

PATTERNS OF BETRAYAL
the flight from Socialism

Papers and Viewpoints
which set out

The Struggle for
THE WORKERS' PARTY

***An account of the recent
upheaval in the
Workers' Party***

The Workers' Party of Ireland.

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*Dedicated to the Memory of
Comrade George Mathews
1948 - 1992*

Loyal Party member and Activist

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Preface

The recent breakaway from the Workers Party by a faction led by Proinsias de Rossa was the most serious setback the party has suffered since it began its modern development as a Socialist party. This pamphlet, which includes all the documents issued by the party and all the documents issued by the De Rossa faction puts their actions and aims in perspective. The article titled Analysis and Assessment and the Conclusion were delivered by Sean Garland to a meeting of Dublin Regional Council of The Workers' Party on 30th April. The other documents are printed in the order in which they were presented to the party members.

Underlying all the varied reasons given by the liquidators for their actions there was a deep pessimism which eventually will lead most of them into a position of hostility to Socialism. In attempting to understand the motives of the De Rossa faction, which within itself holds many contradictory elements, one must have regard for their blatant dishonesty. They used many fine words and phrases to conceal their true intentions so unless one goes to the heart of the matter one could be forgiven for believing that they were indeed sincere and were serious about building a strong left wing party in Ireland.

But now and then over the past months and weeks, the mask slipped and in the following pages readers will learn how the various leaders of this breakaway De Rossa, Geraghty, Rabbitte, Gilmore, Patterson and others had a hidden agenda which has even yet not been entirely revealed. One longtime supporter of the Workers Party has described the actions of De Rossa and his cohorts as an attempted coup against the party. And in examining the build-up to the Ard Comhairle meeting of 24th January when P. De Rossa introduced his motion for a special Ard Fheis this description does fit the bill. The manner in which the conspirators chose to conduct their campaign from and within the Parliament, to keep their plans and intentions secret from Tomas MacGiolla, is one of the key aspects of their preparations for the attempted coup.

They knew and indeed feared that if Tomas Mac Giolla became aware of their plans and motives he would not hesitate to expose them and rally the party organisation against them. It is clear that they hated and feared Tomas Mac Giolla's integrity and suffice to say that when Tomas did become aware that there was a hidden agenda he came out strongly and publicly in defence of party unity and against the plotters. His statement on Tuesday 18th February gave great encouragement and hope to all those members and supporters fighting the liquidators

and was the death knell of their plans to destroy the party. After that statement the De Rossa group realised they had lost the battle for control of the party and they knew they had no option but to break away.

From the conclusion of the special Ard Fheis on Saturday 15th February to the Tuesday 18th February, aware that their plan to take control of the Workers' Party had failed some of the faction based in the Parliament began to exert even greater pressure on Tomás Mac Giolla to join them in their breakaway. If they had succeeded in getting Tomás Mac Giolla to join them it was their intention to move against their leading opponents in the party by expulsions. Fortunately they lost and eventually they will be wandering in the political wilderness until they get swallowed up by the larger Social Democratic party or fade away as another Clann na Poblachta, in their own words, a 'surge' party with no long term influence.

The Workers' Party has already demonstrated, and will reinforce in the coming months and years, its capacity to survive and overcome the action of the De Rossa faction. The process of analysis and reorganisation has begun. A new optimism born out of a determination and consciousness that capitalism has to be fought at every level and that capitalism can and must be defeated is again present. The defeat of the British Labour Party under Neil Kinnock in April 1992 has once again proven that you cannot win the struggle for socialism on capitalism's terms.

To learn from our mistakes and to apply these lessons in a constructive and determined manner is critical to a party organising the working class.

This particular struggle against the De Rossa faction is now over. It has occupied much of our time, energy and resources. Let us put it behind us and remembering the lessons from it we must now go about the real business of rebuilding, as Tomás MacGiolla said, the finest political organisation of the working class that ever existed in Ireland.

This is the best and only answer to those who sought to destroy the Workers' Party.

Sean Garland
National Treasurer
The Workers' Party

Dublin
1st May 1992

ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

Now that the De Rossa faction have broken away from the party we believe it necessary and timely to analyse and chart the motives and actions of the liquidators. Over the recent months it became clear that we were dealing with a group of conspirators who had been active for some years in preparing the ground to take over or split the party.

The theoretical genesis of the breakaway faction is located in the contribution Eoghan Harris made to a party education school in Belfast in July 1988 and which he subsequently expanded upon for the 1989 Ard Fheis speech of P De Rossa. This speech which is now accepted as having been written, in the main, by Eoghan Harris carried within it the basic elements of Social Democracy. A critique of this speech was made by Ellen Hazelkorn and Paul Sweeney in the May/June 1989 issue of Making Sense magazine, a few extracts from their article will demonstrate the basic flaws in the speech. It is somewhat ironic that Hazelkorn and Sweeney have been leading advisers to the De Rossa faction for some considerable time.

Here is what Hazelkorn and Sweeney said:-

It is not surprising that political commentators and letter writers have drawn attention to the significant revision of the WP's concept of socialism and the market contained within the De Rossa speech. In it we are told that "we define Socialism by letting the people tell us what they want from Socialism", people 'all over Europe . . . want socialism to be democratic' rather than economic and coercive.

While socialism can never be 'dogma written on tablets of stone, nor can it grab the moral high ground with claims to 'scientific reasoning, it is clear that socialism traditionally has meant the control of state power, and the means of production, distribution, and exchange by the working class. Popular assumptions both inside and outside the Workers Party have understood socialism as public ownership and control of economic resources. It is more than a mere theory of 'political and social change.'

The speech substitutes and confuses socialism, social democracy, democratic socialism and democracy.

Many of the issues and difficulties that confront The Workers' Party are part of the inevitable hidden agenda of parliamentarianism. In our eagerness to be

seen as 'relevant' and 'modern', (De Rossa's words) the pitfalls of electoralism and populism must be studiously avoided.

This is the verdict of De Rossa's associates on the speech he delivered to the 1989 Ard Fheis.

The events of the Ard Fheis of 1990 which centered around the publication and content of the pamphlet 'Necessity of Social Democracy' coupled with the resignations of E. Smullen, E. Harris etc. postponed the effort of those who had the same aims as Harris to pursue their agenda. In February of that year at a meeting of Dublin members, some of these elements, Rabbitte, Gilmore, McManus, had begun to force the pace with their attacks on Head Office, party organisation in particular the concept of Democratic Centralism, the role of fulltime staff, the need for a party paper, international contacts and allies, the collapse of the 'Socialist' countries, "the failure of Socialism", "the death of Communism".

For sometime the faction under the control of Rabbitte and Gilmore had been undermining the central function and authority of the Dublin Regional Leadership. Des Geraghty had become chairman of the Dublin Region in 1988. Under his authority, or lack of it, the Central Dublin party organisation declined to such an extent that it was unable and in some quarters unwilling to maintain a fulltime secretary/organiser. The Dublin Party organisation fractured and retreated into constituencies as factions built around the personality of most of the TDs.

For some considerable time before this split it was pointed out to many of the conspirators where their actions would lead. Indeed in order to preserve party unity, to attempt to maintain the parliamentary group in the party we accepted many bad decisions, many instances of actions being taken by individuals in parliament without regard to the elected Party leadership. Tomás Mac Giolla has pointed this out very recently in regard to a number of basic Party policies, against internment, the issue of Irish neutrality, the party policy of full employment, the defence of state companies, De Rossa's justification of the market as the means to solve the country's serious economic problems, a developing Anti-Republican position, issues which Tomás Mac Giolla and other comrades felt had been fudged or dropped in the past few years by Proinsias De Rossa and his faction.

This process began soon after Tomás Mac Giolla had retired as party president in 1988. A steady consistent campaign began after the June 1989 elections in the Republic to dilute the party's programme and principles. For almost two years every meeting of the Central Executive Committee and Executive Political Committee, particularly leading to an Ard Fheis, was characterised by attempts by the Rabbitte/Gilmore faction assisted by the De Rossa /Geraghty faction to undermine and destroy the Party's socialist principles and

integrity. The establishing of a party commission at the 1990 Ard Fheis to draft a new party programme was the ideal vehicle for these elements to push forward with their plans for control of the party and the adoption of a social democratic platform.

It is clear from the Ard Fheis of 1991 that the many amendments from Belfast, Waterford, Derry and Galway to the proposed draft party programme brought out in the open these same elements hostile to Socialism and Communism. As we know since that Ard Fheis the Rabbitte-Gilmore-De Rossa- Geraghty elements had become a unified faction, they intensified and widened their campaign to take control from the members and shift the centre of authority to the parliamentary group. Some of these people made no secret of their ambitions. It is also clear there were many meetings of these people, De Rossa, Geraghty, Gilmore, McManus, Rabbitte and others, to co-ordinate their efforts and work to a plan. They attempted to portray those members who supported the amendments to the draft party programme at the 1991 Ard Fheis as an 'old guard reactionary clique' with failed policies, and combined with sections of the mass media they used the collapse of the so-called 'Socialist' countries, the BBC Spotlight programme of June 1991, the party financial debt, the alleged existence of the so-called Official IRA and attacks on the concept of Democratic Centralism as an organisational principle, and of course the now familiar thesis that 'Socialism' had failed, to pursue their now obvious aim of creating a Social Democratic Parliamentary Party, and/or seeking to merge with the Labour Party.

