

THE LENINIST

Monthly paper of the Leninists of the Communist Party of Great Britain

Ireland: Thatcher's Vietnam

BRITAIN'S DEFEAT WILL BE OUR VICTORY

BRITAIN'S rule in the Six Counties is in deep crisis and that crisis is getting deeper. In the late 1960s a mass democratic struggle for elementary civil rights shattered any legitimacy the Northern Ireland statelet ever had. Since then the British Goliath has tried to bring the rebellious Irish David to heel. And yet despite all its might, British imperialism has not been able to destroy the Irish liberation movement.

Rising like the proverbial phoenix from the setback it suffered in its 1950s border campaign and the debilitating reformism of its then President MacGiolla (now the leader of the rump Workers' Party) the IRA/Sinn Fein has heroically taken on the British giant. Indeed, the IRA, despite having been declared defeated time and time again by British ministers and army tops, has taken dramatic steps forward in terms of prestige, organisational ability, and fighting power. Internment, no jury SAS assassination squads, super-grasses, and battalions of British troops have abysmally failed to end the armed struggle against imperialism. As to Sinn Fein, it has grown at a staggering rate both north and south of the border, giving establishment politicians in London, Belfast, and Dublin countless sleepless nights worrying about Ireland becoming 'another Cuba'.

Although the hotel bar based, and therefore usually inebriated, pro-imperialist propagandists of the British TV and press have long sought to portray the IRA and the republican movement in general as nothing more and nothing less than a mafia-like organisation, the truth cannot be hidden. The IRA could only operate and survive with extensive popular sympathy.

THE IRA

All the lying propaganda, the carefully manufactured peace campaigns, the banks of sophisticated computers, the spy at night equipment, the new tech torture techniques, and the wretched blackmailed or paid informers British imperialism has pitted against the IRA have all proved ultimately ineffective. Of course, the reason is simple.

The Catholic masses no longer accept British rule and have increasingly turned to explicitly revolutionary solutions to redress their grievances.

The refusal of the Catholic masses to be ruled in the old way is obviously only one side of the coin. The other is Britain's inability to rule in the old way. These two dialectically linked facets of life in the Six Counties along with a dramatic sweeping of the masses (both Protestant and Catholic) into political action testifies to the objective reality of a profound revolutionary situation.

REVOLUTIONARY WHIRLPOOL

British troops were, as we all know, rushed to the Six Counties in August 1969. They were sent to suppress the revolutionary upsurge which followed the failure of the peaceful mass agitation for Catholic civil rights. The Unionist Stormont regime had lost control of Catholic areas in Derry and Belfast to the forces of revolutionary republicanism. Britain's Labour government feared that the continued existence of the Northern Ireland statelet hung in the balance. They certainly thought that the Unionist Party through which

Britain had ruled the six Counties for nearly half a century, was endangering British interests because of its intransigence and was at least in part responsible for large numbers of Catholics turning to the IRA.

Far from direct British intervention suppressing the revolutionary situation it only proved that Britain could no longer rule in the old way. Indeed, despite all the power of British imperialism the revolutionary whirlpool has become ever more powerful and violent, dragging all the British schemes of 'normalisation' to destruction. Britain could not prevent the shattering of the once monolithic Unionist Party, the fall of the power-sharing executive, or the rise of Sinn Fein, let alone the ability of the IRA to deliver ever more powerful blows against the forces of imperialism.

THE DUBLIN CARD

It is because Britain has found its attempts to suppress the revolutionary situation constantly frustrated that the Thatcher government decided to play the Dublin card and to bring its satraps in the Twenty-six counties openly into the fray. The resulting counterrevolutionary, anti-republican Accord saw Britain grant Dublin seats on essentially symbolic and toothless consultative commissions while Dublin has recognised, as Tom King the Northern Ireland Secretary bluntly declared, "for all practical purposes and in perpetuity that there will never be a united Ireland."

As well as this, Dublin agreed to take a full part in anti-IRA operations in effect backing Britain's efforts to keep its domination of the whole of Ireland through maintaining its direct colonial rule over the north. Britain has as a result been able to tidy up cross border military operations, give the kiss of life to the flagging SDLP, and cover the international odium of its colonial occupation and terror in the Six Counties with a cloak of respectability provided by Fitzgerald's signature to the Accord. Naturally Fitzgerald has dressed up his abject servility to British imperialism as a brave attempt to achieve peaceful Irish re-unification. But treacherous facts are treacherous facts. Dublin's day-to-day openly counterrevolutionary acts shows that King told the truth about the Accord.

