressed the Knesset with an emotional plea for peace. Following this in September 1978 with the direct intervention of the United States, a framework for 'peace' was announced at Camp David between Egypt and Israel and in March the following year a peace treaty was formally signed by the two countries. In return for Israel agreeing to give back Egyptian land that it had seized in 1967 in stages, Egypt gave full diplomatic recognition to Israel, trade was to commence between the two countries, and Egypt was to limit its armaments in the Sinai. Egypt was immediately condemned and accused of betraying the Arab case in Palestine and in 1978, Arab countries broke off diplomatic relations with Egypt. The Palestinians were more and more being pushed to the sidelines while the Arab nations were discussing the Arab-Israeli problem. Because of the weakness in the Arabs camp and the increasingly unified strategy of the reactionary regimes, the most recent Arab summit held in Amman last November decided to lift the Boycott on the Egyptian Regime. Though Egypt was formally not readmitted into the Arab league, it stated that "diplomatic" relations between Egypt and Arab league countries was a matter for the country itself thus giving tacit approval of the Camp David deal and the politics of bi-lateral deals as advocated by Washington and

Tel Aviv.

The continued onslaught against the Palestinians in exile continued with the Israelis invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the resulting P.L.O. forced Exodus from Beirut. In more recent times the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon have been besieged by the Amal Shi-Hite Militia, resulting in starvation, many Palestinians killed and wounded, but since the uprising of the Palestine people in the occupied territories, the siege has been lifted.

Iron Fist Policy

During the last 20 years, the Israel administration using special military powers laid down in the British mandate have ruled the occupied territories with an iron fist and its against this background that we look at the uprising which is growing in strength and spreading inside Israel as well.

Economy

Israel has always viewed the occupied territories as a market that would eventually import nearly 90% of its needs from Israel so the economy, especially of the West Bank has been geared to suit Israel's interests. So that there is no competition of Israeli subsidised goods, farmers are restricted in what they can grow which is further compounded by what land is allowed to be used for farming and even the amount of water that can be pumped by Arab farmers from their own wells for irrigation. The occupied territories also provide Israel with a large supply of cheap labour. Arab labourers earn 40% less than their Israeli counterparts, and out of their wages are deducted for social services, medical insurance and unemployment benefits, none of which they are entitled to receive.

Land Expropriation

The Israeli administration systematically declares certain areas closed, orders the Palestinians out and demolishes their dwellings. They are creating more and more Jewish settlements in the occupied territories many of which have been established by the Israeli defence force as military posts. It is clear that Israel is attempting to totally integrate the occupied territories into Israel, they have surrounded Palestinian towns cutting them off from each other.

Demolition Of Homes

If a person is suspected of being involved in any type of resistance activity then the house where they are living is blown up, regardless whether he/she is the owner or not.

Deportation

Since 1967, there has been an on going policy of deporting Palestinians and many of those arrested have been forced to agree to being deported or they would have been imprisoned indefinitely.

Imprisonment And Torture

There have been nearly 300,000 Palestinians imprisoned since 1967. Torture is a sanctioned and deliberate policy used to try and extract information or force people to "confess" to "security offences." Palestinians can be held for up to 18 days without charge and then they can be administratively detained (internment) for six months which is renewable ad infinitum. Many people die under interrogation which is blamed on heart attacks or suicide.

Education And Health

Curriculum in the schools and universities are overseen by the Israeli Military Officer of Education even though they are financially independent from Israel. All appointments of staff, and all appointments of staff, equipment have to be approved by the Israeli authorities. Hospitals are too few, inadequately staffed and poorly equipped.

Political Level

In the mid 70's the Israeli government organised a general election for the West Bank councils but contrary to expectations, Palestinian Nationalist Mayors were overwhelmingly elected. What followed were attempts on their lives and finally they were removed from office. Palestinian collaborators were put in their place but the Palestinian people refused to co-operate with them.

Palestinian Resistance Intensifies

Throughout last year we have seen the level of Palestinian resistance rising in the face of massive repression from the Zionist authorities. During October there were numerous incidents including the killing of four Palestinian freedom fighters, an attempt by Zionist extremists to storm Al Aqusa Mosque, three Palestinians were shot at an alleged road block though when their families received their bodies back they all bore signs of torture, demonstrations were met with plastic bullets and tear gas.

On the 8th December in the Gaza Strip a mass demonstration of Palestinians went to the headquarters of the Military governor, stones and molotov cocktails were thrown, protests spread throughout the West Bank. The Zionist occupation forces replied with bullets and tear gas and later with tanks and helicopters. The uprisings spread to inside Israel in support of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

On December 21st, there was a general strike called for by the P.L.O., both inside and outside the army responded by welding the doors of the shops permanently closed. The response to the Palestinians demonstrating inside Israel was summoned up by the President Herzog "Continue to be docile lest you suffer a

Catastrophe"

Three concentration camps have been opened in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip where over 2,000 Palestinians have been detained. Four people have been deported despite international protest from the United Nations and there are more pending. Stones are being met with live bullets, curfews are being imposed on the camps, food is only being allowed in sporadically, electricity and water supplies have been cut off and bands of Jewish settlers are running amok, shooting indiscriminately at Palestinians.

As we go to press, four more Palestinians have been shot dead, bringing the total of officially admitted deaths to 47 with an estimated 800 injured.

The uprising has caused confusion within the Zionist government. Prime Minister Shamir was one week expressing that the "uprising is only temporary" and the next week that there is a war situation. Some editorials from leading newspapers have openly condemned government policy and called for a political solution. A demonstration of about 2,000 Israelis outside Shamir's house condemned Israeli activities in the occupied territories. The most significant factor has been the spread of the resistance to inside Israel itself and East Jerusalem has now become a battlefield.