It is as we have stated since the Ard Fheis of 1991 that this campaign to undermine and destroy the party really accelerated. When the Ard Fheis adopted a number of key amendments from constituencies and branches throughout the country to the draft party programme concerning the character and objective of the Party it was clear from the reactions of De Rossa, Gilmore and their supporters that they would not accept the democratic decision of the Ard Fheis. From then on they declared, in private, and some in public their aim to overturn the Ard Fheis decision and to capture the party. The rules and organisation commission established after the 1991 Ard Fheis, by the Central Executive Committee under the chairmanship of Des Geraghty who in turn handed over the chair to Dep. E Gilmore, became one of their vehicles for this purpose. It is clear from the composition of the commission that it was heavily loaded in favour of the De Rossa faction, Gilmore, McClean, Lynch, De Rossa, Geraghty, D.O'Connell and Rabbitte against them there were only two members who had the aim of defending the integrity of the party, Peter Kane and John Lowry. Despite the efforts of these two members of the commission to safeguard the basic and fundamental organisational principles of the Party the Gilmore faction were able to push through a meaningless catch-all type organisational structure. Even so they still wished to create confrontation with this commission report, using their

friends in the media to hype up leaks with the aim of preparing members for a split at the Special Delegate Conference which was scheduled for 14th March.

Well aware that we faced a serious split unless some compromise could be worked out a number of leading members met, outside of the Central Executive Committee and Executive Political Committee, in the middle of last year to attempt to achieve some compromise. After a great deal of discussion Proinsias De Rossa supported by Des Geraghty and Seamus Lynch agreed to draft a comprehensive paper setting out their faction's views on the future. They were to present this paper to a re-convened meeting on the 21st September 1991. They reneged on this commitment and obviously unable and unwilling to continue open democratic discussion arrived at a Political Committee meeting in August with a list of what was termed difficult problems and hard decisions. This was the beginning of the public involvement of the media in the internal party problems. Despite making it known through the media the nature and scope of the party debt little or no progress was ever made in reducing or even rescheduling the debt. In fact the task was made much more difficult by the action of De Rossa and his faction which undermined the credibility and capacity of the Party to deal with the debt. We have dealt elsewhere with the distortion and lies on this issue and how it was used to smear members.

As part of their 'solution' to what they termed was a 'crisis' in the Party the De Rossa faction proposed a reduction in fulltime staff. It was agreed by the Central Executive Committee and Political Committee to reduce staff from 13 to 6 and to ensure that the areas of publication, organisation and administration would be maintained. After discussion with staff re. voluntary redundancies it was at the political committee meeting on December 16th that a decision was made on staff. As is now known Proinsias De Rossa presented a list of staff to be retained - these were G Doherty, P Gillan, M Brady, M O'Leary, T Ebbs and an editor of the party paper. Noel McFarlane who had been editor had resigned in protest at De Rossa and Geraghty's attitude and political direction.

An alternative list was presented by Sean Garland who pointed out that if we were to fulfill the requirements concerning organisation, administration and publications the De Rossa list failed to do this. Sean Garland proposed we would retain G Doherty, to work on finance and organisation; P Kane as national organiser, P Crook as secretary/administrator, M O'Leary for publication, T Ebbs as printer and to appoint an editor for the Party paper. On a vote the Garland list was accepted by 9 to 4, nevertheless, nothing was done by the General Secretary Des Geraghty to implement this decision. In fact no further meetings of the Political Committee were convened after that meeting of the 16th December. Des Geraghty at a meeting of the Central Executive Committee in January stated that there were some suspicions about the Political Committee and indeed further stated at the same meeting that it

was their intention to bring the party in a new and fundamentally different direction, most revealing remarks in the light of subsequent events.

Of course the fact is that the De Rossa faction knew after the December 16th meeting that they could not rely on the political committee to rubber stamp everything they wanted so the safest thing for them was to have no meetings of the Political Committee. De Rossa has in fact stated that the failure of the Political Committee to endorse his proposals on staffing was the trigger for his action to liquidate the party. One other fact that came to light after this Political Committee meeting, was the statement by Gerry Doherty, who became one of the main agents of the De Rossa faction spreading poison throughout the party, that the decision of the Political Committee to make Marie Brady P.De Rossa's sister, redundant provoked him to make allegations that the Ard Fheis of 1991 was 'rigged'. Despite being called upon at different meetings to furnish evidence of this 'rigging' Doherty never produced one shred of evidence. In fact as we show later there was substantial rigging by Doherty and his cohorts for the Special Ard Fheis on February 15th.

We have asked the question before, why the need to rush to have a special Ard Fheis?. Because everything was being prepared for confrontation, to force people out of the party. We had a Central Executive Committee meeting on 14th January, where after a great deal of acrimonious debate Tony Heffernan the party press officer suddenly produced a long motion, obviously prepared well in advance of this meeting, which demanded that the Central Executive Committee express full support for the Party President and General Secretary as to their handling of the party in previous months, and also that the Central Executive Committee would express full confidence in the integrity of all the members of parliament.

This motion was passed by a large majority, as those opposed did not wish to provoke confrontation or a split, some other members abstained believing that it was not possible to give any endorsement to people whom they knew or suspected were out to destroy the Party. It was pointed out to the meeting that it had always been the situation in the party that the Party President and General Secretary acted in a unifying manner, but that the present holders of these positions, De Rossa and Geraghty were now acting in a very divisive manner.

Yet even with the large majority of the Central Executive Committee supporting the Heffernan motion, mainly on the basis of preserving party unity, this vote was used to intensify the witch-hunt against long established members or opponents of the De Rossa group. Clearly the liquidators were not happy with the progress they were making in attempting to force people from the party. So they re-convened another meeting of the Executive Committee for the Friday and Saturday 21st and 22nd January. They were now being obviously forced to adopt more extreme measures, hence the

motion at this Executive meeting for a special Ard Fheis to re-constitute the party and to stand down the membership and have all members re-apply. They realised after a week or so that they had made a serious error in their demand for members re-registering, this particular demand alienated many members, so much so that they began to backtrack on this particular issue.

At the 1991 Ard Fheis Sean Garland announced his intention to retire as General Secretary of the party. He was asked to continue in the position until September 1991, until Des Geraghty the proposed new General Secretary had completed plans for leave of absence from his fulltime position as union official with S.I.P.T.U. In September Geraghty took over as General Secretary without getting the leave of absence, it was decided to have him act in an honorary capacity. What this meant in effect was that the two most important positions in the party, President and General Secretary, were now in the hands of the liquidators. It is indeed very probable in reviewing the situation, that Sean Garland's retirement as General Secretary gave the De Rossa faction a false sense of confidence that they could now proceed to implement their plan without any fear of setback or failure. As we know they badly miscalculated for whilst they were able to confuse and mislead many members the bulk of the party membership rejected their treacherous actions.

In fact since September 1991 in particular one can trace a definite plan of action which has been confirmed by a document drafted by one of the main liquidators which has come into our possession. This document details the steps considered necessary for the plotters to achieve their aims which is clearly identified as being the formation of a Social Democratic Party. The document states that the strategy is to:

- Win a special delegate conference and Ard Fheis
- Produce a commission document as urgent to heighten the debate in the party.
- To launch a public and private campaign to re-constitute the party and in turn re-constitute its political, economic, constitution and party programme;
- To visit selected party branches and constituencies,
- To establish a media group,
- To have an inner group meeting of selected Executive Political Committee members.
- To have a special interview for P De Rossa with D De Breadúin of the Irish Times.

After his failure to secure a majority for his motion to re-constitute the party and determined then to destroy the party P. De Rossa became desperate and engaged in a more intensive slander campaign after the special Ard Fheis. He indulged in a series of threatening and abusive phone calls, telling members that if they did not cease opposing him he would ensure that they would never hold any positions of influence in the party at local or national level. He

visited a number of people whom he considered key members and attempted to win them to his viewpoint by attacking all and sundry who opposed him. Tomás Mac Giolla came in for special attack because of his refusal to join the new group. In the course of these meetings De Rossa stated that he was under great pressure, that his son Feargal had been putting pressure on him for weeks to form a new party, he also admitted that he had had to rush things concerning his motion for a special Ard Fheis *"If I didn't rush it people would have left weeks ago, some in senior positions like Gilmore and Rabbitt"*. Gerry Doherty had proved invaluable he said, identifying areas and people where support could be developed and hostile elements isolated. This last remark has particular significance in relation to the special Ard Fheis. The De Rossa faction had total control of the organisation of the Ard Fheis. They had full control of delegate's and branches credentials, and indeed it was our intention to raise serious questions if they had remained in the party, about their manufacturing of some delegates and branches who supported their aims and the blocking of other delegates/branches whom they believed opposed their aims of liquidating the party.

Before the Special Ard Fheis many objections were raised at Management Committee meetings by Peter Kane, National Organiser, and Sean Garland, National Treasurer concerning the legitimacy of various delegates and branches to be represented at the Ard Fheis. In order not to be divisive or considered obstructionist and given the tense atmosphere surrounding the Ard Fheis these objections were not pursued at that time. On the morning of the Ard Fheis Peter Kane and Sean Garland met with members of the steering committee, Des Geraghty, Dep. E Gilmore who was Chairman of the Ard Fheis steering committee, Party press officer T Heffernan, proposed chairperson of the special Ard Fheis T Dooney, Secretary to De Rossa in the European office J Gallagher and party administration M Brady, all of whom were supporters of the liquidators. This group had assumed the role and function of the Management Committee in relation to the issue of delegates and branches affiliation.