There have been costs. Britain might have been able to get the Fine Gael/Irish Labour Party coalition government in Dublin to jump through its Accord hoop, but the Protestants in the Six Counties have proved more difficult. Despite the master/dog relationship, the Loyalist dog has snapped at the British imperialist hand that feeds it. The Loyalist politicians, from both the Paisley and the official wings of Unionism, were infuriated at being left out in the cold when the Accord was negotiated and are deeply perturbed about not having a place in the new structures. Playing on the pitiful xenophobia of the Protestant working and middle classes, mass discontent has been whipped up in an effort to crudely pressurise the British authorities into not giving Dublin any role whatsoever.



BRITAIN'S CRISIS

Thus, as in the days of the so-called Ulster Workers' Council strike, Britain faces the prospect of a sustained and damaging Loyalist campaign against the form of British rule. The referendum style by-elections, the Protestant demonstrations, and violent outbursts against the Accord are of course not revolutionary. They do after all reflect the near pathological fear of a bigoted pro-imperialist labour aristocracy about anything which might jeopardise their privileges relative to the Catholics, no matter how measly they may be in real terms. Nonetheless, who can deny that Protestant fear and discontent is a result of Britain's crisis in the Six Counties.

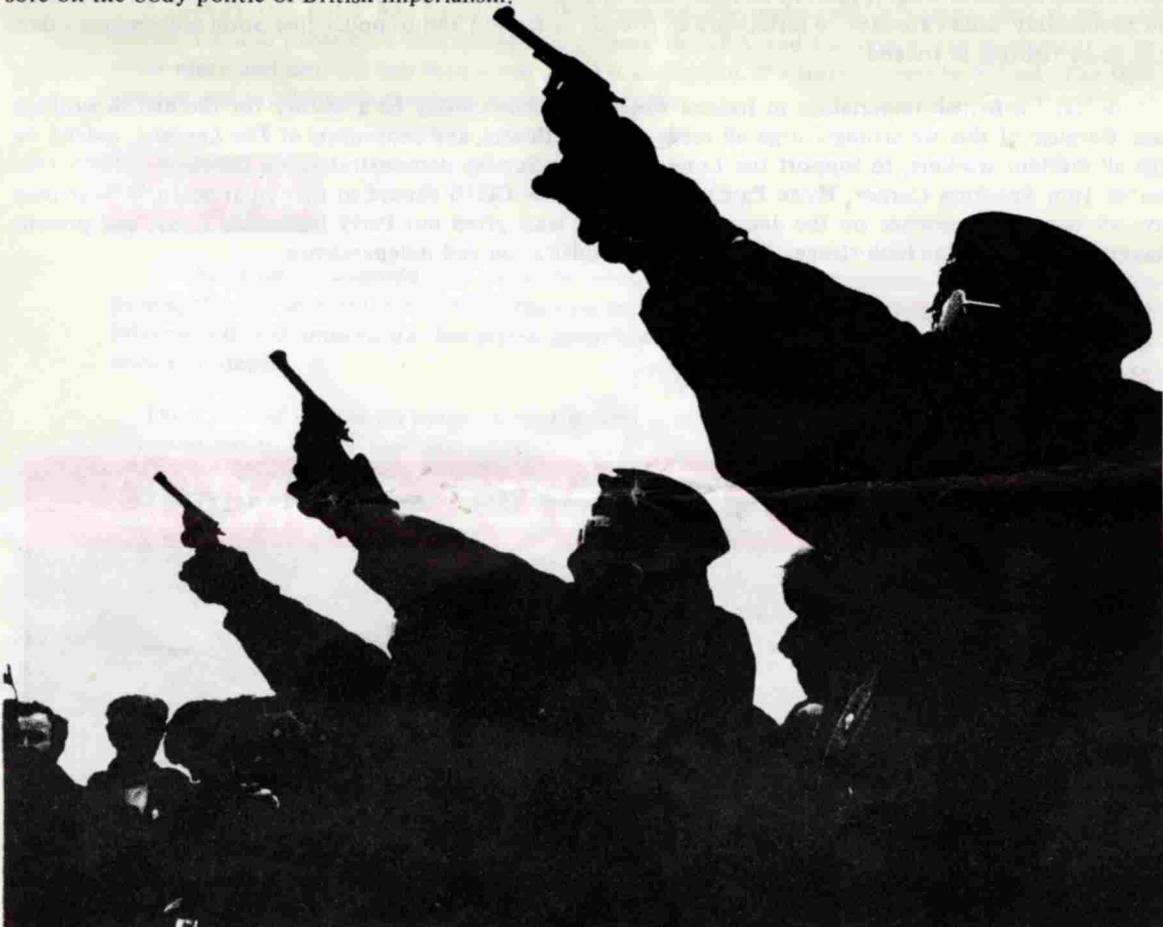
Thatcher was reportedly truly shocked by the accusations of betraying the union between Britain and Northern Ireland hurled at by frothing Unionists and their motley band of far-right Tory supporters. The victor over the enemy without and the enemy within believed, so it is said, that her Iron Lady image would preclude such charges and prevent Unionist fears of a 'sell out' arising in the first place.