It is clear that the mass resistance we are witnessing of the Palestinian people is due to the inherent contradictions within the Israeli state and the occupied territories: between the oppressor and the oppressed, the occupier and the occupied, the exploiter and the exploited and between the imperialism and Palestinian self-determination, and this can only be resolved either by eliminating the Palestinian people or by the destruction of the Zionist state.

The state of Israel was created to serve the interests of imperialism and Israel has developed into being the policeman of the Middle East for imperialism, which has enabled Israel to pursue its own aggressive expansionist policies. Israel is most active in supporting reactionary and racist regimes in South Africa, Latin America and Central America by supplying them with arms. It was instrumental in supporting the Shah in Iran, supplying arms which in turn strengthened its own economic base. At one stage one third of Israel's arms exports were going to Iran. Israeli intelligence trained by torturers of SAVAK, the Shah's secret police. And during the recent Iranate hearings, Israel's involvement in the arms sales to Iran and diversion of profits to the contras was revealed. Israel is the ideal partner in America's dirty deals, supplying arms where it would be publicly embarrassing for America to do so.

There can be no imperialist solution to the Palestinian question. Only a complete dismantling of the Zionist state and its replacement by a secular pluralist society in which Palestinian and Jew are united on the basis of class interests, free from imperialist domination and exploitation, in other words, only socialism offers a solution.

We in the Irish Republican Socialist Movement extend our Palestinian comrades our solidarity with you in your fight for self-determination and freedom for the Palestinian people.

Kate Doyle.

M. Machover - Zionism and War and Peace.
Democratic Palestine.
Al-Fair (Jerusalem Palestinian weekly).

water supplies continue to be cut off

DOUBLE TAXATION! Service Charges Are Double Tax

The "service charges" at present being forced on the population of the so called "Free State" have met with fierce opposition. Both the National Tenants Association, A.C.R.A. (The Central Body for Residents Associations) and N.A.T.O. (The National Association of Tenants Organisations) are actively campaigning against them. They have been supported by the public service unions who have come out against the "service charges" and have instructed their members not to assist in acts such as water disconnections.

Despite this most Local Authorities have persisted in enforcing these "charges" and with massive support from the media have tried to convince people that it is their duty to pay for these "services". Unfortunately for them the facts tell a different story. In 1978 domestic rates were abolished and Local Authorities were promised that they would be fully reimbursed from central funds. To make up for the lost revenue direct and indirect taxation were increased. This meant that people were now paying for their "services" every time they bought something through V.A.T. (value added tax) or every time they received a wage packet through the P.A.Y.E. (pay as you earn) tax system. In the years following 1978 budget after budget increased the P.A.Y.E. and V.A.T. burden. V.A.T. rose from 4% in 1977 to 30% in 1983 while during the same period the P.A.Y.E. percentage of the government's total tax income rose from 67% to a staggering 85%.

The over-burdened P.A.Y.E. sector had not meekly accepted their ever increasing burden. Their protests culminated in a massive protest march in Dublin by an estimated 250 thousand people. The sight sent shivers down the backs of the ruling classes and promises were quickly made. A commission was established which acted as a safety valve at the time but of course has delivered absolutely nothing in 7 years. The only time the unfair taxation system looked shaken was when Waterford Glass workers went on

a 3 day working week in protest over it. Unfortunately, this campaign which would have smashed the tax system in a matter of months fizzled out due to lack of support through the country and failure by the unions to give correct leadership.

The one thing all this did achieve apart from showing what the working class could achieve if they used their collective power was to stabilise the tax rates. Governments realised that they could no longer keep increasing the percentage of tax taken from the workers wage packet.

Double Taxation

The established politicians were looking for a way to further increase the taxation on the working class without appearing to directly do so. They came up with the idea of re-introducing service charges.

The coalition government introduced the "1983 Local Government Financial Provisions No. 2 Act". The Ministers primarily responsible in the coalition of Fine Gael and Labour for the introduction of this legislation were Dick Spring, Ruairi Quinn and Liam Kavanagh, members of the Labour Party who for some perverse reason like to posture as socialists and claim to be defenders of the working class. This legislation was subsequently supported by Fianna Fail when they attained power despite their frequent promises to do the opposite. However, this comes as no surprise as breaking promises is the hallmark of this anti working class party.

Once these local "service charges" i.e. (water rates, refuse charges etc) became effective, funding from Central Government was reduced while the V.A.T. and P.A.Y.E. tax takes remained the same.

The rates abolished in 1978 were back only under another name, whereas, the P.A.Y.E. and V.A.T. tax increases which had been increased the first day to make up for the short fall after the abolition of rates, remained punitively high. It is on this basis

that it is clearly obvious that "service charges" are a double tax on the working class.

Fight Back

This unfair double taxation has been met with fierce resistance throughout the country. Those in the forefront of the resistance have been met with an onslaught of court injunctions, court summons and jailings, even in the case of an elderly man in his 70's. The establishment has even gone to the limit of using the recent "operation Mallard" to

intimidate activists. One of the leading members of the campaign nationally, Matt Larkin an officer of N.A.T.O. had his house broken into in his absence by Special Branch Detectives. The N.A.T.O. membership files and other documents were scrutinised. This campaign was scrutinised. This was an obvious attempt to get details of the membership, with an eye to future intimidation. There were also raids on large numbers of the organisation who did not receive media attention. This is indicative of the type of harassment and oppression prevalent in the 26 counties which the working class face when they stand up to the establishment, even in a campaign of civil disobedience such as this. As a microcosm of what is happening in the campaign nationally we are taking the example of one town in the 26 counties active in the campaign against double taxation. This town is Dungarvan in County Waterford.