A list of the doubtful delegates and branches were submitted to this Committee which rejected all the charges. Some of the dubious paper branches who the plotters had established to support their line and were granted delegates or had extra delegates allowed were Cabra, Crumlin, Dun Laoghaire in Dublin, Kilkenny City, Dungarvan in Waterford and Cork East. Areas refused delegates or which had their numbers reduced were Derry City and Craigavon in Co. Armagh. At this point Peter Kane and Sean Garland stated that up to then they had reluctantly accepted the decisions on delegates but now they wished to express their strong reservations and also to question the dubious nature of some of the delegates. When one takes into account this blatant attempt to 'fix' the vote at this special conference it is possible to arrive at what the real voting figures would have been if the conference had been conducted in an open democratic manner. One estimate is that the

splitters succeeded in securing another fifty votes for their motion through their manipulating of delegates and if one adds to this the number of delegates, about forty, who followed Tomas MacGiolla's advice and voted for the motion to preserve party unity, one can see that the vote of 241 to 133 was not a true and accurate reflection of the party members attitude to this motion to liquidate the party.

It is now clear that a conspiracy to 'pack' the Ard Fheis was organised and that the conspiracy involved the then General Secretary, Des Geraghty, with the chief organiser being the then Director of Finance, Gerry Doherty assisted by Marie Brady. We have mentioned the poisonous role that Gerry Doherty has played in this affair and each day that passes sees him exposed more and more as a willing and servile betrayer of the party and its history. He continues, unsuccessfully we are proud to say, to attempt to suborn members from the party. Recently he called to a member in Dublin and demanded that the member join him in this new group. The member refused saying he did not intend to desert the party, this answer enraged Doherty and he shouted at the member "Well then stick with your fucking Fenian past" so much for rational political discussion.

One of the subordinate though very vocal agents of the breakaway faction, P Breathnach, from Co. Kildare has now admitted that they moved too hastily, that they over-reached themselves, that the motion for a special Ard Fheis was a mistake on their part for it resulted in their failure to get control of the party.

Despite our obvious reaction to this breakaway from the party nevertheless, we must attempt to put this particular betrayal in context. Whilst there is the internal Irish dimension to this situation we cannot ignore the very important, indeed essential, international dimension. In the former Soviet Union despite the now acknowledged and many serious problems of widespread corruption, a stifling bureaucracy, lack of basic rights and poor living conditions one single fact stands out above all these faults that is that the party in the Soviet Union neglected one basic fundamental fact, they lost contact with the people. The party became an elite with which the people had no links and ultimately there was no regard or confidence in the party's ability or indeed of the party's concern for the population. These are some of the reasons which helped to bring about the collapse of the so called 'Socialist' countries.

Another time and place we intend to make a fuller and more complete analysis of the collapse of the Soviet Union. For the moment in these days of pessimism and despair which is peddled by the enemies of Socialism, more especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it is worthwhile recalling some of what Daniel Singer wrote in the Nation

Magazine, which was reprinted in Nov/Dec issue of Making Sense, Singer says:-

"Balance Sheets drawn in the moment of bankruptcy are always distorted, the liquidator concentrating on the bottom line rather than the what-went-before, the stirring story of an enterprise, and this is no exception. The tale of the past seven decades cannot be written all in black. It involves illusions and enthusiasms, heroic deeds and genuine sacrifices, mass education, the rise of the downtrodden and the wholesale transformation of society. A similar point-counterpoint is needed for the external version. It is true that Stalin turned big communist parties with popular roots into obedient puppets, but also true that Russia's pioneering example inspired millions throughout the world to defy their establishment. The tanks that brought the Stalinist regime up to the Elbe were the same tanks that had liberated that part of Europe from the Nazis. Even more recently, while infecting all countries that entered its orbit with bureaucratic inefficiency, the Soviet Union was also the only potential external obstacle to the expansion of American imperialism. Having been all my conscious life a stern critic of Stalin and his heirs, I find it quite easy to say that the pictures of the Soviet era now being drawn, often by former admirers or practitioners, are caricatures."

Since 1917 capitalism has never ceased in its effort to destroy the First Socialist State. That they have succeeded today does not negate the achievement of Lenin and the Bolsheviks and neither does capitalism's "successes" of today render Socialism null and void. The Socialist project to liberate humanity from oppression and want remains viable, naturally it is going to be more difficult in the short term due to International events and failures and also due to the various betrayals on a national level that have taken place over recent years and just now in our own party.

Some of those who have betrayed us have done so consciously, others have been duped and manipulated. Ignorance of course does not excuse them for the damage they have done is serious, but the Workers Party despite their actions remains intact and ready to fight again and again on behalf of its class to win the struggle for power. We stand ready also to welcome back into our ranks all those sincere and genuine people who have, for the moment, left the party because of the lies, the distortions and confusion peddled by the splitters.

Some people to excuse their own weakness or cowardice have attempted to portray this struggle as one between two competing elites/factions for control of the party, a so-called 'old guard', called a rump by some, clinging to outdated and discredited organisational forces - and a new modern young group led by active TDs who wanted to bring the party into the world of today. We reject this simplistic, dishonest and shallow excuse for it fails to recognise the reality and/or address the political issues that have emerged. It must be

obvious now to all people who wish to see that this was no benign attempt to reform the party, it was a deliberate and malicious attempt as Proinsias De Rossa has admitted in his own words to 'destroy the party and move into the middle ground of Irish politics'.

In some respects we built the party in a haphazard fashion, learning as we went along trusting to people to behave in a principled and comradely fashion. We gave too many fool's pardons. We conceded, for the sake of party unity on policies and principles which we now know we should have resisted. We know this to have been a mistake and it must never happen again.

We now need to build the party according to the theory of Scientific Socialism, a clear design and our collective experience. Despite what our opponents say there was never a greater need than today for a class conscious disciplined party of the working class. We need hardly repeat here the many serious problems confronting the country, almost 300,000 unemployed in the Republic, well over 100,000 unemployed in Northern Ireland, one third of the population on the island living at or below the poverty line, massive emigration, with widespread and savage cutbacks in essential services of health, education and housing in both States, widespread and deep corruption among private and public companies which has cost the Irish public millions upon millions of pounds. What kind of morality is it, what kind of society is it that will allow gangsters to openly line their pockets at the expense of the working class. Socialism indeed has had its crooks and failures but nothing ever on the scale or scope of the criminals of capitalism who continue to plunder the public treasury.

And all of this coupled with the continuing terrorist violence in Northern Ireland bringing death and destruction to all sections of the population, alongside of which there is the deep and bitter division among the working class of Northern Ireland, maintained and indeed deepened by the policies and actions of sectarian religious/political parties. Only a party of the working class can ever hope to unite the workers in Northern Ireland regardless of their religion, and bring an end to capitalism which has made the lives of so many millions a misery on this island and establish a unified, secular, socialist Republic of Ireland.

Again many of those who have left us sneered at this concept, this objective. We reject their pessimism, indeed, we know that their opportunism which has sucked them into this catch-all constituency from which they hope to gather support will eventually be the rock upon which they perish. The people will recognise in time that those who would betray their comrades and party will as soon betray the people themselves. We have mentioned before our erstwhile comrades contempt for our country's and party's history. Recall P De Rossa's attempt, in his contribution at the special Ard Fheis, to rubbish the place and

value of the 1913 Lockout Struggle by Irish workers against the employers in Dublin led by William Martin Murphy, and also his disgraceful, bitter and contemptuous distortion of the motives and actions of those who had the courage, commitment and politics to take part in the international fight in Spain against the Fascists of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler. His drift into anti-republicanism is demonstrated by his attempted confiscation of the October 1991 Bodinstown speech of Tomas MacGiolla the content which he obviously knew would rally members and supporters against the liquidators actions and aims

It is clear from many of the speeches made at the Special Ard Fheis by our opponents that they have now a deep abiding hatred for Socialism and Socialists. The various abusive and vitriolic speeches which many of them spewed out, in particular Deputy Joe Sherlock, Pat Brady S.I.P.T.U. official, and Cllr. Colm Breathnach, only helped decent people to see them for what they were, anti-socialists, who were prepared to play up to the media and prove to their particular 'constituency', that they were now "highly moral and respectable" politicians and could therefore be trusted by the establishment.

Nobody can or should minimise the task that now confronts us. Just reflect for a moment on the composition of this new party they have called 'New Agenda' 'Democratic Left' a name chosen it is said by an advertising consultant. It is made up of many different elements who have joined together for an immediate aim to destroy the Workers' Party. They have failed in their first aim. There are many contradictions within this group, first on a personal basis, and secondly because they have no common political objectives. Within the parliamentary group, there is bitter competition combined with intense personal animosity between P De Rossa and J. Sherlock, between Rabbitte and Sherlock, between Rabbitte, De Rossa and McCartan, and then one could well ask how will Cllr. Kathleen Lynch square her strong public dislike and private hatred of Deputies Byrne and Sherlock with her membership of this new party.

This of course also applies to Cllr. Gallagher who is held in contempt by them all. There is something odd to say the least in this defection. One can recall that when elected to the Dáil for the first and last time in 1981 Cllr. Gallagher came under the influence and control of Eoghan Harris and his group. This association has we know lasted on a personal basis since then with members of the Harris group.

Of course the particular animosities and divisions which are present among this hybrid group in leadership level are also reflected through the entire group and unless they can secure successes very rapidly and indeed consistently they will not hold together.

Every day it becomes clearer exactly what the faction's political orientation is and what they had in mind to achieve for some considerable time. Speaking at a meeting of his supporters in a Dublin constituency on Thursday 27th February P.De Rossa stated "*The Workers Party had gone as far as it could, that is why we set out to destroy it and go for the middle ground in Irish politics*". Again Dep.Pat Rabbitte speaking on Television's current affairs programme Today Tonight on Tuesday 25th February said that their new party would be targeting for membership and support '*Poverty groups, Environmental groups, Womens groups and 'Psychological groups'* (whoever they might be) *and many other single issue groups*. Not one word about the working class, the homeless, or the hundreds of thousands of unemployed.'

