

James Connolly and the struggle for Marxism in Ireland

by a special correspondent

An essay on James Connolly must start with the world historical crisis of capitalism, and particularly with the decline of British imperialism as a world power. Inseparable from capitalism's crisis is the historical crisis in the leadership of the working class, which can only be overcome through the building of the world party of the socialist revolution, the nucleus of which is the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Ireland was the first colonial country, the first target for British capitalism's expansion, particularly in the waves of settlement which followed the Cromwellian revolution. The briefest glance at Ireland's history shows the meaning of the national question. Oppressed peoples always have long memories, and flashpoints in Irish history — the suppression of the United Irishmen, the Irish Famine, and the execution of the nine 1916 revolutionaries — are part of the living struggle today.

But these historical questions are alive today in very definite conditions of capitalist decay and world capitalist slump which dominate every aspect of Irish life. The world historical perspective elaborated by Trotsky in his theory of Permanent Revolution is the most vital requirement for the Irish working class today.

The historical weakness of the Irish bourgeoisie, now led by Haughey, is being intensified every single day by this world crisis. The war between Iraq and Iran has threatened one of the major oil sources for the Irish Republic's economy, i.e. Iraq, which is particularly serious because the Republic's economy is very dependent on oil. There are of course many other factors in the crisis of the Irish economy. Not least is the very nature of industry in the Republic,

having been built in the fifties, sixties and early seventies on the basis of inflated dollar values. The removal, therefore, of gold backing to the dollar by the American ruling class has created very unstable conditions in the south of Ireland and dictates the destruction of great sections of that industry, and in fact many cases of such liquidation of companies can be cited.

The Haughey government, then, is thrown into deeper and deeper collaboration with the Thatcher government. On the one hand Haughey is paying lip-service to 'Irish unity' — of a sort — but on the other hand all the resources of the state are being mobilised to create conditions for police/military dictatorship against the working class, the first step of which was the use of the army in the tanker drivers' strike, and the cynical use of the capitalist media to wage a scurrilous vendetta against the tanker drivers.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

For many decades until 1969 the British ruling class was quite content to allow the north of Ireland to be ruled by the Orange landowning oligarchy, typified by Brookeborough. The world crisis of capitalism smashed these cosy arrangements. Having dismissed Stormont, the ruling class used the period of Direct Rule above all for international purposes. The north of Ireland is the laboratory for the most vile practices of capitalism. The lessons from here are being applied in every country in the world: we have only to mention internment without trial and criminalisation of political prisoners, along with phone-tapping, surveillance, informing and torture.

The historical weakness of the Irish native bourgeoisie is shown nowhere more clearly than in recent developments in the south. Urged on by the International Monetary Fund to prepare civil war against the Irish workers, Haughey has had a section of his police trained by the West German killer squads. But they in turn got all their expertise from the British SAS. This weakness of the bourgeoisie has therefore the most deadly consequence for the Irish workers. What is posed is the Permanent Revolution, the need for the working class to establish its dictatorship, before the bourgeoisie completes its preparation to rule by naked force.

The bourgeoisie seeks at every turn to keep the working class within the national straitjacket. All the discredited tricks are wheeled out, including a 'Buy Irish' campaign, and calls for import controls to

save industries such as textiles. But by far the most sedulous purveyors of this form of reactionary, anti-working class, anti-internationalist bourgeois ideology are the various groups who comprise the forces of Stalinism and revisionism in Ireland.

An essay on Connolly cannot therefore be an academic exercise, but must concentrate on taking up the fight against these reactionaries, in the building of the Irish section of the International Committee. The revisionists and Stalinists prey on the weakness of Provisional Sinn Fein in its total opposition to the Trotskyist theory of Permanent Revolution. Marxism must pay the closest attention to all aspects of the national liberation struggle against British imperialism in Ireland. Marxists understand that Ireland's history is carried forward into the present, spontaneously by the masses. But the interests of the working class are opposed to the interests of every other class in Ireland. Those who refer to the 'Irish people' cannot answer the simple question: Is Charles Haughey not also an Irish person?

What is posed here is the need for the independent mobilisation of the working class in this Irish national liberation struggle — but this poses immediately also the question of the dictatorship of the working class. Sinn Fein has been unable to put forward a clear socialist programme, necessitating the working class taking power. They state that this will follow after Ireland is united.

That method turns its back completely on the world crisis of capitalism, on the need to build a world party to fight for socialism, and on the mobilisation of the working class. Put briefly, Sinn Fein's radical republicanism has amounted to attempting to harness the working class behind national demands, a replay of the old, tired and discredited theme — 'Labour Must Wait'.

In short, that protest movement, which has included forms of struggle based on individual terrorism, a method rejected by Marxism, has turned its back definitively on the working class as the only revolutionary class in Ireland. Radical republicanism is opposed to Marxism, it does not base itself on the scientific world outlook, the explosiveness of the world crisis and the dramatic effects this crisis has on Ireland. The revolutionary potential of the working class is ignored, and the ability of the Protestant working class to break from Orangeism is denied.

These weaknesses, which will never be overcome by courage alone, are the stuff upon which the Stalinists and revisionists seize. They cynically misuse the name and heritage of Connolly to do this work.

Connolly would turn in his grave. The People's Democracy is one of those groups which has opposed the International Committee investigation into Trotsky's assassination, and has slandered those who have fought to expose the CIA agents inside the American Socialist Workers Party.

But this highlights the most important factor which needs to be stressed in an essay on Connolly. While we are dealing with the weaknesses in Connolly as a Marxist, a sharp line must be drawn between those weaknesses and the cynical use made of them by the Stalinists and revisionists today.

The world crisis is creating the conditions for the Irish working class to develop an international perspective and an alternative, Marxist leadership. The turn to Connolly by the revisionists and Stalinists is the turn away from the history and revolutionary principles embodied in the International Committee of the Fourth International.

What is involved is how the working class in Ireland can fight to survive as a class in this period. All the international experience of the past must become the property of the Irish workers as they cannot avoid the historic struggles of the present. This international experience is Trotskyism, and it is inseparable from the actual construction of the revolutionary party in Ireland.

However, what do the Stalinists and revisionists do? The Stalinists cannot face up to their own bloody history. In Ireland in the 1930s they gave blanket support to Stalin's purges and applauded the assassination of Trotsky. The many revisionist cliques are all renegades from Trotskyism, and can only exist by attempting to throw confusion on the principled history of the International Committee. Their treatment of Connolly starts from a completely subjective standpoint. It must be stressed that an assessment of Connolly, giving him credit where credit is due, is very necessary. Stalinism bears the criminal responsibility for suppressing the development of Marxism since the days of Connolly. The struggle for dialectical materialism and the permanent revolution must go back to 1916. That Irish workers are drawn to study Connolly can be a great source of enlightenment.

But the Stalinists and revisionists wheel Connolly out of the archives, and put him on a pedestal like a saviour of the masses. His works are printed by the Stalinists, biographies abound, and they repeat his statements parrot-like in their papers. But all of this is done in order to escape the experiences of Leninism and Trotskyism.

In the political conditions of Ireland today we have to lay stress on two things. Firstly, to analyse the nature of this particular period of world capitalist slump, and the overpowering effect this crisis has on the political struggle in Ireland. This emphasis on the world perspective is the key to all political knowledge. Secondly, it is necessary to stress above all the type of leadership required to lead the working class, a leadership which must be scientifically based on this world historical perspective.

An assessment of Connolly cannot differ fundamentally from this. We must make a serious analysis of the particular conditions of capitalist development in his period. And the second question posed remains the type of leadership which Connolly gave to the Irish working class. What was the method of Connolly, and how did it meet up to the requirements of the objective crisis of capitalism?

CROMWELLIAN REVOLUTION

The first point that must be stressed above all others, is that Ireland is inseparably connected with the development of world imperialism. As both the first colony, and now the last outpost of the British Empire, it occupies a unique position in the history of capitalism. An analysis of class relations in Ireland must be based on this international perspective.

The English bourgeois revolution led by Cromwell, had enormous implications for Ireland. Trotsky has written about Cromwell, that in everything he did he acted as a consistent bourgeois revolutionary. This is true for his actions in Ireland. To see only the intense repression is subjective, and explains nothing. Vital issues were posed before the English bourgeoisie in the 1640s. It goes without saying that it was quite in the nature of things that colonisation of Ireland be placed on the order of the day. The radical proposals for colonisation, put forward in the writings of such bourgeois intellectuals as Petty, shows the revolutionary nature of the English bourgeoisie. But there were other factors which lay behind this invasion which must not be minimised. Firstly, that Cromwell had met considerable opposition to his rule in England, but since those dissenting petty-bourgeois elements were totally unable to play any independent role, Cromwell was able to suppress them.

There was another most important consideration to which Cromwell had to address himself, a consideration which is pregnant with

meaning for the present. Writers such as Christopher Hill have affirmed that there was considerable opposition among the Levellers, even in Cromwell's army, to the invasion of Ireland. This dictated the type of forces which Cromwell employed, who had to be guaranteed the land and property of the conquered native Irish. If Cromwell invaded so quickly after the English revolution, and if he used such decisive force in Ireland, then this was because of the danger of the Irish revolutionary nationalists linking up with opposition to Cromwell from left-wing elements in England. The revolutionary role of an ascendant class in Britain, its deeply reactionary role in oppressing the Irish people — this is the dialectic that has to be grasped.

WORLD CRISIS

In the 17th century Britain was led by a revolutionary bourgeois class about to colonise enormous sections of the globe. By the beginning of the twentieth century the cracks in the British Empire were widening — capitalism internationally was entering its historical decline. If English capitalism under Cromwell invaded Ireland to consolidate its rule in England, in preparation for world historical feats of expansion, by the twentieth century its thoughts turned to Ireland for the very opposite reasons — for retrenchment, to salvage what it could from the tottering Empire, but above all to protect its class rule on its home base from its own British working class. So the relationship between British imperialism and Ireland provides at every point a clear indication of the crisis in the world capitalist system.

This historical crisis in world capitalism is mirrored sharply in the way that imperialism was driven to seek allies in the Irish native bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. This has great relevance for understanding many of the developments of this century with which Connolly was connected.