Dungarvan

Service charges were first introduced into Dungarvan in 1983 in the form of a tax on water. It met with little initial opposition in the first year as people were taken by surprise by its sudden introduction and did not fully realise the long term implications of this double taxation. By the time the second year payments were due a large element of the working class in the town had organised themselves under the banner of the National Association of Tenants Organisations. The

methods they decided to utilise in the fight back against the double taxation was to withhold payment, to picket Council meetings etc and to attempt to publicise their opposition as much as possible.

They met their first obstacle in attempting to publicise their opposition. The local papers devoted large amounts of space and editorials etc to promoting the Service taxes as being a necessity, at the same time editing letters or even refusing to print letters sent in from the N.A.T.O. Committee. The Council meantime embarked upon a campaign of refusing to do anything for people who withheld payment. For example necessary repairs and maintenance to Council houses and refusing transfers to families who were living in houses with no bathroom facilities, no living room and no hot water facilities. In many cases large families were living in these houses which consisted of two bedrooms and a kitchen. The bedrooms in most cases were riddled with dampness and small children were expected to sleep in these conditions. People involved in the campaign who had been granted transfers found when they went to collect their keys that they were given an ultimatum, pay your water taxes or you will get no transfer. This meant that these people were blackmailed into paying the water rates. Council officials utilised these types of forced payments in a campaign of black propaganda to imply that opposition was crumbling where in affect the opposite was the case. They also commenced a campaign of harassment through the courts by issuing multiple summons which coincided with a campaign of vilification by certain Urban Councillors. They were taken aback however when they themselves were taken to court over the legality of the 1983, 1984, 1985 taxes. The courts decided that the charges were in fact illegal for these years. This was never publicised in the local papers they even refused to print letters telling people of this victory. The Council meantime refused to refund people who payed the service

taxes in those years.

The Council then embarked on a campaign of disconnecting people's water supplies. This was carried out by a minority of workers in the Council who can only be described as members of the "Lumpen Proletariat" who were usually escorted by members of the Gardaí and armed Special Branch men. This was despite a union directive nationally that union members were not to get involved in disconnections and that they would have official backing if any action was taken against them.

The N.A.T.O. members organised themselves into teams to reconnect immediately tenants who had been disconnected in order to ensure that no family had to endure the hardship of having no running water in their homes. In relation to these reconstructions 13 people appeared in court, of these 4 were members of the I.R.S.P. Among the charges was the bizarre charge of "fraudulently extracting water". These charges which are being appealed resulted in fines of £100 and £300, on two unemployed families. This can only be described as a vicious attempt to break the will of the working class resistance to this double taxation.

Conclusion

We demand that the Trade Unions implement their national directive and make sure the branch secretaries enforce it in their areas which appears not to be the case in all parts of the country. In fighting these taxes no reliance should be placed on trying to win justice through the courts as they are part and parcel of the corrupt system which imposed these unjust taxes in the first place. They should be utilised only as a tactic. There should be greater coordination between the areas active in the campaign to make the opposition a real threat to the establishment. To give a fighting lead in campaigns such as this the true revolutionary party has to be strengthened to defeat capitalism and put the working class in control of their destiny. Join us.

Jon O'Hanlon.

Derry remembers Bloody Sunday

The weekend 30/31st January saw many commemorations to mark the 16th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Practically everything that can be said about Bloody Sunday has already been said. It sticks out as perhaps the most concentrated and blatant act of British oppression in this latest phase of the national liberation struggle. It also resulted in one of the most blatant cover-ups/whitewashes not really equalled until the Stalker/Sampson report and the Birmingham 6 appeal in 1988.

1988 is of special significance in that it marks the 20th anniversary of the exposition to the world of the true nature of the six county unionist statelet: Ireland became world news. It has remained world news in fluctuating degrees ever since. All the major events of the past 20 years have been well catalogued yet what has been the result to date. The Brits are still in occupation and the war of national liberation has reached a stalemate. Repression has increased in refinement in the 6 counties, and reached a level in the 26 counties unthinkable in 1968. Collaboration



between the Free State and Britain is also at a level equally unthinkable in 1968.

The example of "operation Mallard" should serve as a salutary lesson. The whole thrust and aim of the repressive measures is ostensibly to destroy the national liberation struggle. It also recognises the fact that a discentred working class which is aware of the significance of the

national liberation struggle to its own emancipation is an even more serious threat to its existence. Hence anti-republican measures are easily used in an anti-working class role for e.g. the use of the Offences Against the State Act to end the occupation of factories in industrial disputes in the recent past.

1988 will see a great recalling of the events of twenty years ago, yet what is needed now is not a

catalogue of fruitless reminiscences and commemorations of previous events. The Civil Rights Campaign was the nearest thing in these past 20 years to an anti-imperialist front although the stated aims were hardly the overthrow of the capitalist system. One of the biggest problems of past campaigns is that they addressed pertinent issues in isolation - single issue campaigns.

IN MEMORY

Kearney/O'Reilly/Power/ Ferguson.

The Staff and Comrade Volunteers of the Republican Socialist Movement remember with love and pride our friends and comrades: Vol. Thomas 'Ta' Power, January 20th 1987; Vol. John O'Reilly, January 20th 1987; Vol. Michael Kearney, February 18th 1987; Vol. Hugh Ferguson, February 20th 1975. All of whom gave their lives in defence of our right to organize and in resistance to counter-revolution. When the Freedom of our Country and Class has been won, let us guard it well, remembering it was paid for in the blood and lives of those now dead.