Commenting on the progress to date of the 'New Agenda' group the Sunday Business Post newspaper stated on Sunday 8th March "*Spokesmen for the New Agenda, interviewed in the media in recent days, have failed to declare their hand. Asked what their policies are, they have been long on waffle and short on detail. Much of what they are saying is mush. Not even Social Democratic mush, just plain mush. The party seems bent on wooing support from the most strange sources: assertive feminists, (already they claim to have identified prospective election candidates, including several high profile women who have no previous involvement in politics) the sea-green environmentalist lobby and people motivated by a muddled opposition to the influence of Catholic thinking on Social policy*". The paper went on to say; "*Right now the New Agenda's economic policy could only be described as the Hidden Agenda. The only difference between the new party and Labour would appear to be that De Rossa's supporters visit a better class of tailor. But that won't butter any bread for Ireland's 275,000 unemployed*". We predict in time it will be demonstrated that this particular faction is travelling the well established route opened up over a hundred years ago by Edward Bernstein, into the cul-de-sac of Social Democracy.

If one examines the social composition of the theoretical and philosophical leaders of this split it is evident that the majority of them come from the privileged professional and revisionist intellectual wing of the working class movement. This group would term themselves as the 'Communist Elite' and is made up of such people as Henry Patterson, Ellen Hazekorn, Rosheen Callander and Paul Sweeney. The group's main theoretical and political background and involvement has been through and with the British and Irish Communist Organisation, a small British empiricist elitist group, who have for years fed like leeches off other organisations. Though the new group may at the moment have some genuine working class support this is mainly through a combination of factors, media hype, personality influences, distortion of Workers' Party aims and actions. The leaders of this faction have infected many genuine people with their pessimism on the future of Socialism and the Workers Party. They have been able, with the assistance of the media, to dress up their opportunism as so-called 'openness' which

disguises their real agenda of a move to the centre and then inevitably to the right of Irish politics. Political history is filled with examples of so-called Communists, Socialists, Radicals and Liberals degenerating into Conservatives and indeed even Reactionaries. Mussolini in the early part of this century is one example and of course the most recent and well known turncoat of today is Boris Yeltsin.

If any confirmation was needed that there was a concerted plan to this breakaway the question of bank accounts being closed down or cleared out supplies this evidence. A few examples will demonstrate this, bank accounts in the name of the Central Executive were cleared out by G. Doherty with the help of D. Geraghty and M.Brady. Friends of G.Doherty were owed £5,5000, this was to be repaid out of the sale of a site in Co. Kilkenny. This sale had run into difficulties though there was never any question of the party not repaying the money owed to G.Doherty's friends. Yet without any reference to any party committee or the party treasurer, G.Doherty and M.Brady took every penny out of every party account to which they had access on the Thursday and Friday 20th and 21st February a day or two before they deserted the party.

In Dublin Region three members of De Rossa's faction have denied the existence of a Workers' Party Euro Account for which they were the signatories. In Dublin North East, Dublin North West, Dublin South West and Bray Co Wicklow, Workers' Party accounts were closed without the authority of the party and to date requests for bank documentation and information have been refused. In Dublin South Central constituency supporters of De Rossa's group withdrew all monies in the party account and closed the account down without any authority of the branch. In Cork City the party has had to go to court to attempt to regain its money. Proceeds from the sale of a new motor car won by the party in a raffle were lodged not in a party bank account but in a personal bank account in the names of two individuals Tom O' Mahony and Bernard Lynch, supporters and now members of "New Agenda" now 'Democratic Left'.

Much has been made by the liquidators of alleged criminal activity carried out by the so-called Official I.R.A., ostensibly on behalf of the Workers' Party. Time after time the party has made it clear and particularly in recent times, even by the liquidators themselves, DeRossa, Rabbitte, Lynch, Geraghty, Gilmore that the party has no connection with any paramilitary or criminal organisation. People must be aware that there has been a consistent campaign by elements in the media, aided and abetted by the establishment to smear and damage the party in the eyes of the people.

It is not just a figment of our imagination that for decades now the party has been the subject and object of continuous attacks. Extracts from an R.T.E. documentary Today/Tonight and the BBC Spotlight programme of June 1991

have been used as part of this campaign. The main witnesses against the Workers' Party in these programmes were members and supporters of the I.R.S.P./I.N.L.A. gang and Provisional I.R.A. some of whom have since been charged with terrorist offences. Sean Montgomery and Bernadette Dobbin from the Markets Area of Belfast who were prime 'witnesses' for the BBC Spotlight programme in June 1991, were charged on September 20th 1991 with conspiracy to murder and with possession of a rifle and ammunition. Other 'witnesses' on this B.B.C programme were of the calibre of our political opponents such as Dr. Brian Feeney of Belfast from the sectarian Catholic Social Democratic Labour Party.

These then are some of the elements, and of course their champion Vincent Browne, member of the National Union of Journalists and newspaper publisher, a man who has travelled the road from being a fervent admirer of Charles J. Haughey to Provo/IRSP supporter now to become an admirer of Proinsias De Rossa Eamon Gilmore and Pat Rabbitte, these are the people whom as we have stated, who have attempted to link the Workers' Party with alleged criminal activity. In regard to the Sunday Tribune newspaper of Vincent Browne surely it is pertinent to ask how it is that a newspaper group can lose millions upon millions of pounds year after year, with losses for 1991 of almost £3. million, and still continue publishing. Where does the money come from to fund such an enterprise?

Those of us who have experienced the split with the Provisionals and Irish Republican Socialist Party can well recall the immediate media reaction to these groups. They were lauded and praised as being progressive and forward thinking, in tune with the situation of the day, they would have no trouble in leaving the rigid, stuck in the mud 'Officials' behind. Indeed, the media said, these organisations were the answer to the people's needs, and that the class politics of the 'Officials' would soon leave them isolated and forgotten. Such issues as class politics we were told were not wanted or needed in Ireland. We now know how badly the media misjudged the situation, we not only survived but went on to build as Tomás Mac Giolla has said the finest political organisation the working class ever had in this country, until traitors within did what the enemy without could not do - seriously damage the party.

The manner in which the De Rossa faction conspired to conceal their aims and actions from Tomas MacGiolla is now well known and is also ample proof of their unprincipled and deceitful mentality. The liquidators have spoken long and loud on the need for change in the party, for the party to accept the necessity for change. They were continually quoting Tomas MacGiolla's last address as party president in this regard. And yet they decided to conceal their agenda from one of the main architects of change in Irish political life. It is worthwhile quoting a couple of paragraphs from that particular speech made by Tomas MacGiolla in 1988. In it he said

Change is the permanent condition of a Party of the working class. Changing the world means precisely that, and since the Party is part of the world it is changing, it must change too. A party of the working class which claims to be trying to change the world, and is not itself changing with it, is not only a contradiction in terms but is a sick party. If it is not changing it means it has stopped listening to the working class which is forced to continually change by changes in the process of production and looks to the party of the working class to replace the erratic and inhuman changes of capitalism with a planned process of production in which change is no longer arbitrary but anticipated and accepted and humanised so that humanity is the author of change and not its victim.

That is why I say freedom is the acceptance of the necessity to change. The Workers' Party is the Political Party of the working class and since the Party is drawn from the working class, it must change with the class it represents.

How can the liquidators P.De Rossa and his faction retain any honourable claim to seek genuine change when they insulted and chose to betray a comrade who had worked with them for years, a comrade Tomás Mac Giolla who had led the way for decades and was still in the forefront of those seeking and implementing positive political change.

To further demonstrate that there was plan to take control of the party and move it in a fundamentally different direction (Des Geraghty's words) we need only recall the 'Stagg Drama' of "Will He, Won't He" jump the Labour Party ship into the 'New Agenda/ 'Democratic Left' row boat. After taking up the position of General Secretary of the party Des Geraghty met secretly in October 1991 with Dep. E. Stagg to discuss the terms or conditions on which Dep.Stagg would join the faction in forming a new group. The De Rossa faction had many sincere people entirely convinced that Dep E. Stagg would join them. In Kildare constituency for example it had reached the point where the people who had decided to defect with De Rossa had accepted that Dep.E. Stagg would be the new group's front runner in that constituency in any election. The anti-Republican councillor Katherine Murphy had been forced to take the position of running mate to Dep.E. Stagg a person whom she and others in the constituency had up to them castigated as being opportunist and unprincipled

At a meeting of the Dublin North East Constituency of the Workers Party on Friday 21st February Dep. Pat McCartan in an effort to sway members to defect assured all present that Dep. E. Stagg at a number of meetings with P. De Rossa had given De Rossa a 100% guarantee that he Stagg was going to join the breakaway faction in a new party. Other members of the De Rossa faction at other meetings had told members that other deputies and some senators would join the new group, names mentioned were Deputies Michael O'Higgins and Jim Kemmy along with Senators Brendan Ryan, Joe O'Toole

the party then becomes in their minds responsible for all the alleged wrongs or humiliations suffered by these particular individuals.

We are under no illusions, we recognise the damage done the losses incurred nevertheless we are convinced and determined to rebuild the Workers Party, to re-establish the party's standing and influence among the people. As we know from experience there is no short-cut to achieving this aim. It is only by our active work among the people, campaigning and developing agitations on housing, unemployment, on the cuts in the health, education services, the struggle against terrorism and against sectarianism, to campaign for democracy in every sphere of life, these are the issues by which we will once again demonstrate to the people that the Workers Party is their party.

The ruling class in this country, as in all capitalist countries, is well represented with their own political parties of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Progressive Democrats, and in Northern Ireland the sectarian all class alliance of the parties of Unionism and the S.D.L.P. The working class needs and must have its own party to represent and defend its interests. **The Workers' Party is that party.** Against that the Labour Party have proved for decades through its reformist programme and its participation in coalition government with reactionary parties, that it is neither able or willing to act solely and principally on behalf of the working class. The Labour Party is now a willing partner- in-waiting for its next period of coalition and as we know from all the evidence available 'New Agenda' now 'Democratic Left' will not be found wanting in offering whatever services it has in this coalition process.