There can be not the slightest doubt that British imperialism was totally conscious at the turn of the century that it recognised the main threat to its rule as coming from the united struggle of the Irish and British proletariat. One thing stood between the ruling class and its destruction, the crisis of leadership in the working class. This was expressed at its very sharpest in the most vital and important struggle of the period, the 1913 Lockout of the Dublin workers. There are two things that must be stressed about this experience. Firstly, the criminal role of the British Labour and trade union bureaucracy who by

their servility to British imperialism anticipated their role in the 1914 imperialist war. By their isolation of the Dublin workers in 1913, the bureaucracy showed they had abandoned in practice the whole principle of internationalism. But equally important was the second factor, that neither the syndicalist movements in Britain of 1911-12, nor the syndicalist militant leadership of Connolly and Larkin, were able to challenge the betrayal of the bureaucracy.

However, the main lesson learned by imperialism in this period was the need to create allies for its rule in Ireland, to ward off this threat of a united Irish and British working class. Its preparations in following this strategy were to lead to the partition of Ireland and the creation of a sectarian Orange state in the north.

Imperialism, of course, already had allies in the unionist bourgeoisie all over Ireland, but concentrated in the north. Precisely because it feared the strength of the Protestant working class, highly industrialised and organised in its trade unions, the Unionist ruling class had long since thrown its weight behind Imperialism, and had developed the closest ties with, in particular, the English aristocracy.

But the main orientation of the Imperialists, most overlooked, particularly by Stalinists and revisionist writers, was to cultivate in Ireland allies in the Irish petty bourgeoisie. More precisely, imperialism set out to create a petty bourgeoisie. Ruling by political edict, and backed up by the garrison, the English bourgeoisie had sought to stunt the development of an Irish capitalist class. The classic example of this form of rule, lasting centuries, was the 18th century Penal Laws, aimed at 'legally' transferring all property into English and Protestant hands.

There was very little outlet for the Irish Catholic middle class. A runt of a class grew up around the middle of the 18th century, based on the provisioning of ships in Cork and Waterford. Continually oppressed by imperialism it was never afforded the opportunity of any real organic growth. The contrast with how British capitalism had developed, within feudalism, could not be greater.

Typical of this middle class was the Catholic orator Daniel O'Connell, of whom Marx and Engels held a very low opinion indeed. But O'Connell was the representative, and really only typified the groveling weakness of the Irish middle class towards imperialism. The 'high point' of this middle class was the Catholic Association, and its backbone was the Catholic hierarchy which worked hand in hand with the Association in patronising the peasantry, holding them in spiritual

and intellectual submission to their abject suffering. Noted for their opportunism, they left it to the Presbyterian radicals to catch the spirit and zeal of the French Revolution in the United Irishmen, led by the middle-class intellectuals, Tone and McCracken.

Viewing with disquiet its own historical decline, imperialism set out quite consciously to create a counter-weight to the revolutionary landless masses, and to the working class. Trotsky, writing on the 1916 Rebellion, drew attention to just this petty bourgeoisie, which refused to budge in 1916. How imperialism created, or at least encouraged, the development of this conservative middle class, has great relevance for this study of Connolly.

The mid-19th century Irish Famine is usually referred to as the turning point which ushered in far-reaching changes in the composition of the Irish countryside. However, the Famine merely intensified a process already under way, one in which more and more land was turned over to grass and livestock. With little industry, this inevitably caused great land hunger, which was intensified by the Great Depression lasting from 1873-1896. (The formation of the Land League in 1879 followed the wholesale eviction of tenants.) So the strategy was: how to change a nation of peasants, hungry and rebellious, into a nation of small property owners. This was the origin of the government schemes mentioned by Trotsky in his article. Loans were granted so that the peasant could buy the land. This did not eliminate poverty in the countryside, but did create a conservative force to stand against the landless poor and the emerging proletariat of the towns.

Along with these schemes in the latter decades of the last century, culminating in the Wyndham Act of 1903, came an upturn in world trade at the end of the century. Conditions began to change, which can be appreciated when it is remembered that the price of farm produce such as beef, mutton and butter, had fallen by as much as half during the Great Depression. So, among other things, saving in Ireland took place for the first time, and the petty bourgeoisie very late in the day at last had a hole out of which it could creep.

An important representative of this class was Parnell. His party in Westminster was tied completely to imperialism, depending slavishly for favours on the Liberals or Tories. Nor did Parnell mind which. During the period from 1880-1885 he was simultaneously supporting the Liberals in Parliament and reaching agreements with the arch-conservative Randolph Churchill, that is before Churchill decided it would suit the interests of imperialism better if he befriended the

Orange bourgeoisie in the north. So the inability of the petty bourgeoisie to play a role independent from imperialism was shown even at the start of its political life.

With the menacing growth of the working class this strategy of imperialism was accelerated. The purchase of land was intensified, and a new body called the Congested Districts Board was set up to work with small farmers in the West, where land hunger was most intense. In line with these developments, a Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction was established. But most important, in response to the growth of a petty bourgeoisie, an act of 1898 extended local government to Ireland. Recognising the process already well under way, this act weakened the landlord class by conferring office on local elected bodies, dominated by the merchants and traders of the countryside, many of whom were to play a very conservative, and pro-imperialist role, in giving support to the Treaty which set up the southern bourgeois state of 1921.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

Along with the political demand for national independence, came cultural expression in new forms of literature. Yeats's first poems were published in 1889 and the Abbey Theatre was opened in 1904. Without taking anything away from the quality of this literature, much of the drama and poetry expressed the peculiar insecurity of this middle class. The Catholic hierarchy was at the centre of things. They were the most enthusiastic supporters of the countrywide co-operative movement, founded by Sir Horace Plunkett, and were quite explicit in seeing it as a factor in holding revolution at bay! There was a movement for a growing national identity, typified by the foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893 with the primary intention of assuring 'the preservation of Irish as the national language of Ireland and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue'. Its founders were Douglas Hyde who was a landowner, John McNeill a civil servant and Father Eugene O'Growney, Professor of Irish at Maynooth seminary.

These points are not made to disparage the national movement, or national culture, in the slightest. The proletariat, of course, cannot afford to turn its back on the best elements of national bourgeois culture.

But the problem was, how was this culture to be put at the disposal of the revolutionary class, the proletariat? The weakness of the Irish

middle class meant it could never lead a consistent struggle against imperialism. And although its final sell-out to imperialism took place in 1921, the seeds were sown much earlier. The only class which could lead a consistent struggle against imperialism was the working class, but the question was, how could the working class defend its independence in the midst of this national ideology?

In short, when James Connolly travelled from Scotland to organise a workers' party in Ireland, in May 1896, he was entering a seething cauldron which was Irish political life. How Connolly measured up to that objective situation brings us to the second major factor for consideration in this essay, Connolly's political method.

The task was not to turn away from the national movement against imperialism, and from the growing national awareness in the country, typified by the various cultural movements springing up. Rather it was necessary to build a revolutionary party at the head of the proletariat, based on dialectical materialism, which could place the national question in its world historical setting. This entailed seeing clearly the role which the proletariat must play in Ireland in the modern epoch of imperialism.

It is easier to make the socialist revolution than it is to make a purely national bourgeois revolution, in a country whose national revolution has been delayed by imperialism. This maxim really emphasises the revolutionary nature of the proletariat, the weakness of the native bourgeoisie and middle classes, and the indisputable fact that their interests are totally opposed.

That the interests of the working class in Ireland were quite opposed to the interests of all other classes, was recognised immediately by Connolly. From his earliest writings this is repeated time and time again.

But is this knowledge enough? Certainly not, because it is necessary above all to know how these independent interests can be defended. Moreover, Ireland was a land which had become the centre of European ideological reaction, in which the particular brand of idealism generated by Catholicism prevailed. This has been explained very fully in a former article in *Labour Review*, which dealt with the historical basis for religion in Ireland.¹ Nor is it surprising that the Irish middle class, crushed by the grinding repression of imperialism on the one hand, and confronting the youthful energy of the Irish working class on the other, should in its insecurity find solace in religion, and other forms of idealism. But without the leadership of a

revolutionary party, based on dialectical materialism, able continually to probe and expose these forms of idealism identifying their class roots, the working class stood in great danger of being submerged by this dominant ideology.

Thus, the struggle for leadership in the national liberation struggle, and for the independence of the working class, was inseparable from the development of dialectical materialism, in the recruiting and training of a revolutionary cadre to lead the struggle for workers' power. In this, it must be faced up to squarely, Connolly failed totally. Paradoxically, the reason for this failure, is to be found not so much in Ireland but in Britain, more specifically in Connolly's early training in that country.

It has been established by other writers for *Labour Review* that Connolly made serious concessions to dominant bourgeois ideology, one of the forms of which was religion. But what is most important of all is to establish the political method of Connolly, which allowed the adaptation to take place in the first place.

It needs to be stressed that when Connolly came to Ireland in 1896 to begin the task of building the Irish Socialist Republican Party, he was already 28, a highly developed workers' leader, with a more or less fully formed political method. Those who like to think of Connolly as the great Irish national hero can do so, of course. But the fact remains that he received his political training not in Ireland, but in the British working class movement, It is in that early political training that the key is to be found to understanding so much of Connolly's influence in the Irish working class struggle.

In most of the writing on Connolly, two aspects have not been sufficiently stressed. The first of these is the influence of syndicalism in the early British movement and the extent to which Connolly both absorbed and contributed to these ideas. The second is that while Connolly absorbed certain ideas of the Marxist movement, his position was far removed from that of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

The influence of syndicalism is fairly straightforward. What is important here is the effect syndicalist ideas had on his attempts to build working class parties. The second, Connolly's position as a Marxist, is more difficult to pin down. The key to understanding Connolly's obvious weakness is to understand that he was trained in the school of materialism, but a materialism which was mechanical in form, not dialectical. Therefore it is truer to say that Connolly was more closely connected with those who had preceded Marx, than with

Marx himself. By far the most important work in understanding Connolly's role in Ireland has been done by Pearce and Woodhouse, and this should be fully studied. But by examining Connolly's most famous work, his pamphlet *Labour, Nationality and Religion*, we can see the weakness of this mechanical materialist method.

It is worth quoting from Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*:

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself . . . The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice.