Kearney/O'Reilly/Power/ Ferguson.

We the Republican Socialist Prisoners of War, Crumlin Road, Long Kesh, Magilligan, Maghaberry Portlaoise and England, remember with pride our murdered Comrades I.N.L.A. Volunteers: John O'Reilly, January 20th 1987; Ta Power, January 20th 1987; Michael Kearney, February 18th 1987; Hugh Ferguson, February 20th 1975; also our friend Mary McGlinchey, January 31st 1987. The reconstruction of the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class is the only tribute befitting our fallen Comrades - let us now set about this task.

Kearney/O'Reilly, Power/ Ferguson.

In proud and loving memory of Volunteers: John O'Reilly January 20th 1987; Ta Power January 20th 1987; Michael Kearney February 18th 1987; Hugh Ferguson February 20th 1975; and our friend Mary McGlinchey January 31st 1987. Murdered by counter-revolutionaries. They fought to forge the Irish Link in the golden chain of world Socialism and always remembered by the Bristol, London and Glasgow I.R.S.P. support groups.

Kearney/O'Reilly/Power/ Ferguson.

The Irish Republican Socialist Committees North America remember with pride our I.R.S.P./I.N.L.A. Comrades: Vol. Ta Power, January 20th 1987; Vol. John O'Reilly, January 20th 1987; Vol. Michael Kearney, February 18th 1987; Vol. Hugh Ferguson, February 20th 1975 and our friend Mary McGlinchey, January 31st 1987. Murdered by counter-revolutionaries using different labels, but of the same ilk.

Ferguson Hugh Vol. I.N.L.A. 13th Ann. Killed by Counter-Revolutionaries.

In proud and loving memory of Hugh A Socialist Republican of the highest calibre. Will always be remembered by Hugh and Margaret Torney.

Ferguson Hugh Vol. I.N.L.A. 13th Ann. Killed by counter-revolutionaries.

In proud and loving memory of Hugh. A very well thought of, Socialist Republican. Will always be remembered by his friends, Willie and Bernie Smyth.

Kearney Mick (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of our friend

Micky, Vol. I.N.L.A. cut down by a counter-revolutionary gang. His contribution to the struggle was widely known to all, enough said. Will always be remembered by Hugh Torney, Margaret and family.

Kearney Michael (1st Ann.) Volunteer Belfast Brigade I.N.L.A.

Whenever death may surprise us, let it be welcomed provided that this our battle cry may reach some receptive ear and other hands reach out to pick up our weapons to intone our funeral dirge with the staccato of machine gun fire and new cries of Battle and Victory. Ever Onward to Victory. Venceremos. In memory of our friend and comrade Micky, always remembered by Jimmy B. Red, Cookie Geno.

Micky Kearney Volunteer I.N.L.A. Belfast Brigade. In loving memory of

our daddy, who was murdered by the I.P.L.O. on the 18th February 1987. St. Joseph pray for him. We had some happy times Daddy. We had some sad ones too, but the saddest day we ever had, was the day they murdered you. But God is a silent witness, tis he who keeps the score. And those who took our daddy's life will pay for ever more. From your loving daughters Michelle, Sinead and sons Michael, James and baby Paul.

Kearney (Micky) 1st Ann. Cut down by counter-revolutionaries. A dedicated socialist republican. Will always be remembered by Sharkey and Ann.

Kearney, Michael (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of my husband Michael (Micky) Kearney Volunteer Belfast Brigade I.N.L.A. who was murdered by agents of Britain, February 18th 1987. "There is an inner thing in every man, do you know that thing my friend? It has withstood the blows of a million years and will do so till the end" Bobby Sands. Always remember by his loving wife Jeanie and children.

Kearney Michael (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of a good friend and comrade Micky, Volunteer I.N.L.A. who was murdered by scum February 18th 1987. "They may kill the revolutionary but never the revolution." Always remembered by Margaret Power and family circle.

Kearney Michael (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of Vol. Michael Kearney, Belfast Brigade I.N.L.A. who was murdered by British Agents, February 18th 1987. I messe laochra na nGael go raibí se. Always remembered by Tommy, Annie O'Reilly and family.

Kearney Michael (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of our friend and comrade Micky, Volunteer, Belfast Brigade I.N.L.A. murdered by counter-revolutionaries, February 18th 1987. "One does not negotiate the sovereignty of the people. One defends it with arm in hand." Augusto Sandino. Always remembered by Kevin, Joan McQuillan agus clan.

Kearney Mick (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of our friend and comrade Micky, Volunteer Belfast Brigade I.N.L.A. Who was murdered by counter-revolutionaries February 18th 1987, hoclafadh ar la, always remembered by Bap Hughes, Sue and family.

Kearney Michael (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of our good friend and comrade Micky, Volunteer, Belfast Brigade I.N.L.A. "When-ever death may surprise us, let it be welcome provided that this our battle cry may reach some receptive ear and other hands reach out to pick up our weapons to intone our funeral dirge with the staccato of machine gun fire and new cries of battle and victory. Always remembered by Davy, Mary Clinton and family.

Kearney Mick (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of Vol. Micky Kearney I.N.L.A. who was murdered by counter-revolutionaries on 18th February 1987. A dedicated comrade, a committed socialist, always ready with a smile or a joke. Nothing ever got him down. He had so much more to contribute to the struggle - and so it is left to us, the comrades he left behind to continue until victory. Micky along with our other comrades, will never be forgotten. Sadly missed by Liz, Jim and Ciaran.