We for our part will continue to build the Workers' Party, to organise the Irish working class, to develop and expand class struggle, to confront the establishment through active campaigning on all the social, economic, cultural and political issues that confront the Irish people, North and South. To campaign for jobs, for peace, for democracy, for a Democratic Secular Socialist Unitary State in Ireland-a Republic.

The proposal to reconstitute the Workers' Party will have caused surprise and even alarm amongst some members. We have been asked why such a drastic step is necessary. Surely our problems are not insurmountable and a compromise can be found between opposing views?

If opposing views were all that were at issue certainly a compromise, a working relationship could be found.

The problems, however, are deep and fundamental. They relate to organisation, politics and ideology. Reconstitution is intended to establish the rights of the general membership and to guarantee that democratic decision, once made, are implemented.

A vote for reconstitution and the steps necessary to implement it effectively is a vote of confidence in our capacity to deal with change in a mature way.

A vote against the motion is to put at risk all the progress we have made to date.

We believe that the vast majority will opt to support reconstitution once the issues are laid out clearly and unambiguously.

For that reason we ask you to read and consider the following statement before deciding how your vote will be cast. Whatever way you vote, you will be deciding on the future of the Party and its politics.

Proinsias De Rossa
Workers' Party President

February 1992

Why there is no Alternative to Reconstitution

The decision to have a special Ard Fheis to reconstitute the Party has been represented by some critics as a panic measure by a parliamentary cabal who would be better off in the Labour Party or even the Progressive Democrats. The proposal is alleged to create the conditions for a witch-hunt against 'real' or 'revolutionary' socialists in the Party. It will also, it is claimed, serve to insulate a 26-county social democratic Party from the problems of the North. Careerism, we are told, will sacrifice the Northern members for its own narrow purposes.

These statements are not true and simply serve to obscure the real issues at state and to hide from the general membership the true sources of conflict. These have their origin, in part, in the collapse of the Eastern European bloc and the disintegration of the USSR. The Right throughout the world has greeted these developments as a vindication of economic liberalism and liberal democracy and as final evidence of the intellectually bankrupt nature of Marxism. This has all added to a long-standing set of conflicts and tensions in the most important Communist Parties in the West.

For, as most informed commentators know, the whole Soviet model of 'socialism' and the associated ideology of Marxism-Leninism had been under challenge from within some of those same Communist Parties since the development of 'Euro Communism' in the 1970s.

One of the reasons why the Workers' Party has had its recent troubles is the repressive attitude taken by some leading members to any criticism of the Soviet bloc. For some, during the 1980s, it was sufficient to label a proposition or arguments 'Euro-Communist' to have it dismissed out of hand. During the discussion of the new Party programme the same arid labelling approach was used to dismiss any serious attempt to face up to the bankruptcy of the Stalinist tradition as some sort of mealy-mouthed reformism. There are disturbing echoes of the bankrupt wailing of the CPI. The failure of the statist economies of the East is in no way a proof of the failure of Marxism or Socialism but only a particular authoritarian and voluntarist view that socialism could be constructed 'from above' by a vanguard armed with the theory of 'scientific socialism'.

One of the effects of the Bolshevik seizure of powers in 1917 and the formation of the Third International was to narrow down the choice of direction to that of a 'revolutionary' Communist approach or a 'democratic' social democratic one. In crude terms the Communist tradition was only capable of taking power in economically backward countries or on the backs of the Red Army.

It was a travesty of the intention of those of us who have been arguing for applying an unsentimental and critical focus to the current state of the Party to claim that we have a social democratic agenda. It is even more obnoxious to be labeled as disciples of Harris whose veneer of social democracy has been shown to be even more superficial than his communist veneer. The choices we have are not confined to a superficial radicalism express in the outmoded terms of Marxism-Leninism or the dull managerial approach of Spring and Kinnock. There is, in our view, a space for a Democratic Socialist alternative to both Stalinism and Social Democracy. But we cannot make the challenge to social democracy effectively as long as there are doubts about our own commitment to democracy.

The tendency to make sneering references to 'bourgeois democracy' and abstract attacks on 'parliamentarianism' (which is also linked to notions of the 'revolutionary vanguard' and 'democratic centralism') can only serve to reinforce ordinary people's doubts about our commitment to basic democratic values. We cannot ignore the damage that association of any radical form of socialism with the Soviet Union has done to the cause of social transformation. The English socialist R H Tawney summed up the choice very clearly.

They (socialists) must face the fact that, if the public, and particularly the working class public, is confronted with the choice between capitalist democracy, with all its nauseous insincerities, and undemocratic socialism, it will choose the former every time.

Both Stalinism and Social Democracy represent visions of socialism or social reform which treat the working class and the mass of the population as passive, as essentially an object to be acted upon by the elite of Marxist-Leninists or enlightened administrators. Both have given to socialism a statist and bureaucratic cast which is, in part, responsible for the success of the neo-liberal upsurge of the last decade.

In the case of the Workers' Party both a certain kind of Soviet Marxist ideology and the associated ideology of the vanguard Party and democratic centralism may have served a positive transitional function as the republican movement struggled to transform itself and shed backward nationalism and militarism.

But time change and vanguardism did not challenge one key aspect of the republican tradition - its elitist and conspiratorial approach to politics. In Northern Ireland this has been overlaid by a history of bitter conflict with the Provos and other terrorist organisations. It is now being argued that those of us who have raised the need for a clear and fundamental break with any last vestiges of the conspiratorial mentality are 'forsaking' the members in the North. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Party has long argued that there was no military solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland, that what Northern Ireland needs are new structures of democratic accountability, an entrenched Bill of Rights and structural reforms in the economic and social sphere. We have won respect for standing out against knee-jerk anti-RUC sentiment.

We had won ground in the 1980s because it appeared to increasing numbers of people that we had shown the ability to change, to rethink our positions, to jettison the ideological baggage of our past. Unfortunately that hard-won capital has been squandered in ways that we may ignore but which the public won't. Attitudes that most of us believed had been put behind us but are still a reality. This reality is restricting the growth of the Workers' party in the Republic as well as in Northern Ireland and threatens to destroy us.

We cannot ignore this problem and we should not be tempted to compromise or fudge on it. The stakes are nothing less than the survival of the party as a serious political force in Irish life. All over Europe the Left is struggling to emerge from the debris of collapsed social democratic and Stalinist projects at a time when many of the economic, social and cultural bases of traditional working class struggle and political involvement are disintegrating. This has meant that many traditional ideas and slogans on the Left have been falling on stony ground for some time.

The Workers' Party critics of the proposal for reconstitution have utterly failed to keep abreast of the debates which have been taking place on the European Left for over two decades, despite the fact that both *Workers' Life* and *Making Sense* have made a serious attempt to bring them to our notice.

The problem here is a concept of Marxism as a complete system with all the answers. The fact is that, while Marxism has continued to demonstrate a great strength in analysing the contradictions and inequalities of capitalism, it has been much less successful in either producing a convincing model of a socialist economy or an alternative to liberal democracy that does not appear to be democratically regressive.

It was these problems that the new Party programme was beginning to address. But even to challenge the 'system' was sufficient to produce shrill cries of betrayal and revisionism. What was on display at last year's Ard Fheis was a Marxism more in keeping with religious faith. The programme was seen as containing a number of blasphemies which had to be dealt with by the invocations of such holy relics as 'class struggle' and 'revolution'. It you are not happy with the ritual you are excommunicated to the land of middle-class liberalism and the PDs.

In fact, all the evidence from Ireland and other Capitalist countries is that, while class remains a determining factor of the lives of the vast majority of people, class antagonism and identification with class is much less powerful

as a source of immediate political and cultural identity. It is not enough simply to preach at people and that is essentially what we do when we talk in abstract terms about class struggle and revolution. Our concepts and practices must reflect their lived experience. That means an activist Party that is involved in a multiplicity of different struggles. It also means bringing to those separate struggles a broader and longer term vision. This cannot be constructed from old socialist manuals but only through a process of democratic interaction with popular struggles and campaigns. Our experience has shown us that the vanguard culture and democratic centralism produces an elitist and authoritarian attitude to both ordinary members of the Party and even more to the mass of the population outside. This leads to suspicion of, rather than enthusiasm for, the spontaneous emergence of movements and groups aimed at radical change.

At the core of any credible socialist vision at the end of the twentieth century must be modesty and democracy. Modesty because of the barbarities and dead-ends of much of what has passed for socialism in this century. Just as Marx would have achieved little if he had not stood on the shoulders of intellectual giants like Hegel and Adam Smith, we should make it clear that we will take enlightenment from whatever source. Tired clichés 'bourgeois ideology' and 'middle class liberalism' should be seen for what they are, the protective mechanism of closed minds.

But what's of central importance is that we have to face up to the fact that our crisis is too deep to be resolved simply by ideological debates or political education. The last couple of years has not seen a debate but more a dialogue with the deaf. The great step forward which the victories in the 1989 election represented has been undermined by some people who can see in the Parliamentary Party nothing more than a threat. Thus despite the fact acknowledged by a Press which is not usually bending over to say positive things about the Workers' Party, that they have brought a new radicalism into the Dail, the TDs are now portrayed as the source of the crisis in the Party.

The truth is precisely the opposite; the emergence of a new source of influence in the Party has provoked a backlash from a group who feel that, for historical reasons, they 'own' the organisation.