MECHANICAL MATERIALISM

This aspect of Connolly — that he was a materialist of sorts — must be stressed. The revisionists and Stalinists of today are taking materialist-sounding statements of Connolly as part of their efforts to depict him as a fully-fledged Marxist leader. For example, a letter which Connolly wrote to Matheson, a Scottish colleague, and which is dated January 30, 1908, says in answer to a direct question:

For myself, though I have usually posed as a Catholic, I have not gone to my duty for 15 years, and have not the slightest tincture of faith left.

So in private Connolly held one position, in practice quite something else. This apparently contradictory position flows from the method of mechanical materialism. For what it leaves out is the whole question of 'revolutionary practice' which Marx referred to in his thesis. Connolly was able to hold one position in private, but quite another in public. It is worth remarking that towards the end of his life Engels had conflicted very sharply with just that mechanical method, typified by the Social Democratic Federation leadership in Britain. Connolly never broke from that method.

All this becomes very clear in his famous pamphlet on religion. *Labour, Nationality and Religion* was written as a reply to a Jesuit priest, Father Kane, who had made a very fierce attack on Marxism. The Jesuit was not speaking as an individual, his attack was part of a major effort by the Church to discredit the ideas of socialism. Behind it lay not only the highest authorities of the Church, but the whole ruling class. The remarkable thing about Connolly's reply is that it contains both the most vitriolic attacks on the Church, exposing its

historical counter-revolutionary role, and very serious philosophical weaknesses. Connolly's reply, rather than being a major blow for Marxism, makes many concessions to idealism.

The method of his reply is the method of the mechanical materialist. He begins with an analysis of religion, very correct and detailed, from a materialist position. But in the next stage he sets this aside as if of no consequence, and he finishes by replying to Kane on the latter's own ground. Since many of Connolly's weaknesses are contained in this pamphlet, it is worth examining sections at some length.

On historical materialism he says:

It teaches that the ideas of men are derived from their material surroundings, and that the forces which made and make for historical change and human progress had and have their roots in the development of the tools men have used in their struggle for existence.

There is much more on the same theme. He points to the influence of material surroundings upon mental processes and conceptions. This is shown in the vast difference between the primitive conceptions of fishermen on the west coast of Ireland some years ago, with the conceptions of men living in modern conditions today. He also deals with how morality is relative to the ruling ideas of a particular period. Despite this, he remains at the level of mechanical materialism, and it is worth examining his concluding paragraph of this section because it illustrates the barrenness of this mechanical materialism, and the blind alley it must lead to in practice:

As man has progressed in his conquest of the secrets of nature, he has been compelled to accept as eminently natural that from which his forefathers shrank as a manifestation of the power of the supernatural; as the progress of commerce has taken wealth, and the power that goes with wealth, out of the exclusive ownership of kings and put it in the possession of capitalists and merchants, political power has acquired a new basis, and diplomatic relations from being the expression of the lust for family aggrandisement have become the servants of the need for new markets and greater profits — kings wait in the ante-chambers of usurpers like Rothschild and Baring to get their consent for war or peace; Popes have for hundreds of years excommunicated those who put their money out at usury and have denied them Christian burial, but now a Pierpoint Morgan, as financier of the Vatican, lends out at interest the treasures of the Popes. And man caught in the grasp of the changing economic conditions changes his intellectual conceptions to meet his changed environment. The world moves even though men stand still, and not the least of the changes have been those of the ghostly fathers of the Church towards the world and its problems.

From this it is clear that Connolly sees the road to socialism as an automatic process. Left out is the revolutionary practice of the working class, and particularly of its vanguard leadership. Man automatically changes as conditions change. In this process the Church will reach a point when it realises that 'the game is up', and it throws its weight behind the progressive class and socialism. Could a more damaging assertion possibly be made!

It is very clear indeed from a study of even this limited section of his writing, that the road from mechanical materialism to idealism is very swift.

It would be a great disservice to Connolly if we tried to claim that he was unaware of the counter-revolutionary role of religion in Ireland, in dulling the consciousness of the working class in the fight against capitalism. He knows exactly what the political implications are in the setting up of Maynooth seminary, and he quotes the right-wing Catholic orator, Richard Lalor Shiel, who addressed the British government on the occasion of the grant to Maynooth in 1845:

You are taking a step in the right direction. You must not take the Catholic clergy into your pay, but you can take the Catholic clergy under your care. . . . Are not lectures at Maynooth cheaper than state prosecutions? Are not professors less costly than Crown Solicitors? Is not a large standing army and a great constabulary force more expensive than the moral police with which by the priesthood of Ireland you can be thriftily and efficaciously supplied.

The debate with Kane was no academic issue. What was at stake was the building of a revolutionary cadre in the working class. As a mechanical materialist, with no conception of the building of a revolutionary party, influenced greatly in that by the ideas of syndicalism, Connolly was not probing the origins of idealism to educate a cadre in the working class. His conflict with Kane therefore degenerates to the point where he is reduced to quoting from early founders of the Church, who opposed riches, and comparing it with the Church of today.

We can conclude by referring to Connolly's introductory remarks to his outline of historical materialism. He began:

Let us examine briefly the true context of this doctrine. While remembering that there are many good Socialists who do not hold it, and that a belief in it is *not* an essential to Socialism, it is still accepted as the most reasonable explanation of history by the leading Socialists of this world.

This is the classic position of the mechanical materialist. On the one hand Connolly accepts the correctness of the materialist philosophy, but on the other he leaves it aside as if it is of no relevance in the building of the revolutionary party and in the fight of the working class to smash capitalism.

With this method, before he had even begun his answer to Kane, he had conceded victory to idealism. There is only one basis on which to build the revolutionary leadership, which is the foundation of dialectical materialism as a world scientific outlook. This conception must be brought right into the very centre of cadre-training. And having left this aside as being of little relevance, as he infers 'there are many good socialists who do not hold it', it is of little wonder that Connolly was to capitulate to the idealist philosophy dominant in the working class.

Connolly set aside the most important matter, namely that the only theory on which to build the revolutionary party is dialectical materialism. He was prepared eclectically to choose bits and pieces of Marxist teachings and apply them where they fitted. But it is vital to stress the influence which Connolly's syndicalism had on his failure to develop Marxism and build the revolutionary party.

Connolly makes clear that he stands for the social revolution which would abolish private property and ownership of capital and replace it by the Workers Republic. These aims are quite in line with the aims of Marxism. What is at issue, however, is how Connolly proposed this could be done. It is here that his syndicalism needs examination.

Connolly proposed the organisation of the working class in each particular industry in to the industrial union, in which all the workers in each industry would be organised in one union regardless of their trades and crafts. And flowing from this he proposed the One Big Union to which all those industrial unions would be affiliated, the result being, all workers regardless of industry or trade would carry the one membership card.

Connolly placed great emphasis on the strike weapon. Not only did he see the sympathetic strike as the weapon to bring the employers to terms, he also saw the strike as the way in which the working class would develop revolutionary consciousness.

These conceptions, though limited, have a certain amount of truth in them. But we need to go further. Because Connolly combined this with a totally wrong conception of the socialist revolution, which he seems to have seen as an automatic, inevitable process. So his call to

the workers, repeated continually almost to his execution, ran along the lines, 'Be ready to take over industry when the social revolution transfers power into the hands of the working class'. It goes without saying that this is the very opposite to the main arguments of Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* which emphasised above all that there is no automatic process to the working class taking power.

A typical paragraph of Connolly reads:

Ireland without her people is nothing to me, and the man who is bubbling over with love and enthusiasm for 'Ireland', and can yet pass unmoved through our streets and witness all the wrong and suffering, the shame and degradation wrought upon the people of Ireland, aye, wrought by Irishmen upon Irish men and women, without burning to end it, is, in my opinion, a fraud and a liar in his heart, no matter how he loves that combination of chemical elements which he is pleased to call 'Ireland'.

But because Connolly left out of this the building of the revolutionary party, the need to organise the working class independently in order to establish workers' power, his conception was very far removed from the Trotskyist theory of Permanent Revolution. Only the dictatorship of the working class could carry through the establishment of independence from British imperialism. This required unity with the British working class to destroy British imperialism once and for all. Unable to grasp this, Connolly accepted a two-stage revolution, in which he saw the achievement of political independence and the establishment of a bourgeois Republic, as being the precursor for workers' power at some later date. It must be emphasised that although parts of his writing might suggest differently, this was his position in practice.

Syndicalism, which had a great influence on these positions taken by Connolly, was the dominant method in the British working class in the early years of this century, and with which Connolly was intimately connected, before he came to Ireland aged 28, and even long after that. Moreover he was closely connected for much of his life with the great syndicalist movement of the American workers, subsequently the Industrial Workers of the World, and he played an absolutely key role in the formation of the Socialist Labour Party in Scotland, all of which is documented fully by Pearce and Woodhouse.

Particularly important is how a contemporary of Connolly, J.T. Murphy, saw the weaknesses of that early movement. Murphy became a leading British Stalinist, after having worked with Lenin in founding the British Communist Party. We can be sure that his book

Preparing for Power has been read by the Stalinists today who have Connolly up on a pedestal, to be criticised by no-one. Yet the points made by Murphy are very revealing.

Firstly, Murphy points out that Connolly's pamphlet *Socialism Made Easy* had a very great influence in the early syndicalist movements, becoming in fact their basic programmatic document. Secondly, Murphy is quite explicit about the anti-Marxism of Connolly's method. It amounted to saying that provided the working class organised industrially, gradually winning control of the factories, political power would automatically follow. Murphy calls this a definite form of gradualism, in fact reformism.

Murphy is very explicit:

It is as if the revolutionary teaching of Marx and Engels concerning the nature and role of the capitalist state had been forgotten when strategical and tactical questions were being thought out . . . It reduced the part played by a political party to that of a propaganda society instead of raising it to the forefront as the leader of the political struggle. The organisation of the workers as industrial unionists became more important than the transformation of economic struggles into political struggles. The conquest of the state was reduced to the simple proposition of declaring a Workers' Republic by the working class organised one hundred per cent in industrial unions.

And Murphy adds: 'Strange indeed that Connolly of all people, who later led the Irish insurrection of 1916, and met his death at the hands of the State, should be the pioneer and protagonist of this doctrine throughout his lifetime.'

A STALINIST BIOGRAPHY

The main Stalinist biographer of Connolly has been Desmond Greaves. Is it not remarkable that Greaves in his long rambling book, full of all kinds of trivia, should not once mention this analysis of Murphy, particularly as they were fellow travellers in the Stalinist camp at one time.