Kearney/O'Reilly/Power (1st Ann.) In loving memory of my friends and comrades I.N.L.A. Volunteers John O'Reilly, January 20th 1987; Thomas Power, January 20th 1987; Michael Kearney, February 18th 1987; murdered by counter-revolutionaries. "The great appear great because we are on our knees let us arise", James Connolly. Always remembered, never forgotten by their friends and comrades I.R.S.P. Limerick.

Kearney/O'Reilly/Power (1st Ann.) The Republican Socialist Movement in Dublin, remember with pride I.N.L.A. Volunteers, Ta Power and John O'Reilly who were lured to their deaths at the Rosnaree massacre January 20th 1987, also I.N.L.A. Volunteer Michael Kearney who was murdered by counter-revolutionary thugs February 18th 1987. They gave their lives in defence of the primacy of Politics and in persuance of the Workers Republic.

Kearney/O'Reilly, Power. In proud and loving memory of our friends and comrades I.N.L.A. Volunteers, John O'Reilly, Thomas Power 20th January 1987, Michael Kearney, February 18th 1987. Also our good friend Mary McGlinchey, 31st January 1987. Murder for no cause by men of no cause. Always remembered never forgotten by Paddy, Anne Kinneily and family Ennis, County Clare.

McGlinchey Mary (1st Ann.) The Staff and Comrade Volunteers of the Republican Socialist Movement remember with love and pride our good friend Mary who was brutally murdered January 31st 1987. "To live as a republican is to live in the shadow of death."

O'Reilly, John (1st Ann.) Murdered by Scum, I.P.L.O. 20th January 1987. With the help of the Judas touch there is a bridge of golden memories from here to heaven above, that keep you very close to me, it's called the bridge of love. No one knows the heartache or what parting cost, but God in all his glory has gained what I have lost, my arms are aching to hold you, my heart cries out in pain my John, love is something I never know again. I'll never forget the love you gave us in my eyes you will always shine of all the husbands in the world. I'm proud you were mine. Love and miss you always wife Agnes.

O'Reilly (1st Ann.) In memory of our dear daddy John who was murdered by scum I.P.L.O. 20th January 1987. Does a heartache last forever, must it hurt with ever year, will the loneliness leave us never, but stay with us year after year. I'll never grow too old to think of you daddy, that was once, was your memory we will treasure till the end of time. Although we cannot see you, you are with us night and day, for the love daddy we had between us, death cannot divide. Always remembered by his daughter, Alisha and son John.

John Gerard O'Reilly On the first anniversary of our son John, we love and miss you son. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus keep you safe until we meet again. Say a prayer for us. Your mother, father and sister Jean and John Gerard Paul.

John Gerard O'Reilly. On the first anniversary, our life will never the same without you John. Watch over us until we all meet again in a happier place than this. Your big sister Maura, John, Jill and John.

O'Reilly, John (1st Ann.) Vol. Chief of Staff I.N.L.A. In fond memory of my comrade, my friend, my brother John, who was brutally betrayed and killed by a Judas and cowards who hadn't the guts to come face to face on the same terms, but stooped to a level befitting Judas himself. Sleep my brother, sleep. For your ideas your inspiration shall never die, but shall carry on for generations to come, stand by Pearse Connolly. Tone for I know my brother you's are not alone, but watching over the people, the soldiers, that you's loved and left behind for in this war you's know that victory shall be ours. With people like you's for inspiration, we cannot fail from your loving brother Michael, Annemarie and family.

O'Reilly/Murdered 20th January 1987 by I.P.L.O. RIP. In proud and loving memory of our dear friend (John), he died because of his struggle for Socialism, will never be forgotten by those who had the privilege and honour of knowing him. Always remembered by Margaret Power and family circle, St. Anthony pray for him.

Power/O'Reilly (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of Ta and John murdered by Cowards on 20th January, 1987. A little tribute true and tender just to say we still remember. Always remembered and never forgotten by Jeannie Kearney and family.

O'Reilly/Power (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of our friends and comrades, Volunteers John O'Reilly and Ta Power I.R.S.P./I.N.L.A. Slaughtered by counter-revolutionaries January 20th, 1987. We are in business as a serious revolutionary organisation and we are not going to be put out of business by anybody. The IRSP is organised and it's here to stay! S. Costello. Always remembered with pride and sorrow by Kevin, Joan McQuillan agus Clan.

O'Reilly/Power (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of our friends and comrades, Volunteers John O'Reilly and Ta Power I.N.L.A. Murdered by the lowest form of life. January 20th, 1987. We remember their resolution, their uncompromising manner, they were good Socialists, good soldiers and good friends. Always remembered by Tony, Margaret Hayde and family, Joe, Ethel Keane and family, all their friends in Walkinstown.

O'Reilly/Power (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of Vols. John O'Reilly and Ta Power murdered 20th January, 1987. Soft lies the soil that covers their graves, proud be the country that bore them, ever green be the memory of their souls, that have gone to join the soldiers before them. Always remembered by their friends and comrades Gary and Sharon.

O'Reilly/Power (1st Anniversary) In proud and loving memory of our friends and comrades volunteers Ta Power and John O'Reilly I.N.L.A. murdered by counter-revolutionaries on January 20th 1987. We count it as a privilege to have known Ta & John, 2 committed Irish revolutionaries. Not one day goes by when they are not in our thoughts. Their enemies might have killed them hoping to have extinguished forever the Republican Socialist Movement but their thoughts and ideas can never be destroyed. They have given us the courage and determination to continue on the struggle which they were a part of. Will always be remembered by Liz, Jim & Ciaran.