Democratic centralism and the belittling of the Parliamentary Party have a clear aim; to maintain the power of a particular section of the Party over the rest of it. It is as crude and brutal as that. The aim of reconstitution is not to replace one power centre with another and to ensconce the parliamentarians in power. It is to open up the Party to the active participation and control by its membership. There is no future of another parliamentary Labour Party in Irish politics. There is space for an active democratic socialist Party with a strong presence in the Dail. Unless the Party is reconstituted the avalanche of dirt with which we have been smeared recently will bury that space.

The name of the Workers' Party has been irretrievably linked to unlawful activities in the North. We cannot continue to pretend otherwise. As constituted at present the Party can go nowhere in Northern Ireland. This is a tragedy for the vast majority of our members in the North. It is now being suggested that those in favour of reconstitution see the Northern members as an embarrassment to be got rid of as quickly as possible. The fact is that the positive progress which the Party was making in the North was the product, in large part, of the struggles and sacrifices of the Northern membership. They are not being sold out by us. Their achievements are being undermined by those who will not see the need to change and to finally and completely break with the past. It was its revisionist position on Northern Ireland which has done much to establish the Party's distinctiveness in the Republic.

Its special knowledge of the North was a major stimulus to the development of policies on secularism and pluralism in the Republic. It would be a miserable admission of failure for a reconstituted Party not to continue to play an active and challenging role in the politics of Northern Ireland.

Reconstitution is aimed at establishing a more adequate relation between our democratic socialist philosophy and values, set out in the Party programme, and the structures, behaviour, atmosphere and inner life of the Party. At present it is quite possible for someone to be attracted by what they know the Party says it stands for and then be shocked and sickened by what they read or see on television which seem to show a different and seamy side to the present Workers' Party.

We are deluding ourselves if we think that denunciations of the 'capitalist media', whatever effect they have internally, will do more than confirm an image of a defensive sect with something to hide. The Workers' Party has made a major contribution to producing an Irish Left with a serious and critical edge to its politics. It has achieved more in the intellectual and strategic renovation of Irish socialism in the last twenty years than the rest of the Left in the whole period since the execution of Connolly. It would be a tragedy if it was to become no more than an interesting chapter of Irish political history - another Clann na Poblachta, a 'surge' Party with no long-term influence. If the road of reconstitution is rejected then we all risk spending the next few years writing the Party's obituary.

Dear Comrades

The proposal by Proinsias De Rossa, Seamus Lynch and their supporters to liquidate the Party has caused considerable damage to the Party's standing and influence among the working class. Indeed, we know that this proposal to liquidate the Party has caused great distress among the vast majority of members and supporters.

We know that there is an alternative to this incredible surrender, to this betrayal of all that we have struggled to achieve. First and last our concern is to safeguard the integrity, the unity and future of the Workers' Party. To do this we must defeat the aims of the liquidators and the following pages will give you some information concerning the aims and actions of those who wish to liquidate the party. It refutes the lies and rumours that have been spread about members integrity. It points out that the only ones to gain from the liquidation of the Workers' Party will be capitalism, and its allies, and it states clearly that the only losers will be the Irish working class.

We show that this is no sudden decision but a plan of action that has been in preparation for sometime.

There are it must be admitted serious differences within the Party. Nevertheless we state here and now that as democrats we will accept the democratic decision of the Ard Fheis, unlike our opponents who have made it clear they will leave the Party if they do not get their way.

We have no difficulty accepting the Party Programme and the Party Constitution adopted at the 1991 Ard Fheis and within that structure working with comrades who may differ from us on some issues, but working in a spirit of trust and honesty.

Our Party has travelled a long road, we have overcome many many problems including two bitter splits, we have no wish or desire to experience anything of a similar nature. We appeal to the proposers and their supporters of this negative and divisive motion to draw back now and preserve the unity of the Party.

United we have achieved much. We can achieve much more in the years ahead with a united Party. Let us defeat the proposal to liquidate the party and continue with our task of building the party throughout the country.

Sean Garland
Members of Executive Political Committee

John Lowry

There is an Alternative Defend the Party - Defeat the Liquidators

Dear Comrades

By now you are aware of the very serious situation confronting the party. Over recent weeks there has been a widespread and intensive media campaign of vilification and distortion of comrades political principles and commitment. Some comrades of longstanding in the party have been singled out for special attack during this time. It has been difficult to combat this campaign in the media for the people who were issuing statements and making these attacks preferred to remain anonymous and the media assisted them in this. We had to wait until it was clear what their motives and aims were and are. It was necessary to wait and have them expose themselves.

This finally happened at the Ard Comhairle meeting held on the Friday and Saturday 24th and 25th January, when Proinsias De Rossa presented a document outlining his political position and proposing that the Ard Comhairle should convene a special Ard Fheis to as he stated "Reconstitute the Party". Contrary to misleading reports this document was not endorsed by the CEC. A motion to convene a special Ard Fheis was passed by the CEC. What in effect P De Rossa and his supporters want to do is **TO LIQUIDATE THE PARTY**. We will return to this issue later, for now, we would believe it is important to give all members an overview and trace the development of this crisis.

The first attempt in recent times to divert the party was initiated by E. Harris at a party school in Belfast in Summer of 1988. Harris's main thesis was that Socialism had failed therefore the future lay in adopting Social Democracy. For some months in late 1988 and early 1989 Harris, who had over some years built a clique around himself, circulated this pernicious doctrine through the party. It is clear now that E Harris exercised considerable influence over P. De Rossa so much so that in De Rossa's first address to the Ard Fheis as party president E. Harris made the major contribution with P De Rossa acting as virtual spokesman for E.Harris's ideas.

It was also clear from party members reaction to this speech that they rejected any attempt to divert the party into Social Democracy. Harris and his clique refused to see and accept this fact (where De Rossa and his supporters did) and Harris continued his attempt to impose this new trend on the party. They published a document 'Necessity for Social Democracy' and the manner of its publication combined with its content resulted in they being overwhelmingly rejected by the party at the 1990 Ard Fheis. At that time it must be stated the members defending the Socialist principles and ideals of the party were under no illusions, we knew that some of the leading members who were ostensibly opposed to Harris and his ideas were acting not out of principled opposition but because of personality conflicts. It now transpires they actually accepted his main thesis "Socialism was Dead" but did not wish to be associated with him or his group for apart from their personal dislike of Harris they were able to gauge the reaction of members to E Harris's proposals.

P De Rossa's first speech in 1989 caused a great deal of dissension and turmoil. Even so the party entered the June Election of 1989 in the Republic, as a united, disciplined, determined and enthusiastic party. The result of the election for the Dail and European Parliament gave us as you know seven T.D.s and one European Member. This result we believe fairly reflected the rising influence and strength of the party.

Who Gains?

How is it one then, one must ask the question, after such a stunning victory that the Party could now be on the verge of a bitter division. Who gains from this? Who is it that has been fomenting and organising this dreadful situation in which the only losers will be the working class who over the past ten years were coming to recognise that at last they had a party to represent their interests.

As a new and young party only developing socialist consciousness with a growing number of parliamentarians and with little experience of integrating and directing a parliamentary group it soon became clear that elements of the parliamentary group were taking on a life of their own and resented, in the main, any direction or control from the democratically elected leadership of the party.

Soon after the election results of 1989 it became apparent that a major breach had developed between P De Rossa and E Harris. Up to that time Harris had as stated considerable influence and even control in some areas on P De Rossa, claiming in effect to have masterminded the Euro election campaign and being primarily responsible for the victory. This is of course typical of

Harris's exaggerations but nevertheless it is a fact that Harris did have great influence on De Rossa to the point where De Rossa had accepted many of Harris's ideas and also it would now seem his arrogance and contempt for people. At the 1990 Ard Fheis, Harris's supporters attempted to have the Ard Fheis endorse their viewpoint using the suspension of Eamon Smullen as the main issue, they failed and about 20 members, a couple in leadership positions, resigned.

At this same Ard Fheis P De Rossa repudiated many aspects of his previous years speech, relating to Social Democracy and the "Death of Socialism".

In his statement accompanying his motion calling for a special Ard Fheis, P De Rossa covered a lot of ground with emphasis on political objectives and activity. In this statement which one presumes is his and his supporters main political programme/manifesto, and objectives there is a total absence of any class content, nothing about the end aim or objective of the party, nothing about the fundamentals, the principles from which the party derives its existence, its whole basis for organising. Such a speech could have been given by Dick Spring or indeed by John Bruton as advised by E Harris for that matter.

In his statement P De Rossa tries to convey the impression that it is only since his election as Party President that the Party has had any significant success that he is the sole initiator and supporter of change. In fact he makes a most startling admission in that he says since 1988 "he has dedicated himself to reform the party's organisation and politics" whatever about organisational reform this is the first time politics has been mentioned. The spirit of E Harris lives on.

The victories of 1989 did not come out of the blue but were the result of hard work and considerable investment in members time commitment and our financial resources. Any member who was involved or indeed aware of our history must know that we have never been afraid to adapt or change. From the sixties through the seventies we have demonstrated our commitment to and our ability to change. In 1982 we adopted a major organisation document which laid the basis for the party's advances over the following years. Nothing in this document was sacrosanct and indeed as far as organisation principles and methods go nothing should be sacred. A person and a party can change position on any and every issue but when they change direction that is another matter. This is what is proposed now.

In the Autumn of last year Dep. P Rabbitte invited a fulltime party employee, Noel McFarlane, to the Dail Bar for a discussion. The member was amazed to hear Dep. Rabbitte say he intended to defect to the Labour Party and would the member join him. Dep. Rabbitte went on to say that there would be a split in the party before the Ard Fheis, that John and Cllr. Liz McManus were resigning, in fact all the Wicklow organisation were resigning, that Tony Heffernan, PRO, intended to quit and that the party was going nowhere. A report on this discussion was made to the Political Committee in the Autumn. Unfortunately the Political Committee did not take this matter up, indeed in order to avoid a bitter dispute it went on to recommend to the CEC to co-opt Dep. Pat Rabbitte on to the Political Committee.