But this really brings in to sharp relief the vast gulf which separates Connolly from these Stalinist and revisionist hacks, who prey like carrion on his life and memory. The moral and physical courage which Connolly always showed, his inspiring determination, and his fight for the Irish working class contrasts totally with the likes of Greaves. This small incident, his complete ignoring of Murphy's

criticism of Connolly, really indicates in microcosm the despicability of his role.

The Stalinists and revisionists never stress the two main factors, the objective conditions in Ireland and the conceptual equipment with which Connolly approached the job in hand. This was the building of the Irish Socialist Republican Party. Connolly approached this task, in that particular political situation, with just those syndicalist ideas mentioned by Murphy. It was a recipe for disaster. The failure of Connolly in building the ISRP is a very important question for those really interested in building a revolutionary party today. Let us see how Greaves deals with it. He writes:

His failure to stir [?] a lasting mass movement was due not to his own immaturity but to the immaturity of the objective conditions. He was ahead of his time, not behind it. The ISRP was limited by the environment in which it grew. But the key to Connolly's contribution at this period was the struggle against opportunism without which no development was possible.

Greaves as a hardened Stalinist is quite expert at this distortion. Always he emphasises the difficulty of the objective conditions, and draws a picture of Connolly fighting against impossible odds. The purpose is obvious: to prevent any serious analysis of Connolly's weakness being made. So Greaves always works to prevent real lessons being drawn which might be of benefit to the working class today.

The sleight-of-hand, and downright dishonesty, of the following passage is transparent. Greaves claimed:

The programme of the ISRP was thus more advanced than that of the most advanced party in Britain. It may have lacked the sharp analysis of tasks and tactics characterising Lenin's draft for the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which was drawn up almost simultaneously. But to proclaim, at a time when the socialists of oppressed nations were frequently taken to task for their 'nationalism', that the struggle for national independence is an inseparable part of the struggle for socialism entitles Connolly to a foremost place as a political thinker.

Greaves, the Stalinist hack, reduces the question to one of 'sharpness'. But at the very basis of Lenin's building of the revolutionary party was a totally different conception, which philosophically and practically stood in opposition to the conceptions held by Connolly. In *What is to be Done?* Lenin had this to say:

Of course, socialism, as a doctrine, has its roots in modern economic relationships just as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and, like the latter, emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process.

The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia; it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually-developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduces it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arose within it spontaneously.

Greaves, the distorter, while certainly aware of Lenin's real position, nevertheless blurs the differences between Lenin and Connolly.

On the question of the role of the revolutionary party, they were poles apart. And it was impossible to build a revolutionary party in Ireland in Connolly's day, without a clear grasp of the main conclusion reached by Lenin in the above paragraph, and it remains just as impossible today!

Quite the opposite conclusions were reached by Connolly. The ideas of syndicalism, the method of mechanical materialism, led Connolly to minimise the role of the revolutionary party. But what was required was not a propagandist group proclaiming industrial unionism as the road to the Socialist Republic, but a revolutionary Marxist party based on Lenin's conceptions, which could in practice win the leadership of the working class, and in practice establish its ideological independence from the native bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

Trotsky, in his article on the 1916 Rebellion, emphasised that the youthful Irish proletariat, in the absence of a Marxist party, tended to swing between nationalism and syndicalism. These remain the dominant ideologies in the working class to this day. They are cultivated strenuously by the bourgeoisie, and its agents — the revisionists and Stalinists — who work always to obscure the weakness in the ideology of the working class. They do this in order to keep the

working class away from the struggle for state power, and away from the revolutionary party.

But the falsifying by Greaves is by no means over, and space prevents full exposure of his book, the perfect model for deviousness in its most sophisticated forms.

We will give just one example of this: On very few occasions in his book does Greaves venture to make a criticism of Connolly. But sometimes it cannot be avoided, as when Connolly wrote in the American *Harp* magazine:

The first act of the workers will be through their economic organisations seizing the organised industries; the last act the conquest of political power.

Poor Greaves has no option, he has to strike out, but his 'criticism' is tempered to say the least! Again note the crafty sleight-of-hand:

That one to whom the Communist Manifesto was so familiar could thus stand Marxism on its head testified to the utter confusion reigning in the American movement.

Really, Greaves, you must think that your readers are complete idiots not to see through this. However, more is to follow. Having diverted the focus of attention away from the method of Connolly, i.e. his syndicalism, to the 'American movement', he continues by turning the spotlight onto two other leaders of the American movement. He writes:

And the ironic upshot was that the two rival revisionisms of De Leon and Ward Mills . . . presented themselves as the 'right' and the 'left' at the fourth IWW convention. All that was absent was Marxism. The door remained closed to both through lack of the conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and consequently of the role of the working-class party.

The remarkable thing about this is that Greaves never once makes such criticisms about Connolly, yet he is prepared to attack De Leon and Mills here on the role of the party and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It also leaves out the obvious fact: that Connolly in America and at this particular convention was not an innocent bystander, but a leading influence in the struggle there.

Why this strange behaviour on the part of this Stalinist 'historian'? The answer brings us to the very centre of the role of Stalinism, and its cynical use of James Connolly, or more precisely its distortion of Connolly, in holding the working class back from the revolutionary party.

Stalinism in Ireland has pursued one aim above all others: it has viciously and deviously opposed the Trotskyist theory of Permanent Revolution as an historically proven law of the development of world capitalism.

Irish history is absolutely littered with examples of how in a country whose development has been delayed and distorted by imperialism, the native bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie are totally unable to conduct a struggle which can unify the country, and unite the masses to drive imperialism out. The Irish bourgeois leaders such as Collins and Griffith, who accepted the Treaty with its partition of the country, giving imperialism another lease of life in Ireland under two reactionary regimes, could not make this historical law more clear. As if that were not enough, the whole struggle in Ireland since then has reinforced these lessons. The Republican movement in recent years has been incapable of winning mass support behind a campaign of individual terrorism, and their use of socialist terminology is skin deep, which is shown in the consistently reactionary position towards the Protestant workers of the north, as they are thrown in their tens of thousands onto the dole.

But if many youth turned to individual terror as a method to attempt to drive the British army out of Ireland, then the fault lies squarely with the Stalinists who have consciously held back the working class from playing its rightful role in the national liberation struggle.

The main crime of the Stalinists has been to prevent the historical lessons being learned. Greaves completely obscures the real lessons of the 1913 Lockout in Dublin. The Lockout posed the need to build the revolutionary party in Britain and Ireland to defeat the trade union and labour bureaucracies. It was the British trade union bureaucracy which drove the final nail into the coffin of the 1913 struggle. The syndicalists, including Connolly and Larkin in Ireland, were unable to challenge that bureaucracy.

And the failure to build a revolutionary party, in those revolutionary conditions, was the greatest gain for imperialism, and the greatest blow for the working class and the national liberation struggle. Greaves writes:

Lenten pastorals denouncing socialism and syndicalism had no influence on the starving workers. Connolly challenged the hierarchy to name one point the union had refused to concede which the Archbishop himself, placed in the same position, would have conceded. Men now signed the

Murphy pledge, but many remained members of the union. They continued to pay their subscriptions at Liberty Hall. There were no sackings. The pledge for which the capitalists had starved, murdered and tortured men for eight months was now reduced to a scrap of paper whose provisions they could not enforce. They could humiliate their returning employees, scoff at their emaciation and raggedness. Yet the battle was drawn. The employers had gained nothing they set out to gain. Their weaker members were bankrupt, and they dare not repeat their challenge to labour. It was too strong. But the Irish national struggle had been dealt a deathly blow.

But Greaves continues immediately with this:

In his weekly articles Connolly showed deep insight into the dynamics of the struggle, its importance for the British working class, and its connection with the Home Rule question.

What Greaves is referring to in Connolly's 'deep insight', is his work after the Lockout, the pamphlet *Old Wine in New Bottles*, in which Connolly attempts to answer the question of bureaucratisation in the workers organisation, which he had first had experience of in the Lockout. But all that Connolly could respond with, was to urge return to the old syndicalist ideas, that the sudden strike, he claimed, had 'won more for Labour than all the great labour conflicts in history'.

But, in fact, the battle was not 'drawn'. The central issue was the question of the Marxist party to lead the working class to power, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to resolve the outstanding national issues. Greaves completely distorts this role for the working class and the revolutionary party. The Stalinists want the working class to tail behind the national struggle at every stage.

DUBLIN LOCKOUT

The historical importance of the 1913 Lockout resides in the fact that the Irish native bourgeoisie were so weak, having been pillaged for centuries by imperialism, that they were forced to strike this blow against the Irish proletariat, not after the national struggle against imperialism got under way, but before. Greaves, by treating the 1913 Lockout as purely industrial struggle, ignores. For the Stalinists, there can be industrial struggles for pay, conditions etc; but these must remain at the level of trade unionism. The question of workers

power, that the working class must establish its dictatorship over all other classes, not just driving out the imperialists, is obscured.

This is linked to complete hostility to the British working class. The Irish working class has only got one real ally in the struggle against British imperialism — the British revolutionary proletariat, represented by its conscious Marxist leadership. This requires the perspective, not just of driving imperialism out of Ireland, but of destroying it lock stock and barrel. The revolutionary unity of the Irish and British working class has its most conscious enemy in Stalinism, and this is really what the Stalinist emphasis on the national side of the struggle in Ireland is all about. The Stalinists are the professional purveyors of the poisonous ideology of two-stage revolution, first to set up a 'democratic' republic, which would necessarily be bourgeois, then later socialism would follow. How much a republic would be 'democratic' they never spell out. What would be the composition of the army, police and law courts? If workers challenged the power of this 'democratic' but capitalist state, would the powers of 'democracy' not be used to intern and kill workers and socialist leaders?

In opposition to Greaves, the 1913 Lockout struggle must be seen as a great defeat for the Irish workers, the lessons of which must be learned today. It was a defeat because ideologically the workers remained tied to bourgeois ideology, the struggle never transcended syndicalist aims, the question of workers' power was not posed, and the revolutionary party was not built. The Irish workers today must take inspiration from the combativity of the Dublin workers of 1913, but must negate the weaknesses of that struggle in building the revolutionary party today. The Stalinists are resolutely opposed to this perspective.