For those with eyes which do not refuse to see it is obvious that the Accord is an attack on the republican movement and is designed to perpetuate what is called the 'Protestant veto' (i.e. British rule). The Loyalist dog may snarl 'no surrender' and bark on about 'withdrawing consent', but its protests against the Accord are for British imperialism more of a nuisance than anything else.

ACHILLES HEEL

Thatcher is unlikely to make a U-turn on the Accord because of Loyalist actions. She now has her eyes firmly set on crushing the IRA and perhaps she has even a thought or two as to how bourgeois historians of the future will see her. Can she crown her 'brilliant' career with the solving of the 'Irish problem' once and for all? Can she succeed where Gladstone, Lloyd George, and lesser imperialist politicians like Wilson, and Callaghan failed? Thatcher is certainly psychologically predisposed to dream about pulling off a hat-trick and adding victory in Ireland to victory over Argentina and the miners: this would certainly earn a prominent place for her in the bloody annals of British imperialism.

Of course Ireland could prove the Achilles heel of the arrogant Thatcher. Her dreams of victory could turn into a 'nightmare' for British imperialism in the cold light of day. The last 15 years of revolutionary crisis and armed struggle, the very fact that Thatcher has found it necessary to negotiate with Dublin in the first place, and even the granting of symbolic concessions show that the Irish question is a chronic running sore on the body politic of British imperialism.



TWENTY-SIX COUNTIES

The Accord might have set back the rise of Sinn Fein but the SDLP will quickly expose its imperialism; Reagan might be promising economic aid to anchor Ireland into the US led anti-Soviet wardrive but the crisis is organic. It stems from a conjunction of Ireland's unresolved national question and Britain's steep decline relative to an increasingly crisis ridden world capitalist system. Already we can see that while temporarily saving the SDLP from oblivion by playing the Dublin card Thatcher may have unintentionally caused revolutionary sparks to fly from the seething north to the tinder dry conditions of the south.

The Fitzgerald government is already decidedly unpopular. Opinion polls show it trailing 19 percentage points behind Haughey's opposition Fianna Fail. Being seen to do Britain's dirty work can only further erode his government's poor standing. Fuelling Fitzgerald's troubles are the grave economic problems gripping the Twenty-six Counties' neo-colonial economy. Unemployment now stands at around 18% and the foreign debt has soared to the point where it is estimated to owe £1,300 for every working person in the country. And things are getting worse, not better.

The social order in the Twenty-six Counties is unquestionably fragile. Its dependent political and economic position has been laid bare by the Accord. Perhaps becoming directly involved in the inferno that is Six Counties politics could produce exactly opposite results from the counterrevolutionary ones Thatcher and Fitzgerald have been working for.

Ireland could even become Britain's Vietnam. If this were to happen age old barriers against social progress would have been broken down not only in Ireland itself but in Britain. Because of this we must do all in our power to assist the cause of Ireland.

SOLIDARITY

So far, solidarity with Ireland in Britain has been more than a disgrace. It has been cynically boycotted by a whole range of organisations and trends in the workers movement which claim to be revolutionary, an unmistakable consequence of Ireland's great importance to British imperialism. And while some groups have stood aside from the Irish question, others have objectively sided with British imperialism; such positions can only be considered criminal.

Our class has already paid dear for such infamy. The methods and tools of terror used against the brave Irish have sickeningly come home. The black youth of Handsworth, Tottenham, and Brixton and the miners have all learnt what it feels to be Irish. And of course the Prevention of Terrorism Act has inevitably and predictably been extended to intimidate all friends of Ireland and to police liberation movements other than those fighting in Ireland.

A defeat for British imperialism in Ireland would therefore clearly be a victory for the British working class. Because of this we strongly urge all readers, sympathisers, and supporters of *The Leninist*, indeed we urge all militant workers, to support the London Bloody Sunday demonstration on February 2 1986. (Assemble 1pm Speakers Corner, Hyde Park) Members of the CPGB should in particular see to it that they have an organised presence on the demonstration, not least given our Party leadership's past and present chauvinist stance on the Irish struggle for national re-unification and independence.

- Britain's defeat will be our victory
- Victory to Ireland
- Make Ireland Thatcher's Vietnam
- Troops out now

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