O'Reilly (1st Ann.) Proud and precious memories of my friend John who was murdered and betrayed by the enemy of Ireland RIP. Mary of the Gael pray for him. John O'Reilly has left us now, he's joined that gallant band of men who fought for freedom and died for Ireland. He's with his comrade Ta and now they both can share the wonders of God's Kingdom. For surely they're both there. Remembered with pride by Peter and Geraldine.

O'Reilly/Power Treasured memories of my dear comrades, John and Ta murdered 20th January, 1987. Will never be forgotten by Bap Hughes, Sue and family.

O'Reilly/Power (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of our friends and comrades I.N.L.A. Volunteers John O'Reilly and Ta Power - murdered by counter revolutionaries January 20th 1987. When the undying Republic of Ireland is rescued from the Traidom and shame, you will have a place in her memory and her soldiers will salute your name. Be proud of them, our Martyred dead and in their footsteps let us tread. Always remembered with pride by Davy and Mary Clinton.

O'Reilly/Power (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of Vols John O'Reilly and Ta Power. Murdered on 20th January 1987. The tears we shed are anger based, those callous bastards who were two-faced. But undeterred we'll carry on where you's left off. Always remembered by their friends and comrades Sean and Maura.

O'Reilly/Power (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of Vols. John O'Reilly and Ta Power, murdered 20th January 1987. This day is remembered and silently kept, no words are needed, we will never forget. Always remembered by their friends and comrades Brian and Geraldine.

Power (1st Ann.) In loving memory of my son Thomas Ta, Vol. I.N.L.A. Murdered 20th January 1987 by I.P.L.O. Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on his soul. Like Judas of old they lied and deceived they killed my son for he believed in people in Ireland, in honesty to, but his big mistake he was trusted to, you, your's took my son, your's left me hurt, but the people that's left recognise your's as dirt. Deeply missed and always remembered Mother (Margaret Power).

Power, Ta Murdered 20th January, 1987 RIP. In proud and loving memory of my dear brother Ta. You were home such a short time. We hadn't much time cause the people you trusted cut you down in your prime. I'll never forgive them no matter how long, for what they did to our family murdering you that day, no one could forgive you's in any way. St. Anthony pray for him. Always remembered by his sister, Maria, brother-in-law Terry and families.

Power (1st Ann.) In loving memory of my brother Thomas Ta, Vol. I.N.L.A. Murdered 20th January, 1987 by I.P.L.O. Many a lonely moment often a silent tear, but always a beautiful memory of a brother I loved so dear, so if roses grow in heaven, pick a bunch for me, place them in my brother's arms and tell him they're from me. Sadly missed by his sister Karen and niece Tammy Louise.

Power, Ta (1st Ann.) Murdered by Quislings 20th January, 1987. It is not those who can inflict the most, but those who can endure the most, who will conquer on his soul. Sweet Jesus have mercy. Always remembered by his sister Margaret, Joe and family.

Vol. Thomas Ta Power, 11 Friendly Street, Markets. Murdered 20th January, 1987. A man who would comprise his ideals not treat with a system he found tyrannous as a vile. Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his sister Anne, brother-in-law Chris, niece and nephews. Our Lady of Knock pray for him.

Power, Ta Vol. I.N.L.A 1st Ann. In fond memory of my friend and comrade, Ta who was betrayed and killed by agents of British Imperialism. They feared you most Ta, for when you were alive, for they knew that for you they could not survive, for there, for then they got a man, who could set up a secret plan. To win your heart set upon and then for that you went along. For open minds and open thoughts you did not believe that you'd got caught by people who's thoughts were nought. Sleep my friend Sleep, revolutionary never die but are just away on leave. From your friends Michael, Annemarie and family.

Power/O'Reilly In proud and loving memory of I.N.L.A. Volunteers Thomas 'Ta' Power and John O'Reilly who were murdered on 20th January, 1987. Too good in life to be ever forgotten in death. Always remembered by Red, Paddy and family.

Power/O'Reilly (1st Ann.) In memory of Ta Power and John O'Reilly, murdered on 20th January 1987. RIP Padre Pio pray for him. This day is remembered, and quietly kept, no words are needed. I will never forget. Sadly missed by Oliver, Anne and family.

Power/O'Reilly (1st Ann.) In loving memory of Ta Powers and John O'Reilly, murdered 20th January, 1987. We shared your laughter, joys and tears, we will always remember those wonderful years. Deeply missed by Desy and Geno.

Power/O'Reilly (1st Ann.) In proud and loving memory of Ta and John who were murdered 20th January, 1987. Always remembered by H. and Donna.

Power/O'Reilly (1st Anniversary) In loving memory of Ta and John died 20th January, 1987. RIP. St. Anthony pray for them. Loving memories silently kept, no need for words we will never forget. Always remembered by Willie John and Bernie Smyth and family.

Power/O'Reilly (1st Anniversary) In proud and loving memory of our dear friends Ta and John, who were brutally murdered by a counter-revolutionary gang. Will be forever in our thoughts. Revolutionaries are dead men on leave. Will always be remembered by Hugh Torney, wife Margaret and family.

Power/O'Reilly. In loving memory of our dear friends Ta and John, died 20th January 1987. RIP. No words can say or ever repay, how much we lost on this sad day. Today, tomorrow our whole lives through we will always remember our friendship with you. Mary Queen of the Gael pray for them. Sadly remembered by Bobby and Cathy Tohill and family.

Power, Thomas (1st Ann.) I.N.L.A. Volunteer. Murdered by I.P.L.O. In memory of Ta, a dedicated communist unwavering in his belief in Marxist-Leninist principles, socialism and the working class. Your intellect, energy and optimism will always remain an inspiration to me. Inserted by Steve Coyle, Glasgow.