The Stalinists can never make straightforward use of Connolly's writings — he was too much of the revolutionary for that to happen. Time and time again, we see that Greaves has to doctor some of Connolly's positions. Take for example one of Connolly's most famous statements, that the working class in Ireland was the 'only incorruptible inheritor' of the fight for Irish liberation. Even if this is vague on the exact role which the working class must play, Greaves has to distort it. He writes:

The issue of national independence (political and economic) is the crux of Irish politics. If, as was Connolly's mature and considered opinion, the national revolution takes precedence, then the working class is not the only revolutionary class. It may be the 'only incorruptible inheritor' of the fight

for Irish freedom, but it is not the sole legatee. It can expect allies, even if some of them are temporary, and the question arises of who they shall be.

Of course, the working class can expect 'allies' in the struggle against imperialism. To pose the question like this, as we will see, is typical of Stalinism. The real question that is posed, is how to defend the interests of the working class as an independent force against all other opposing classes, in the struggle against imperialism.

But Greaves compounds the confusion on the issue by the following gibberish:

The evolution of Connolly's thought on this subject exactly corresponds to that on the relation between the two revolutions. While he identified them, he sought to make all republicans socialists. Then during his syndicalist days, the conception of 'seizing and holding' the means of production ran parallel with political Sinn Fein. [!] His last writings, however, show that, especially after January 1916, he was adumbrating the conception of the National Front, or alliance of the forces making for liberation. Their victory would lead to the establishment of a national revolutionary government resisting imperialism without, and suppressing its agents within the country. This was the 'first stage of freedom'. Before he died he had advanced far beyond the formulations in *Labour in Irish History*. During this period those capitalists who accepted the National State were to be left in possession of their capital.

This is the fraud which has been perpetrated by this Stalinist, which has been unanswered by any of the bourgeois academics who have written on Connolly, quoting Greaves approvingly. The political contortions he gets into, over Connolly's innocuous phrase about the working class being the 'incorruptible inheritor' of the fight for Irish liberation, has to be seen to be believed. This alone shows the thoroughly reactionary nature of not only Greaves' book, but the whole Stalinist policy towards Ireland.

This, the fact that the struggle for the socialist revolution of the working class against capitalism is inseparably connected to the national liberation of Ireland from imperialism, was and remains today the most central question in politics. What must be imprinted on the consciousness of every worker is the complete inability of the native bourgeoisie to play a consistent role in fighting imperialism, and the consequent necessity to build the Marxist leadership.

Writing on the Chinese Revolution and the attitude of the working class towards the Kuomintang, Trotsky commented:

The Chinese bourgeoisie is sufficiently realistic and acquainted intimately

enough with the nature of world imperialism to understand that a really serious struggle against the latter requires such an upheaval of the revolutionary masses as would primarily become a menace to the bourgeoisie itself. If the struggle against the Manchu Dynasty was a task of smaller historical proportions than the overthrow of Tsarism, then the struggle against world imperialism is a task on a much larger scale; and if we taught the workers of Russia from the very beginning not to believe in the readiness of liberalism and the ability of the petty-bourgeois democracy to overthrow Tsarism and to destroy feudalism, we should no less energetically have imbued the Chinese workers from the outset with the same spirit of distrust.

ALLIES AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Greaves writes about how the working class can expect 'allies' in the fight against imperialism in such a manner as to sow the greatest illusions in the native bourgeoisie. Marxists certainly have never discounted such alliances, but have never for a moment separated this from the socialist revolution. This, after all, was the lesson of Lenin's April Theses, and the successful carrying through of the October Revolution, against the native bourgeoisie represented by Kerensky. Trotsky was quite explicit about such concrete situations when he wrote about the lessons of China:

It goes without saying that we cannot renounce in advance such rigidly delimited and rigidly practical agreements as serve each time a quite definite aim.

Greaves, note this well! The Stalinists try to slander Trotskyism as being 'ultra-left', but about such alliances Trotsky prefaces his remarks by 'it goes without saying'; in other words it is almost too obvious to Marxists even to bother mentioning. Trotsky is saying that anybody with the least class consciousness would understand the need for unity between all those who are genuinely fighting imperialism, so much for Greaves' slanders about ultra-leftism which litter his book! About these practical agreements Trotsky is most explicit. He continues immediately:

For example, such cases as involve agreements with the student youth of the Kuomintang for the organisation of an anti-imperialist demonstration, or of obtaining assistance from the Chinese merchants for strikers in a foreign concession, etc. Such cases are not at all excluded in the future, even in China . . . The sole 'condition' for every agreement with the

bourgeoisie, for every separate, practical and expedient agreement adapted to each given case, consists in not allowing either the organisations or the banners to become mixed directly or indirectly for a single day or a single hour; it consists in distinguishing between the Red and the Blue, and in not believing for an instant in the capacity or readiness of the bourgeoisie either to lead a *genuine* struggle against imperialism or *not to obstruct* the workers and peasants. For practical and expedient agreements we have absolutely no use for such a condition as the one cited above. On the contrary, it could only cause us harm, running counter to the general line of our struggle against capitalism, which is not suspended even during the brief period of an 'agreement.'

Trotsky adds, in what could be a biting attack on present day Stalinists and revisionists;

As was said long ago, purely practical agreements, such as do not bind us in the least and do not oblige us to anything politically, can be concluded with the devil himself, if that is advantageous at a given moment. But it would be absurd in such a case to demand that the devil should *generally* become converted to Christianity, and that he use his horns not against workers and peasants but exclusively for pious deeds. In presenting such conditions we act in reality as the devil's advocates, and beg him to let us become his godfather.

Those who set out to use the writings and struggles of a man like Connolly to make them fit their own subjective analysis, always end up in difficulties. Firstly, no matter what Greaves tries to suggest, Connolly held to his syndicalist ideas right to the end. His analysis of the failure of the 1913 struggle, *Old Wine in New Bottles*, added nothing to his early SLP syndicalist ideas. Secondly, and more importantly, Connolly was a genuine workers leader, he fought courageously inside the working class. And because of that, very much of his writing tends to emphasise the political bankruptcy of the native Irish bourgeoisie and their highly treacherous role. Never forget the very tense relations existing between both Connolly and Larkin on the one hand, and the founder of Sinn Fein, Arthur Griffith, on the other. If this essay is emphasising the harsh lesson that this class instinct, correct as it was, proved totally inadequate in the struggles of the working class, it should not blind us to the chasm existing between Connolly and the present day reactionaries who claim him.

Typical of much of Connolly's earlier work is his study of Irish history published in 1910 *Labour in Irish History*. Almost all of this work is devoted to one aim, to show the irreconcilably conflicting interests between the Irish working and peasant classes, and the Irish

native bourgeoisie. So much of Connolly's writings emphasise just that truth, and in this book he quotes historical incidents freely to prove his point. This stands in complete conflict with the Stalinists today, so they are disparaging towards such writing, while they portray Connolly as growing more mature later on.

In fact quite the opposite is the case. Connolly's work degenerates, as we will see, and the key is to be found once more in Connolly's basic method. *Labour in Irish History* is the perfect example of this method. The work describes how the interests of the working class are quite separate, but it leaves out how this independence can be achieved. It leaves out the construction of the revolutionary party, and therefore the correct research is emptied of real content.

This is shown in Connolly's summary at the end of the book:

As we have again and again pointed out, the Irish question is a social question. The whole age-long fight of the Irish people against their oppressors resolves itself in the last analysis into a fight for the mastery of the means of life. Who would own and control the land? The people, or the invaders; and if the invaders, which set of them — the most recent swarm of land thieves, or the sons of the thieves of a former generation?

But the conclusion Connolly draws from his study is contained in this very tame conclusion:

The revolutionists of the past were wiser, the Irish socialists are wiser today. In their movement the North and South will again clasp hands, again will it be demonstrated, as in '98, that the pressure of a common exploitation can make enthusiastic rebels out of a Protestant working class, earnest champions of civil and religious liberty out of Catholics, and out of both a united social democracy.

The weakness is apparent. In his book Connolly has emphasised the inseparable interconnection between the socialist revolution, and the freeing of Ireland from imperialism; he has stressed that all revolutionary movements in Ireland had been inspired by international developments; he also quoted from Marx to explain the material roots to the Fenian struggle. Yet he ends with no more than a few pious wishes!

Connolly was entering into the most revolutionary developments, where only a thorough grasp of dialectical materialism could hope to untangle the complexity of the Irish national question, without any perspective for building the revolutionary party. In the absence of such a perspective, Connolly and the working class lay open to the

most severe ideological battering. It was the latter, rather than the physical repression, that was to finally defeat the working class.

The weakness in Connolly's whole method is quite apparent at this stage. One of the conclusions he drew in *Old Wine in New Bottles*, after the Lockout, was that: 'Fighting spirit is of more importance than the creation of the theoretically perfect organisation.' In his analysis of the most decisive struggle which the Irish working class has yet entered, Connolly was forced back to — syndicalism! Greaves has no grounds whatsoever to infer that Connolly moved away from syndicalism as the 1916 Rebellion approached. But without a political method based on Marxism, it was inevitable that Connolly's writings should become more confused as the crisis developed. The great crime of the Stalinists is that they hide Connolly's weakness, and they now depict Connolly, in his writings leading to the 1916 Rebellion approached. But without a political method based on Marxism, it was inevitable that Connolly's writings should become more confused as the crisis developed. The great crime of the Stalinists is that they hide Connolly's weakness, and they now depict Connolly, in his writings leading to the 1916 Rebellion, as Connolly the mature revolutionary.

In an article, *Trust your leaders* published on December 4, 1916, Connolly was writing as a revolutionary nationalist, not as a Marxist leader:

We want and must have economic conscription in Ireland, for Ireland. Not the conscription of men by hunger to compel them to fight for the power that denies them the right to govern their own country, but the conscription by an Irish nation of all the resources of the nation, its land, its railways, its canals, its workshops, its docks, its mines, its rivers and streams, its factories and machinery, its horses, its cattle and its men and women, all co-operating together under one common direction that Ireland may live and bear on her fruitful bosom the greatest number of the freest people she has ever known.

Greaves is bowled over by this. It falls exactly in line with all the Stalinist efforts today to tie the Irish working class behind the demands of bourgeois nationalism. This cynical reactionary refers to the above:

This remarkable passage shows Connolly's thought at its maturest and most profound. The coming revolution in Ireland was to be a 'people's revolution' leading not to the formal democratic republic of the bourgeoisie, but to a 'popular republic' as it might be called today. Moreover, all trace of syndicalism was now sloughed off in the heat of

mental and practical struggle. The cohesive force was to be the direction of a democratic state.