A Hidden Agenda

For some considerable time Dep. P Rabbitte has been engaged in a campaign of disinformation to sap party morale and seek to justify a move to a Social Democratic Parliamentary party and/or defect or merge with the Labour Party. This hidden agenda also had of course its hidden supporters who have now come out in the open with their declared aims to "reconstitute the Party". "To stand down all party members and have them Re-register with the new caretaker executive of 11 members." Also part of this agenda is the intention as soon as it is politically expedient to separate from the Party in Northern Ireland and to rename the Party as the Democratic Socialist Party of Ireland, or as the Party of Democratic Socialists. The entire concentration is and will be on electoral politics to ensure that the T.D.s who accept this line have secure seats, nothing must be allowed interfere with this goal. It is laudable in some respects that party seats in Parliament should be secure but when it becomes the-be-all and end-all of party activity then we must question what kind of party we are, what kind of party do we want?

It is clear that P De Rossa, and his supporters are intent on following the example and practice of the old Italian Communist Party. The steady erosion and decline of the Italian C.P. principles and integrity as a C.P. took some years to accomplish. Their recognition of NATO. Their acceptance without question of the Single European Act, their acceptance of the 'Democratic Deficit' in the European Community structures, their willingness to accommodate themselves in every possible way to the 'Socialist' Party of Craxi in order to get a seat at Cabinet level, and finally to reconstitute the Italian CP as the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS Party of Democratic Left). It would seem now that P De Rossa and his group would want to accomplish the same aim in weeks rather than years.

What we are dealing with is the rotten and putrid legacy of E Harris. People who have been infected with the disease of pessimism and which has now degenerated into hostility to the aims and principles of Socialism. We are faced with a unprincipled alliance ranging from a virulent Anti-Communism to academics who wish to indulge themselves, with no relationship to the need and concerns of the working class struggle for a better life, to opportunistic individuals intent on securing seats in Parliament at any cost and who have no regard for the collective views and rights of party members.

Their contempt for the party members is represented by the statement of Deputies De Rossa and Gilmore at the Ard Comhairle meeting on Saturday 25th January. When P De Rossa was asked early on Saturday morning would he accept the democratic decision of the meeting concerning his motion for a special Ard Fheis, he refused to answer this question, even when pressed a number of times he refused to answer. It was not until late in the afternoon towards the close of the meeting, obviously when he had been advised by his supporters that he was causing them problems did he say yes, he would accept the decision but then went on to say, quote *"If the motion is defeated I will accept the decision, but reserve the freedom to take a personal decision as to my future"*. At a party meeting in Dublin North West on Thursday, 30th January he again stated that if his motion was not accepted by the Ard Fheis he would not stay in the party.

Deputy Gilmore stated quite frankly and openly that he would not stay in the party with people he did not trust. He did not elaborate on this statement. He obviously recognises that many many party members are in doubt as to his integrity on the issue of the future of the Party.

Our opponents have attempted to capture the word and concept of democracy. We are proud to stand on our record as Democrats. Many decisions, made by the party at Ard Fheiseanna, Ard Comhairle, constituency and branch level, on various issues have gone against us. We have accepted these decisions and have worked to implement these decisions. So it is today and tomorrow we will accept the democratic decision of the members. Unlike our opponents, P De Rossa and E Gilmore who stated clearly on a number of occasions that if the motion to reconstitute the Party is defeated they will not stay in the Party. Are these the words and actions of democrats? No. They are holding the Party to ransom. They are saying if you don't accept their view then they will leave. This surely is a clear demonstration of their intentions. Do not allow them to blackmail the Party, reject their arrogance and indeed their contempt for members.

In a situation such as we are in now it is essential that the real issues are brought out. The De Rossa group have put forward what on the surface appear to be good reasons for their actions.

What they fail to mention are the real reasons

1. Their aim to create a Social Democratic Parliamentary Party.
2. To defect or merge with Labour Party.
3. To break with the Party in Northern Ireland which they see as an albatross around their electoral necks.

TO ACHIEVE THESE AIMS THEY MUST LIQUIDATE OR SPLIT THE WORKERS' PARTY.

For those of us who have experienced the bitterness and indeed tragedy of division on other occasions we know that those seeking to split or divert the party usually advance what can be considered good reasons for their actions, it takes considerable time and effort to get splitters to admit to the real reasons for their actions. We can recall how the Provisionals used many and varied reasons for their split, as indeed did Costello's gang. We now know at a terrible cost to the Party and the Irish people what these groups real agenda was.

The Truth About the 1991 Ard Fheis

We now have allegations that the 1991 Ard Fheis was rigged, no evidence has been presented to substantiate this, yet the smear has been peddled through the party. Northern Ireland and Waterford have been singled out for attention. It is alleged they were accredited with more delegates than their membership warranted and that one delegate from Northern Ireland wasn't a member. The record of attendance and voting is what counts if this 'rigging' is to mean anything. Northern Ireland had 106 delegates listed, one of whom resigned from the Party and didn't attend the Ard Fheis. The record shows that fifty-six attended on Saturday and sixty on Sunday. The Lagan Valley constituency is particularly singled out. This constituency has three branches with ten attending on Saturday, and eight on Sunday. Waterford city had three affiliated branches and were accredited with 11 delegates with six attending on Saturday and fewer on Sunday.

But what of the rest of the country? The practice for over a decade has been to encourage attendance from every area providing members are registered and branches affiliated. In many cases branches fell beneath the required number of 5 so rather than disenfranchise activists, delegations are facilitated. At last

years Ard Fheis a sample of areas facilitated are Dungarvan, Athy, Naas, Prosperous and at least one delegation from the Dublin area. Delegate cards are issued subject to the member being registered and branch affiliated. No member who was not registered or whose branch was not affiliated attended last years Ard Fheis, nor any previous Ard Fheis as a delegate.

Again, our opponents through the media have made much of a so-called plot to replace P De Rossa as Party President. What actually happened was that the Editor of the party paper, Noel McFarlane, who returned from the U.S. last year and enthusiastically agreed to edit the relaunched party paper found after some months working as editor that he had fundamental political disagreements with P De Rossa. He had become disillusioned with P De Rossa as Party President. Being, frankly somewhat naive/foolish he approached Dep. P Rabbitte openly and honestly and asked him would he stand for party President against P De Rossa. He told Dep Rabbitte that some people in Belfast had stated they would work with him but not P De Rossa.

Dep. Rabbitte's response to this request was to say 3 or 4 other people had also asked him to do the same but he had declined. This was the total extent of the so-called plot to replace P De Rossa. Dep. Rabbitte true to form couldn't settle for the truth, but as usual had to embellish it, adding to the story that the person who approached him was an emissary for a group of people and that if he accepted this offer money would flow from Belfast.

The Party Debt - The Facts

The issue of the party debt has/is being used to smear people opposed to P De Rossa's action of liquidating the party. A comprehensive financial report was given to the Ard Comhairle meeting of 3 years ago in Dun Laoghaire which was accepted. We give some financial details so that people can judge for themselves how the debt built up over the years.

Subsidies by Repsol to Publications and Elections:

Workers Life/Making Sense, 13 years £195,000
(incl. wages, typesetting/printing)

Irish/Northern People for 15 years £156,000
(incl. wages, typesetting, printing)

It must be emphasised and indeed has been recognised for many years now that there was never sufficient income from any of these publications to cover a fraction of their costs.

Elections Dail

1977, 1981, 1982, 1982 £167,000
Some constituencies which received assistance and had election debts written off: Wicklow, Galway, Waterford, Cork East., Limerick, Kerry South/North, Donegal, Monaghan.

Elections Euro

1979, 1984 £50,000
Includes deposits and printing

TOTAL £568,000

If one adds international travel, foreign guests, plus the upkeep of party premises, rates/insurance, light, heat, telephones, office administration etc. over these same years one could add another £10,000 per year which for 13 years is £130,000, making a grand total of £698,000.

Again the matter of a £75,000 loan being raised in Belfast recently has been distorted. The facts are some months ago the CEC/EPC agreed and instructed the EMC to attempt to reschedule loans. The Belfast chairman of the EMC, Seamus Harrison, undertook this task in Northern Ireland. He finally succeeded in achieving this some weeks ago. At all times the EMC were kept informed of the progress and the terms of this loan re-scheduling.

Over the past ten years and more the party in Northern Ireland has contributed enormously in terms of money and personnel to the party in the Republic. The party in Belfast has borrowed money to help finance elections and pay wages and costs of publications over that period of time. The fact that they have been unable over the past year to contribute to wages and expenses in the Republic is now being used against the party in Belfast. Twisted minds have twisted a difficult financial situation to suit their own particular and indeed peculiar political ideology and have smeared and maligned the party in Belfast. There is no crock of gold in Belfast or anywhere else for that matter.

Much is/has been made of the financial contribution being made by the party in the Dail. The party by having 7 members in the Dail qualifies for group status, and the party, through the party president, is then entitled to approximately £8,500 per month. It is surely only logical and fair that this money should be used to pay wages and help to clear off the debt which was incurred in getting T.D.s elected in the first place.

Let us put on record the contribution of T.D.s to the party centre. From his election as T.D. Tomas MacGiolla paid in to the party his full Dail monthly salary from which he received a weekly wage. Recently this changed and Tomas MacGiolla now makes a contribution of £250 per month.

P De Rossa makes a contribution of £250 per month which repays a loan he took out for the party some years ago, since his election as TD he has made a contribution of £50 a month. He has, since being elected MEP transferred considerable money to the party centre from Europe, details of this were given to CEC meeting in August 1991.