Power/O'Reilly (1st Ann.) murdered 20th January, 1987. In proud and loving memory of Ta Power and John O'Reilly. A little tribute true and tender just to show we still remember. Sadly missed by friends Bobby, Jimmy B. Red, Oliver, Foreigner, Tommy and H.

Power, Tamurdered 20th January, 1987 RIP. Mary Queen of Ireland pray for him. They say it was not meant to be, yet they fasten the triggers for others to fire. Although how much do I know to speak out at them. I know there will never be a greater man than my brother was. Never forgotten by his sister Theresa.

(1st Ann.) In loving memory of John O'Reilly and Ta Power. Murdered 20th January, 1987. Time goes on and fades away, but memories of you both will always stay. Always remembered by Foreigner, Sharon and family.

We would like to remind our readers that all insertions must reach our office before the end of the second week of the month in which they wish their insertion to appear.





THE STARRY PLOUGH

AFGHANISTAN: AT THE CROSSROADS?

Nowhere in the world is there a better example of the power of the media to distort facts and exercise undue influence in world politics than in Afghanistan. Spectacular "news reportage" portraying a heroic people fighting against incredible odds blots out the truth and unfortunately strikes a very sympathetic chord in too many Irish minds.

The Mujihdeen can only be described as the Contras of Afghanistan. The fact that the real revolutionaries are the government, which asked the Soviet Union for assistance is very successful hidden.

There are also salutary lessons for revolutionaries to be drawn from the different approaches taken by the two sections of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan: the old question of revolution or reform has a direct bearing on events in the Afghan revolution. It is necessary to look briefly at some of the major points leading up to the Revolution of 1978 and the later entry of Soviet forces into Afghanistan.

Because of its geo-political position, Afghanistan has always had an importance out of proportion with its intrinsic value in terms of mineral or agricultural wealth. For the old imperial Russia it was the gateway to a warm water port in the Persian Gulf; it was potentially a means of curbing British colonial power in India and with the emergence of oil as a strategically vital mineral resource, the apparently limitless supplies in Iran and the Gulf in particular were naturally of great potential value.

Britain naturally saw the dangers of Afghanistan and went out of its way to close the gateway through occupation. Afghanistan was and is the cockpit of Asia.

The people of Afghanistan rebelled fiercely and often. Continual skirmishing and frequent larger scale conflict certainly did not contribute to any type of development of society.

The Islamic feudal/tribal system persisted into the 1970's. Women in particular were severely oppressed, being considered as little more than baggage. The illiteracy rate among women was 98%. 85% of the population derived their livelihood from the land, but 5% of the population owned 80% of the land. Discontent and pressure from the mass of the people led to a coup in 1973 when the king's brother-in-law Daoud seized power, and declared a republic. Despite much rhetoric about reform, the situation remained unchanged. This is hardly surprising since the coup was based on a weak bourgeoisie and the old feudal aristocracy.

The burning question of property relations, basically the issue of land, was not tackled. How could it be when those who would lose in the redistribution

made up the government. To give the coup a reforming veneer a section of People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan had four ministers appointed.

The P.D.P.A. was formed in 1965. The first Congress elected Nur Muhammad Tarraki as General Secretary, a central Committee of nine including Babrak Karmal, and ten associate members, one of whom was Hafizullah Amin.

Almost immediately the P.D.P.A. split. Two distinct tendencies emerged: Parcham and Khalq. The difference was in their attitude towards the existing state: the basic question of reform or revolution.

Khalq which included Amin and Tarraki were for revolution whereas Parcham under the direction of Karmal argued for reform. Parcham followed their own arguments and allowed themselves to be used as a "left" cover under the Daoud regime. By taking part in this government, Parcham effectively helped to dissipate the revolutionary fervour which gave the Daoud coup a raison d'être. There were no far reaching reforms. In fact when the revolutionary pressure had been sufficiently reduced, the Parcham ministers were discarded. Khalq, on the other hand, held to Lenin's view on working with the bourgeois state: "To attempt by means of this state apparatus, the abolition of the land-owners' property ... is the greatest illusion, the greatest self-deception of the people. This apparatus can serve a republican bourgeoisie, creating a republic in the shape of a "monarchy without a monarch" .. but carrying out reforms seriously undermining or limiting the rights of capital, the rights of 'sacred private property' not to speak of abolishing them - such a state apparatus is absolutely incapable. This is why we have all sorts of coalition cabinets with the participation of 'socialists', the phenomenon that these socialists, even where individual persons among them are sincere, in reality prove to be a useless ornament or a screen for the bourgeois government, a lightning nod to divert the people's indignation from that government, to deceive the masses ... this ... will be so long as the bourgeois, bureaucratic state apparatus remains intact."

The Parcham element never really accepted the truth of this position even after a difficult re-nification in 1977. Even the concrete example of this that they had been involved in did not persuade them. The re-united Central Committee was split 50-50

between Khalq and Parcham but Hafizullah Amin successfully insisted that the Khalq units in the Army remained under exclusively Khalq command.

The wisdom of this decision became obvious in 1978 when the Daoud regime moved against the P.D.P.A. as part of repressive moves to counter the resurgence of revolutionary pressure. Some leaders of the party were killed while others including Tarraki, Karmal and Amin were arrested. Just before his arrest Amin ordered the Khalq units in the Army to begin the rebellion. The rebellion was successful and a P.D.P.A. dominated government was installed.

Immediately the transformation of society was begun. Peasant debts were cancelled, a campaign to eradicate illiteracy was undertaken, the state took a 51% share of major industries and of course major land reform. The reactionaries and tribal leaders naturally were opposed to these reforms and began an armed counter-revolution. Karmal's Parcham wanted a retreat from these reforms and an alliance with the "progressives" of the middle-classes. These opportunists were posted abroad and later removed from the Central Committee.