For this Stalinist these passages of Connolly are perfect for his treacherous role in tying the working class to the bourgeoisie. Thus the working class is diverted from the struggle for state power, and kept politically subject to the bourgeoisie. This is complete liquidationism, the sinking of the interests of the Irish working class with those of the bourgeoisie.

Greaves states that Connolly 'made matters clearer still' in the *Worker's Republic* of January 15, 1916:

As the propertied classes have so shamelessly sold themselves to the enemy, the economic conscription of their property will cause few qualms to whomsoever shall administer the Irish Government in the first stage of freedom.

All the material of distribution — the railways, the canals, and all the land stolen from the Irish people in the past, and not since restored in some manner to the actual tillers of the soil, ought at once to be confiscated and made the property of the Irish State . . . [original emphasis] all factories and workshops owned by the people who do not yield allegiance to the Irish Government immediately on its proclamation should at once be confiscated and their productive powers applied to the service of the community loyal to Ireland, and to the army at its service.

But the political fraud foisted onto the Irish working class by this cynical use of Connolly's weakness is compounded when he continues by drawing a direct parallel between Lenin and Connolly. Following these passages Greaves states: 'Such phrases as "the first stage of freedom" recall the approach of Lenin in *Two Tactics*'. This is a favourite trick of the Stalinists in writing about Connolly, picking out a phrase of Lenin's, totally out of context, and then making the most far-reaching assertions on no evidence at all.

APRIL THESES

The Stalinists never explain that Lenin rejected this position emphatically in April 1917 when he returned from abroad to lead the revolution. In the famous April Theses he denounced those, including Stalin, who wanted to tie the working class behind the national democratic demands of the native bourgeoisie, and if he had not taken this position the working class would have been smashed. Greaves is

guilty of the greatest crime when he writes of Connolly's position as being similar to Lenin's:

Here was not state above classes, dependent solely on the 'ballot box'. Here was a people's state, pursuing a people's policy and supported by the people in arms.

But a section of these 'people', i.e., the Irish bourgeoisie, was to organise the counter-revolution, it was to be armed by Churchill, and was to shoot and hang other sections of the Irish 'people', i.e. the working class, by the score, to consolidate its rule. And today the same section of the Irish 'people' led by Haughey are being prepared by the German secret police in the most brutal forms of repression to deal with Irish workers. It is time that these Stalinists are politically exposed and smashed! Such ideological poison is the surest guarantee the Irish capitalists have of smashing the working class!

Stalinism has been totally responsible for encouraging the theories of Menshevism in the Irish working class. The idea that there can be two stages, first the national democratic, then the socialist, is the most disastrous idea that it is possible to cultivate in a semi-developed country such as Ireland. The British Stalinist Greaves carries this poison further than any of the Stalinist trained cadre of the Thirties. And the policy of the Communist Party of Ireland, on every single issue, has been influenced by this distorted analysis of Connolly.

This has been carried on mainly by A. Raftery in Ireland. Raftery writes in the journal of the Irish Stalinist movement (*Irish Socialist Review*, No.2, 1975):

Towards the end of his life, as his contribution to history, William O'Brien got the ITGWU to publish the collected writings of James Connolly. You could say that it's from that publication that the realisation came that Connolly was something more than a nationalist, something more than a labour leader, something more than a proletarian leader who had Marxist leanings. It is only since the publications of these writings that it became possible to see that Connolly was an original Marxist thinker. Arising from that you had the publication by New Books in Dublin of the cheap editions of Connolly's works, but the big breakthrough so far as a popular recognition of Connolly was concerned came with the 1916 Anniversary in 1966, and it's from that that we can really trace the explosion of interest in Connolly.

Here we have Connolly depicted as an 'original Marxist thinker'. It is true that with the ending of the boom, and the development of the crisis, workers and youth in Ireland did begin to research Connolly's

work. This was of course a very progressive development. However, the Stalinists saw this interest in Connolly as an opportunity to wall these youth off from the tradition of Leninism, carried forward by the International Committee of the Fourth International, the only inheritors of Trotskyism. In this, the timing of Greaves' book, 1961, itself is significant. In other words, Connolly was brought forward as the 'Irish Marxist', in order to evade the whole implications of Bolshevism. The richest experiences ever made by the working class were to be thrown to the side by the Stalinists. That Ireland would produce its own Lenin, and its own brand of Marxism, falls perfectly in line with the reactionary Stalinist theory of socialism in one country!

Furthermore, Connolly was resurrected, as Raftery admits, at the time of a national commemoration, in 1966, and this also suited perfectly the Stalinist plans to emphasise the national question in Ireland, and push the independent struggle of the working class for socialism into the background. It became necessary to give this reactionary strategy a pseudo-Marxist gloss, which is exactly what Greaves did.

The heart of the Stalinist method is anti-internationalism. They reject the central thesis in the *Communist Manifesto*, that capitalism has created a world market, that the working class is completely international, that a world leadership must be built. The crude attempt of the Stalinists to tie the working class to nationalism, is tied in with their portrayal of Connolly as blazing some Irish 'Marxist' trail to socialism, quite independently from the development of the working class internationally. So Connolly's isolation from Bolshevism in Russia is not a problem when the Stalinists come to assess Connolly! The poisonous meanderings of Raftery illustrate this well:

Desmond Greaves' book is in many ways a definitive life, but I have always felt that his summing-up of Connolly, of whom he writes, 'He lacked the philosophical equipment for the fine analysis of concepts,' and that he belonged to the 'middle stage' of the Labour movement, is an underestimation of Connolly's originality.

From looking at particular phases of Connolly's development it's possible for all kinds of people to claim him. We have had Connolly presented as a syndicalist, we have even had him presented as a forerunner of Christian democracy. If you look at Connolly whole you see the development of an original Marxist thinker. The mistakes are part of that development. If you look at the development of any great leader or any great thinker, they made mistakes and learned from their mistakes and mistakes are part of their development. We accept that Marx changed and recognised mistakes

and failures. Connolly's failures are not failures that show weaknesses as a theoretician (!), or show mistakes in lines of policy, they are part of the development of Connolly as a Marxist thinker. They are part of the creating of the full Marxist analysis of the Irish situation which he developed towards the end of his life. He was far ahead of any other development of Marxism in Europe at the time, apart from the Bolshevik Party. The idea that leaders and thinkers somehow emerged fully grown and fully developed, and knew from the beginning where they were going and went straight to the end, is a myth developed at a particular period.

Raftery is attempting to pull a confidence-trick on the reader. In the patronising paragraphs above, he is laying a basis for the treachery which is to follow. He tells us that everybody makes mistakes! But this remarkable piece of information has a very definite purpose. He is suggesting there is no need to dwell for too long on these 'mistakes' of Connolly.

This is nothing different from Greaves, and in fact Raftery merely puts forward Greaves in a slightly different form. He refers to Connolly's early writings, when Connolly was emphasising the conflict existing between the Irish working class and national bourgeoisie like this:

Connolly's first phase as a socialist is with the formation of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, and already in the title he linked the two together — the fight for national independence and the fight for socialism. His writings at the time still had a rather sectarian socialist approach in relation to the other forces that existed in Ireland. His attitude then was to a large extent that only the socialist movement, only the working class could be relied on to fight against imperialism and even in *Labour in Irish History* there was to an extent a reflection of this attitude. For instance, in his analysis of Grattan's Parliament and of Daniel O'Connell there was an underestimation of the objectively progressive things that happened at those periods. Grattan's Parliament for instance, to an extent maintained a certain economic independence as far as Ireland was concerned. Connolly underestimated this. That was part of his development. At that time anything that could be labelled capitalist he saw as bad. It was later that he came to the realisation that you must analyse the forces in a society, not just label them, to see where they're going, and on that basis he later built his mature philosophy. Again, Connolly, even though he may have formulated things in a rather sectarian way in his early days, in practice was in fact co-operating with other anti-imperialist forces. During the Boer War, for instance, and the visit of Queen Victoria he co-operated with Maud Gonne and Arthur Griffith in the pro-Boer demonstrations and in demonstrations against the visit of Queen Victoria.

Later Raftery repeats this:

Theoretically the significance of Connolly and 1916 is this, that it shows in practice his development of the ideas of allies. In his earlier phase he adopted the attitude 'only a socialist movement and only the working class', but from the time of the outbreak of the World War, and even before, Connolly was developing the idea of allies.

The method of this Stalinist is totally subjective, and with all such subjectivism, leads in to all kinds of contradictions. The issue was not, of course, the question of the working class co-operating with other classes in the common fight against imperialism at all, but of how the working class could defend its independent interests. And it is Connolly's weakness on this that Raftery proceeds to obscure. So he continues:

The mistake that many people make is to say that Connolly had left the labour field and gone into the nationalist field. Sean O'Casey said this and it was completely and utterly incorrect. Connolly maintained a separate socialist organisation, a separate working class army. But he began to co-operate with forces outside these.

So, everything is fine! Or is it? But what is this 'socialist organisation' and 'separate working-class army' to which Raftery refers? Everything in his article infers that this is the Irish parallel with the Russian Bolshevik Party and Red Army. But later, in the very same article, Raftery states:

Connolly concentrated, after the outbreak of war, on the Citizen Army. Connolly was in a tiny minority and had to find whatever vehicle he could for revolution.

It is not difficult to see that the idea of finding 'whatever vehicle he could for revolution' is a million light years away from the conscious struggle of Lenin to build the revolutionary Marxist party. This was Connolly's main weakness. Raftery has hidden it, but cannot avoid it. And as always, the Stalinists end up blaming either the objective conditions (Greaves), or in Raftery's case, the working class itself. He writes:

The weakness in the Irish labour movement was that it did not apply itself to the practical problems of the day and find working class answers for them. The ITGWU played virtually no role during 1916. Only a hundred-odd men went out with Connolly.

Of course, Raftery calls Connolly's work on religion, *Labour Nationality and Religion*, a 'tremendous popular defence of Marxist

positions'. On this question, Raftery is deliberately confusing. He claims:

He [Connolly] realised that while there could be discussion and argument within the party and outside on religious questions, that for the party to adopt anti-religion as its policy was to isolate it from the people. Religion is a question for the individual. It is not a party matter.

But contrary to the claims of this petty bourgeois Stalinist, religion, as one of the dominant forms of idealist bourgeois ideology, is very much a party matter. What is at issue in the Stalinist position is not the need for great sensitivity to the religious feelings of workers by the revolutionary party, but the very conception of building the revolutionary party itself.

CHURCH AND POLITICS

What needs stressing is the connection between Connolly's syndicalism and the need to take up a struggle against Catholicism as the dominant ideology of the emerging petty bourgeoisie in Ireland. The mainstay of Connolly's arguments on religion, much promoted by the Stalinists and revisionists, was Connolly's insistence that the Church stay out of political life, and the working class leadership should respond by not dabbling in theological questions. As if those 'theological questions' could be separated from the material development of the real world!

That has nothing whatsoever to do with Marxism, rather is influenced by the secular tradition in 19th century republicanism, itself a throw-back to the French Revolution. The Catholic Church in Ireland has existed by making concessions to native beliefs, even back to early Celtic paganism. A decisive point was reached, however, in the mid-nineteenth century when Cardinal Cullen undertook a determined reorganisation of Church structure, establishing a centralised leadership in the form of the Hierarchy, and insisting on firm discipline.

Just as the recent visit to Ireland by our present anti-communist successor to Peter is very much connected with the onrush of the social revolution, so Cullen's organisation of the Church along those lines had also a very political purpose. The Church's ear was very finely attuned to the development of social forces, it decided to link up in the most intimate way possible with the conservative petty

bourgeois layer, against the working class. And British imperialism, in grant-aiding Maynooth, was quick to see the advantages. The result was an extremely class conscious and political clergy, very aware of the dangers of socialist revolution, and determined to use every card in the game to ward off socialism.

In this context, the tradition which has always existed in Ireland, of the isolated priest refusing to toe the hierarchical line, is a totally reactionary one, doing little more than providing a necessary safety valve for the Church and the bourgeoisie. In the time of the Fenian movement, one such 'rebel' was a Father Patrick Lavelle, and when Cardinal Cullen typically refused a lying-in-state for a well known Fenian, Lavelle preached at his funeral. He later delivered a lecture entitled 'The Catholic doctrine of the right of revolution'. His sympathy was not welcomed by the Fenians. According to F.S.L. Lyons, an Irish historian, the columns of the Fenian paper, the *Irish People*, each week beat out a steady refrain — 'no priest in politics' — and Lyons adds:

There had been a moment in the 'fifties when it had seemed as if the terms 'catholic' and 'nationalist' might end by becoming synonymous. The dispute over Fenians averted this danger, partly because the Fenians themselves were determinedly non-sectarian in the tradition of Tone and Davis, still more because by the very firmness with which they confronted the leaders of their own Church they showed that the Irish laity were not subservient in political matters to its religious mentors. For them the separation of Church and State was not empty phrase, but a principle which lay at the very heart of their programme. By maintaining that principle in circumstances of great difficulty they made a contribution of incalculable value to the development of Irish nationalism.

But praiseworthy as these sentiments were, they have nothing whatsoever to do with Marxism, as the Stalinist Raftery claims. This is the tradition which Connolly inherited when he wrote about religion, in direct antithesis to Marxism. The Stalinists' attempt to marry religion and Marxism has been taken up and carried to the most absurd lengths by the latest revisionist work on Connolly, *Connolly's Marxism*, a book published by the revisionist printing house, Pluto Press; This passage is typical:

If the economic and social life of the ancient Gael had developed in Ireland an enduring sense of collective values, the religious observance of his medieval descendants had contributed universal Christian values which remained fundamental to the modern Irish consciousness. In his own

lifetime — regarded by him as the period of maturing international capitalism — Connolly argued that only under a socialist order could these values again become actualised in social practice.

To all those Stalinists and revisionists, who attempt to breach Marx's materialism through such use of Connolly, it is necessary to repeat again the advice of Marx concerning Christian 'values', in this extract from *Rheinischer Beobachter*:

The social principles of Christianity have now had eighteen hundred years to develop and need no further development by Prussian consistorial councillors.

The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it.

The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable.

The social principles of Christianity transfer the consistorial councillor's adjustment of all infamies to heaven and thus justify the further existence of these infamies on earth.

The social principles of Christianity declare all vile acts of the oppressors against the oppressed to be either the just punishment of original sin and other sins or trials that the Lord in his infinite wisdom imposes on those redeemed.

The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, dejection, in a word all the qualities of the *canaille*; and the proletariat, not wishing to be treated as *canaille*, needs its courage, its self-feeling, its pride and its sense of independence more than its bread.

The social principles of Christianity are sneakish and the proletariat is revolutionary.

So much for the social principles of Christianity.

Because of his rigid, mechanical materialism, inherited from the early British movement, Connolly had stated, but set aside, the main question — the origin of all ideas, including the ideology of religion — as being of no relevance. This led him straight into the camp of subjective idealism. It is this side of Connolly which is taken by the Stalinists and revisionists, and is used to strengthen the idealist and nationalist prejudices in the working class, to ward the class off from Marxism.

These concessions to religion are inseparable from concessions to the petty bourgeoisie. This is a chief lesson from Connolly's life. He spent the greater part of it in a continual struggle against just that petty bourgeoisie. It would be very unjust to underestimate the sharp friction which always existed between Larkin and Connolly, and the petty-bourgeois Republicans. This was particularly so in their relations with Griffith. But in the absence of the perspective of building the revolutionary party, founding that party on dialectical materialism, he did end up by adapting to petty-bourgeois republicanism.

Connolly's characterisation of Lalor as the Irish precursor for socialism was totally idealist. In fact Lalor's writings show that he was really the spokesman for the emerging petty-bourgeoisie, particularly the small farmers. At a time when great social changes were happening in the countryside, Lalor expressed the reaction of the peasantry to the famine disaster. He articulated the hopes of a class of small property owners, at a stage when the working class could not compete in social weight with the petty bourgeoisie.

His idealism was again seen when it came to deal with the revolutionary wing of the Republican movement, developing from 1910 onwards. There have always been differences within the Republican movement, and it goes without saying that Marxists cannot be indifferent to such differences.

As a backward country the social weight of the peasantry in Ireland has always been considerable. Differences in the Republican movement inevitably reflect differences in class interests of various layers. But strategy requires the absolute independence of the working class and its revolutionary leadership. Trotsky had this very valuable advice to give, writing on the Chinese Revolution:

Marxism has always taught, and Bolshevism, too, accepted, and taught, that the peasantry and proletariat are two different classes, that it is false to identify their interests in capitalist society in any way, and that a peasant can join the communist party only if, from the property viewpoint, he adopts the views of the proletariat. The alliance of the workers and peasants under the dictatorship of the proletariat does not invalidate this thesis, but confirms it, in a different way, under different interests, there would be no talk even of an alliance. Such an alliance is compatible with the socialist revolution only to the extent that it enters into the framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In our country the dictatorship is incompatible with the existence of a so-called Peasants' League precisely because every 'independent' peasant organisation aspiring to solve all

national political problems would inevitably turn out to be an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Connolly's idealist method, and lack of perspective for building the revolutionary party, led him to make a very wrong estimation of the splits in the Republican movement between Griffith, leader of Sinn Fein, and the new tendency developing around Clarke and Pearce. As mentioned, these splits have been on an on-going factor in Republicanism, even to the present day. In 1921 the split was between Griffith and Collins accepting the Treaty, while De Valera's group decided to fight on against imperialism, only to capitulate at a later stage.

But, despite undoubtedly playing a revolutionary role in opposing the Treaty, De Valera's fundamental position towards the proletariat was no different. The fact is, Republicanism is rooted in the petty bourgeoisie, in the peasantry, and is organically incapable of basing itself on the proletariat, as the only revolutionary class in our epoch.

REPUBLICANISM AND MARXISM

So it was with the layer which developed around Pearce and his colleagues. Of course, they may have disagreed with Griffith's hostility to Larkin and to the trade union movement. But the fundamental position towards the working class by both wings was similar. To all of these Republican leaders, the national struggle had to come first and last in everything; they expected the working class to always submerge its class interests in the greater 'whole', as they saw it, the national struggle, and the establishment of a bourgeois Republic. That this refrain, i.e. 'Labour must wait,' is being played to the present day, proves the organic inability of Republicanism to base itself on the working class, and its total incompatibility with Marxism.

Emphasised in this essay above everything else has been Connolly's weakness towards the building of the Marxist leadership. This is particularly vital to understand because this weakness is distorted today to infer that it is impossible to build Marxist leadership, that the 'national' struggle takes precedence, that therefore the working-class struggles must be harnessed behind the struggle for the setting up of a national bourgeois republican government in Ireland. The conditions of world crisis, of course, make it entirely possible to build the revolutionary party, in conditions where the working class in Ireland

can develop a completely new, and internationalist perspective. One of the crudest arguments against Marxism, and the most cynical use of Connolly's writings, is the inference that since partition, all struggles must be mobilised behind a national 'campaign' to overcome that specific evil.

This mechanical approach, cultivated most of all by the Stalinist movement, has led countless youth into the blind alley of individual terror. This reference to partition by Connolly is quoted time and again to provide 'proof' that the working class can play no 'independent' role in the national liberation struggle, and that the socialist tasks of the revolution must wait:

The effect of such exclusion upon Labour in Ireland will be at least equally, and probably more, disastrous. All hopes of uniting the workers, irrespective of religion or old battle cries will be shattered, and through North and South the issue of Home Rule will still be used to cover the iniquities of the capitalist and landlord class. I am not speaking without due knowledge of the sentiments of the organised Labour movement in Ireland when I say that we would much rather see the Home Rule Bill defeated than see it carried with Ulster or any part of Ulster left out.

This is quoted in *James Connolly wrote for today*, a pamphlet published by Irish Freedom Press, edited by Nora Connolly O'Brien, Connolly's daughter, and its clear aim is to show the impossibility of building Marxist leadership in Ireland. (The Stalinists' position is no different, they use it to explain their own bankruptcy and dwindling numbers.)