The Soviet Union's assistance in the form of material aid was essential for the continued success of the revolution, but as the counter-revolution, backed by Iran and Pakistan, gained in strength many requests (14 in all) were made to the Soviet Union for direct military aid.

However, when the Soviet Union did come to the assistance of the revolutionary government in December 1979, Amin and 97 others were killed. Apparently Soviet leaders took the Karmal line that a "softer" approach with more gradual reform would make the counter-revolution go away. It didn't of course, but the actual instigator of the revolution had been removed and his name blackened (he was accused of being a C.I.A. agent for which allegation absolutely no proof has been forthcoming).

However, the reforms have continued even if without the sharpness and immediacy originally envisaged by Amin. Undoubtedly the revolution has dragged Afghanistan into the modern day despite the support given to the fundamentalist tribal Mujahideen by the United States, Britain, Pakistan and Iran. In an interview given to "The Leninist" 25/9/86, Mohammed Arif, Secretary of the Afghanistan Friendship Society, outlined some of the successes of the revolution. Here we reprint a few sections of the interview.

Question: Could you give us an idea of the changes in the lives of ordinary Afghan women brought about by the

1978 revolution?
Mohammed Arif: Women had hardly moved towards liberation in a thousand years in Afghanistan. The illiteracy rate amongst women was 98%: their position was no better than that of chattel. After the revolution, women were given the same rights as men. Women are now working in factories; there are women in the Party's politbureau, Dr. Ratabzad for example, the Afghan Women's Organisation is playing a very active role in the life of the country and now has a membership of 35,000 women.

The most revolutionary thing our government did was to liberate the women. The counter-revolutionaries imprison women behind veils. A lot of women are teachers in our country and the counter-revolutionaries, when they blow up or destroy schools, shoot all the teachers. They regard it as a sin for women to be able to read!

Question: What about the social front?

Mohammed Arif: On the social front 350,000 families have been given land; one and a half million people have gone through the literacy programmes, debt owed by roughly 10 million people in the country has been abolished. Minorities are protected; they have their own newspapers in their own language.

Question: There have been reports that the government in Kabul only controls some 35% of the countryside outside the towns. What truth is there in this?

Mohammed Arif: The countryside is very mountainous and has many deserts. Anyone there can claim they "control" the area. What matters are the populated areas. In a desert, anyone can wander around and claim they "control" it. It doesn't really matter. What matters is the fact that the government controls all the populated areas, all the agricultural land, all the industry and the people themselves. The counter revolutionaries can claim anything they like. The counter-revolutionaries have been losing the war. They were having recruitment problems. They had to double the wages of their fighters. They've lost contacts with the local population. To make up for these recruitment problems and the other setbacks of the counter-revolutionaries, the Western powers have supplied them with more sophisticated equipment. Afghanistan is still a very poor country and it would be interesting for your readers to know that the total assistance supplied by the Western countries to the counter-revolutionaries is in fact greater than the national output of Afghanistan.

On the military front, our army has been built up to a formidable force. The counter-revolutionaries are fragmented, demoralised, they have no plan for social reform and are only being sustained with help of the United States. They are Afghan contras. They cannot win; the future is rosy for Afghanistan!

Despite Arif's optimism in 1986, 1988 will be a year of great significance for Afghanistan. It is widely rumoured (in Moscow as much as anywhere else) that the Soviet Union will remove its troops in the coming summer. At the same time the present leader

Najibullah, is fervently denying that his government is marxist and that it is in fact a good muslim government.

For this reason some very basic questions must be asked about the reasons for the Soviet withdrawal. Firstly it must be looked at in the context of the world wide public relations campaign being conducted by the Gorbachev administration geared towards making the Soviet Union more "acceptable" to "Western Democracy". Secondly, and inextricably linked with the PR exercise, is the Soviet Unions playing of world power politics geared to its own furtherance as a world power. (as can be seen in Ireland by the undue importance given to the Workers Party because they have a couple of TDs and could influence government policy, whereas the Communist Party of Ireland cannot).

Neither of these perspectives is geared towards the furtherance of world revolution, or for that matter the success of revolutions in individual countries. Afghanistan is being portrayed by the West as the Soviet Union's Vietnam therefore the Gorbachev solution is to negotiate a withdrawal. As a great Power the Soviet Union would obviously prefer not to have a hostile state, particularly an Islam fundamentalist state directly on its border. Thus we find that the government has apparently espoused Islam with Najibullah being portrayed as a good weekly attendee of the Mosque, and claiming that he is not a marxist. No doubt the government will attempt to preserve the immense reforms that it has achieved, but in order to counter balance the fanatical transience of the Afghan contras it will find itself regressing further and further into the old Islamic mould with all its attendant reactionary trappings.

The planned Soviet withdrawal will not be made in the interests of the Afghan people but rather as another move in the great chess-game of super-power politics. Pacification and stability are preferable to the preservation of a fledgling socialist state. It is worthwhile noting what Lenin said about such attitudes: "Petty bourgeois democrats are distinguished by an aversion to class struggle, by the hope of managing without it, by the endeavour to smooth over and reconcile, to take the edge off sharp corners. Such demoscrap therefore either brush aside any recognition of the necessity of a whole historical period of transition from capitalism to communism or regard it as their task to concoct schemes for reconciling the two contending forces, instead of leading the struggle of one of these forces."

Soviet forces should not be withdrawn until the complete success of the Afghan revolution is assured.

Francis Glenn.

Sources

1. "Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat by V.I. Lenin.
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