But partition was not an isolated incident in Irish history, to be viewed as a 'thing-in-itself'. Imperialism had consciously intervened to encourage the influence of a petty bourgeoisie in Irish society, to act as a conservative influence, against the socialist revolution. This Irish Catholic petty bourgeoisie was the other side of the coin to Orangism in the North, they were both to play a complementary role, in opposing the working class.

The industrial revolution had in the north created a working class, which was proportionately large numerically and socially, in comparison to the strength of the middle class. It was therefore an absolute necessity for the capitalist landowners and factory owners of the north to split the working class on sectarian lines at every opportunity.

The centre of Orangism is the creation of an 'all-class' alliance, which inculcates the values of slavish adherence to the British monarchical system. It goes without saying that this was cultivated in a

period when British imperialism was expanding. But remarkably, this outdated ideology has been resurrected by a Stalinist group, actually a sect, calling itself the British and Irish Communist Organisation, emerging as chief apologists for unionism, claiming that there are 'two nations' in Ireland.

This idea, that partition was based on nationality, is totally absurd. But like the orthodox Stalinists, it is based on the complete writing off of the working class as a revolutionary force. From the very first settlements, the Scottish small farmers were an *exploited* class, exploited by both an aristocracy, and capitalist entrepreneurs backed by the City of London; and it was not accidental that thousands of these Presbyterian small-holders emigrated to America in the 17th century. And the class antagonisms were right at the centre of things when later the bourgeoisie cultivated the Orange Order and loyalism in order to confuse the working class.

It was the development of the working class throughout Ireland, and the dangers for the bourgeoisie and imperialism from a united struggle of this working class, that forced the ruling class to engineer Partition. But the greatest weapon which the ruling class had in this was the crisis of leadership in the working class. An objective look at Connolly's position at that time is therefore essential. At the very centre of this analysis must be Connolly's inability to destroy the role of the trade union bureaucracy, emerging to play its most counter-revolutionary role.

The conflict which had broken out between Connolly and the trade union bureaucrat Walker had at its centre issues which are fundamental even today. This was the nature of the bond between the Irish and the British working class, with the close link between social revolution in both countries. Today the world crisis has brought this forward in its acutest form. Then the issue centred on whether the Irish workers should establish their own Labour Party, distinct from the British Labour Party. The position of Walker as a reformist, a bureaucrat and an excrescence of Empire, was reactionary through and through. Connolly fought correctly for an Irish Labour Party, seeing this as necessary to establish the independence of the Irish working class, not just against imperialism, but also against the native capitalists.

But that did not mean that Connolly was fighting from a revolutionary Marxist standpoint. For that, it was necessary to link the demand for the Labour Party to the building of Marxist leadership. At this point Connolly's method failed the working class completely, and

this, as we will see, more than anything, opened the door to partition. Obviously, this is a method of viewing Partition quite foreign to the method of the Stalinists, as well as the bourgeois nationalists.

To defeat Walkerism in the working class required the struggle to build the alternative revolutionary leadership. How did Connolly measure up to this task, the main question to be asked about partition. In fact Connolly could claim to be responsible for forming not one, but two, political parties at this time. Before the Irish Labour Party sponsored by Congress got off the ground, Connolly called the conference of all socialist groups in Ireland in the spring of 1912 to launch the Independent Labour Party of Ireland. Neither were revolutionary parties, nor were they remotely similar to the type of party Lenin was building in Russia. The crisis which these organisations were plunged into by the outbreak of the imperialist war, along with the announcement of plans for partition, showed the hopeless inadequacy of reformist-propagandist parties in situations which demand the working class seizing state power behind Bolshevik leadership. The socialist groups making up the Independent Labour Party did not fight out the differences. Rather than being based on a revolutionary theory, and strategy for power, it was a reformist grouping, a pragmatic response to the possibility of a Home Rule parliament being set up, in which it could play a role. When the ruling class uncovered its plans for partition the ILP was paralysed. And to add to this dismal picture, the proposed Congress of Labour Party had not even materialised! The bankruptcy of syndicalism in the Irish working class could not be shown more clearly!

This really left the stage to the Irish TUC bureaucrats themselves. The Irish Parliamentary Party, articulating the demands of Irish capitalism in Westminster, had accepted the partition proposals, allowing certain Ulster countries to opt out of Home Rule for six years, and were mobilising support throughout the country for this purpose, claiming that this was necessary if the Home Rule Bill was to become law. This, of course, upset the Irish TUC plans for an all-Ireland Labour Party, but what did they do? Firstly, they sent a delegation to the main representative of imperialism in Ireland, chief secretary Augustine Birrell, who naturally was up to his neck in all the imperialist intrigues for partition. Predictably the TUC delegation got a short answer from Birrell. Then they went on their knees to Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, responsible for accepting partition in the first place. Finally, they received the *coup de*

grace from their fellow bureaucrats in the British Labour Party. When the latter were asked to vote against the entire Home Rule Bill, in order to prevent partition, they replied that they would follow the lead of the Irish Parliamentary Party in supporting the exclusion of much of Ulster. Connolly wrote about this:

The love embraces which take place between the Parliamentary Labour Party and our deadliest enemies — the Home Rule party — will not help on a better understanding between the militant proletariat of the two islands.

But Connolly was powerless because his party, the ILP, was falling apart at the seams over that very issue, Home Rule. And Connolly was forced, in conditions where the building of Marxist leadership was necessary and possible, to fall back on the old syndicalist-agitational activity, holding protest meetings, distributing manifestos. This practice was totally inadequate in stopping the imperialist plans for partition, particularly in preventing the ruling class in the north whipping up sectarianism. For this Connolly blamed the Belfast nationalist leader, Joseph Devlin, who based his opposition to Partition on purely nationalist terms, claiming: 'To brother Devlin and not to Brother Carson is mainly due the progress of the Covenanter Movement in Ulster'. The question, however, was the alternative to the nationalist Devlin. Moreover, in the absence of the revolutionary party, the role of the trade union bureaucracy was not yet finished.

The Irish TUC had been built on a most unprincipled basis. High on its list of priorities was not to offend the right-wing empire-building prejudices of the Walkerite tendency in the North, because, although Walker had abandoned the movement others, fundamentally no different, had taken his place. With the outbreak of war the Irish capitalists led by the Parliamentary Party joined the Unionists to support the slaughter. Sinn Fein, of course, opposed. But the Irish TUC, to prevent a split with the Walkerites, did not directly oppose Irish support for British imperialism. This is explained by Arthur Mitchell:

The national executive, of course, did not want to offend the many Belfast workers and the smaller groups of nationalist workers who followed Redmond in supporting Britain's cause.

Connolly and Larkin both immediately opposed the war. At an anti-war meeting on August 27 1914 Larkin declared that 'the Irish workers, as a class, are taking no part in this hellish crime'. Connolly

will always be remembered for his opposition to the war, having a most honoured place in working class history. He conducted fierce and continuous agitation against the war. However it is of greatest importance to stress, that, even as he did so, his own party the ILP split on the issue. Some of his Belfast members objected to Connolly's anti-war propaganda, maintaining that his statements should not be issued under the name of the party. Connolly replied caustically that they 'do not seem to think I ought to express an opinion on the greatest crisis that has faced the working class in our generation'. But this was the end of the road for that party, which disintegrated, some members becoming pacifists, some joining Connolly in plans for the Rising.

REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Despite Connolly's correct and courageous position against the war, he cannot be compared to Lenin, in the most important sense that Lenin was drawing the most vital lessons, which provided the theoretical basis for building the revolutionary party to lead the first successful workers' revolution. But Connolly, seeing correctly the necessity for an alliance with the advanced republican revolutionaries against imperialism, was entering that alliance without a revolutionary party to defend the independent interests of the working class.

Even perceptive historians, such as Mitchell, are totally incapable of grasping the very dialectical essence of these events he comments.

Connolly realised that the Labour movement would suffer as a result of the almost certain failure of the revolt, but he was prepared to gamble that it would profit from it even more. The leaders who followed Connolly, however, rejected the alliance he had created with advanced nationalism.

Which explains nothing! The final epithet to the tragedy of this whole courageous and lifelong struggle of Connolly took place in 1916, after the Rising and executions had been carried out. Having ducked the issue of the war in 1915, the Irish TUC meeting in 1916 had to face it. But by then, these miserable bureaucrats were forced to state their position on the Rising as well. Another bureaucrat had taken Walker's place — Johnson had not only supported British imperialism in the war, but also as a 'non-violent socialist' had opposed the Rising! Not to offend Johnson was the main aim of the TUC Congress. But the bureaucracy was not made up only of Walkerites. Now Johnson was joined on the Executive by O'Brien and Foran,

two former colleagues of Connolly. The position of the whole TUC could not possibly be more despicable.

Johnson in his address stated: 'This is not a place to enter into a discussion as to the right or wrong, the wisdom or the folly, of the revolt.' He then asked the delegates to stand for a minute to honour the memory of Connolly, but at the same time delegates were asked to remember those who had died in the war 'also for what they believed to be the cause of Liberty and Democracy and for love of their country'.

And after these hypocritical formalities, they really put the boot in. The TUC bureaucrats moved to have the Citizen Army kicked out of Liberty Hall, headquarters of the Transport Union. Only at this point, on this basis, and under this reformist leadership, was the decision which had been taken, proposed by Connolly, to build a Labour Party, acted upon.

The revolutionary unification of Ireland, and a definite end to the medieval obscenities that still plague the country, can only be carried out by the Irish working class. This after all was the position which Connolly came closest to in his long struggle as the greatest Irish workers' leader Ireland has produced.

The nature of Connolly's struggle, expressing enormous courage and determination, is quite typical of the historical struggles of the Irish masses. But these struggles today have at their centre the historical crisis of world capitalism. This provides the opportunity for building a section of the world party of revolution — the International Committee of the Fourth International — which will win the leadership of the working class in every country, including Ireland, in this period.

This study of Connolly has tried to emphasise one thing more than anything else, that Connolly has been not so much used by the Stalinists and revisionists, as abused, for their own reactionary contemporary ends. Their treatment of Connolly has been subjective. They have drawn on his weaknesses in order to justify their own reactionary positions, particularly their attempts to prevent the revolutionary Marxist leadership being built. Only the International Committee, by bringing in to the Irish working class all the historical capital of Trotskyism, can correctly evaluate Connolly, and learn from his weaknesses as well as his strengths, so that his life's experience can become rightfully a major factor in the struggles of the Irish working class for socialism now in this period.

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