Of the remaining T.D.s despite making promises to Sean Garland some years ago to make regular contributions to the centre it was not until late last year that Deputies Byrne and Rabbitte made a commitment to contribute a monthly sum of £75 each to the centre, that is £17.30 per week, less than the attendance allowance for one day. Deputy Sherlock has made a once-off yearly contribution of £600 which is £11.54 per week. Deputies McCartan and Gilmore despite making promises have not contributed anything to date.

The Use of the Mass Media to Distort

We have already mentioned the question of change and adapting to new situations. In recent times there has been much talk of reform within the Party. This is welcomed by all sincere members and supporters. Any party seriously concerned to advance and improve itself must all the time be examining structures and organisation. But let the debate be conducted in a fair and open manner, recognising the rights and responsibilities of the Party members to hear all sides of the arguments, through party structures and not through the mass media. At the 1991 Ard Fheis a commission was established to review party rules and organisation. This Commission had completed its report and the party was about to consider the report and convene a special delegate conference on 14th March to debate and democratically decide on the report. Members will be aware that the media have in recent weeks been told that this report would provoke controversy, would force the so called hardliners - Marxists/Leninists - to quit the party, that these people who were contemptuously referred to as "yesterdays men" would not/could not accept the proposed reforms of the commission. This even before members had received the report.

Members will be aware by now that the Irish Times, Saturday 8th February, carried a comprehensive report concerning the Party Commission on rules and organisation. Once again we would draw members attention to the fact that the Commission report may have been in the post but was not received by

many members before being published in the Irish Times. Coupled with this blatant use of the mass media to manipulate members we have the extraordinary situation where the Chairman of the Commission, Dep. Eamon Gilmore, gives his introduction to the report to the media. It is worthwhile informing members that Dep. Gilmore had promised members of the Commission on two occasions that he would show them his introduction and that it would not attempt to make any political points, it would be concerned solely with the content of the report. Members can judge for themselves what image is projected in the Irish Times by the slanted and inaccurate report and analysis of the Commission report.

All the time as we have said before the stage is being set for confrontation and a split. This is the aim, liquidate or if not, split the party. If this objective cannot be achieved then the media campaign will give the splitters a cloak to cover their aim not to accept the democratic decision of the members when it goes against them. The ground already is being set for this, some of the splitters/liquidators are now suggesting standing orders must be suspended as they apply at present, it should not take a 2/3 majority they say to liquidate the party, it should they now say be done by simple majority.

Some weeks ago the Sunday Tribune, vehicle of Vincent Browne, carried an editorial consistent with his long established campaign of hate and slander to destroy the Workers' party, which called for the party to be dissolved- this is precisely what the De Rossa group propose to do.

Quote, Sunday Tribune, 5th January 1992 *"By far the best solution would be if the Workers' Party dissolves itself and if the democratic socialist element within it joined the Labour Party. The next best outcome would be if the liberal element within the party broke away and joined the Labour Party, leaving the old 'Stalinist' rump to its machinations."*

So much for independent thinking. These then are some of the influences and pressures which are motivating and supporting the liquidation of the Workers' Party.

Much has been made of the damage that the BBC Spotlight programme is reputed to have caused in Dublin in the Local Elections of June 1991. It is of course true that the Spotlight programme damaged the party, this is precisely what it was intended to do, as indeed it was the same motives inspired the RTE Today Tonight programme of some years ago. The reality is this programme was broadcast at 8.30pm on polling day. There had been a great deal of media hype concerning this programme for weeks before it was

transmitted. This media hype affected all the party, all the country. How is it then that the party could win an extra seat in Cork City, a seat in Limerick, a seat in Kildare, a seat in Meath, extra seats in Dublin County, lose a seat in Dublin and Galway and substantially increase its share of the vote in Waterford. Like most of the so-called issues in this struggle Spotlight, has become a convenient stick with which to beat opponents and justify the action of the liquidators.

The reality is and this is known but ignored, that the party organisation in Dublin suffered a drastic decline from the high point of June 1989. The records are there to prove that activity, membership, paper sales, contact with people were being neglected and in decline, the party identity as an independent, socialist party began to be fudged and clouded. Little distinction could be made by many people between the Labour and Workers' Party. All of the emphasis and spotlight began to shift onto the T.D.s, CABs. Press statements from TDs began to replace party activity on the ground among the people. Every effort was made to undermine the role and authority of the fulltime Dublin Regional Secretary. Funds were withheld, meetings were ignored, the emphasis was on building an organisation around some of the TDs, not to build a strong party centre in Dublin.

International Solidarity

At various meetings strong attacks by a few vocal individuals have been made on the party's international contact and relations. In particular our relations with the Workers' Party of Korea, Chinese Communist Party, Cuban Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Whatever about the various internal practices and attitudes of these parties it has always been a basic principle in international relations that one party does not interfere in the internal matters of another party. Differences exist and on many occasions our members abroad have made it clear to other fraternal parties that we were an Independent Socialist Party and that we had on some international questions very different opinions, for instance China and Cambodia (Pol Pot), in the mid seventies the grave situation concerning China and Vietnam, Cuban attitude to the Provos. Much has been made of the personality cult leadership of the DPRK. We certainly do not subscribe to this concept but we do not and cannot tell the Korean party and people how to order their affairs.

It must be borne in mind by any reasonable person the very dangerous situation that exists on the Korean peninsula brought about by the presence of 40,000 U.S. troops with thousands of nuclear weapons. Given the destruction that the United States caused in Korea during the war in the fifties the Korean

people have just cause to be wary of the U.S. aims for control of the Pacific region. We should and must have no hesitation in deciding where we stand in regard to the Korean peoples rightful demands for paeceful re-unification, for a nuclear free penisula and the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

The Ard Comhairle has decided to break off relations with anti-democratic parties. As yet no names of any such parties have been decided. On the issue of international relations there have been many debates and motions concerning our international contacts in recent years. As yet neither the Ard Fheis or the Ard Comhairle have decided as we said to break off relations with any named parties. If and when the Ard Fheis or Ard Comhairle democratically decide on such action then as with all decisions whether one agrees with them or not, we will abide by the democratic wishes of the party. This is in contrast to P De Rossa's statement that he will not accept the democratic decision of the Ard Fheis if his motion is defeated.

In all these matters concerning party relations there is the fundamental question of international solidarity. Capitalism, imperialism led by United States has sought for decades to undermine and destroy these countries who have decided to follow the Socialist road. Korea and Cuba two small countries have stood out for decaeds against U.S. threats and blackmail only because the people of these countries fully support the Socialist ideal. Again with the Peoples Republic of China there is a need to look beyond the headlines in the capitalist mass media. China has achieved more over the past forty years than any other capitalist country, China 's Socialist government has succeeded in solving the basic right to life, people have for the first time in centuries enough food to live. Famine has been abolished, other fundamental human rights have been established. It is necessary to look at the whole picture and not pick out pieces which distort the situation. And of course despite what we may say some people accept without question capitalism's attacks and condemnation of these countries and allow the capitalist mass media to influence and colour their judgement of the situation. The liquidators see everything in terms of millstones around their electoral necks.

In order to make it clear for members to assess the situation we would like to give some information concerning in particular our relations with the C.P.S.U. It was in December 1983 that we established fraternal links with the C.P.S.U. This was at the beginning of the period in which Yuri Andropov had initiated the policy of reforms which M Gorbachev developed as Perestroika and Glasnost. From the beginning of our relationship we made it clear that we recognised the need for and fully supported the reform process. Combined with this we made it clear on many occasions that we had serious

disagreement with the C.P.S.U. on such matters as Northern Ireland and also the activity of Peace movements. As with other parties and countries we did not interfere with the internal affairs or policy of the C.P.S.U. We were critical in private of some of their ideas and their methods as indeed were many millions of communists in the Soviet Union. Indeed it is now recognised that a great deal of the corruption and distortion of socialist principles maintained by a stifling bureaucracy was not known to the majority of C.P.S.U. party members.

It was clear for many years that the Party in the USSR had become divorced from the people, that the party lost touch, were not in contact with the people, this in fact has happened in regard to some constituencies with the Workers' Party.

There is no simple explanation for the failure of the East European 'Socialist' countries. It was not because of any concept of a vanguard party or democratic centralism. It was the abuse of these concepts combined with many other factors - cold war pressures, corruption, bureaucracy, isolation of the party to name the most obvious, which caused the collapse. In our case, as we said we had no hesitation in fully supporting the reforms.

In line with our view of International solidarity we never did or would join the capitalist press or Trotskyist groups in attacking the then Soviet Union or any other Socialist country. We know where we stand internationally. We stand with the oppressed, the struggling mass of humanity, with the working class throughout the world against Capitalism and Imperialism.

No Kitchen Cabinet

The use of the liquidators of alleged links between the Official I.R.A. and the Workers' Party and also alleged receipt of 'Moscow Gold' has been a major part of their campaign in some parts of the country to distort the debate and smear comrades opposed to them. This is, as you know, a consistent theme in the Capitalist press. Vincent Browne of the Sunday Tribune has devoted his paper, indeed his life to proving this alleged link. It is a sad reflection on some erstwhile comrades' objectivity that they are prepared to accept the word of a person such as Vincent Browne a sworn enemy of the Workers' Party.

Let us put it on record again, we do not know of any secret group or kitchen cabinet within the Workers' Party conspiring to influence/control or direct the party. We have been among those who proposed/introduced and fought for the right to give members full control and access to all levels of the party, who brought about the expansion of the Ard Comhairle to include regional

delegates, to broaden its composition in order that the Ard Comhairle would truly reflect the party's membership views and opinions.

In regard to the many rumour/lies that have been peddled about members political standpoint and actions we would only state that every member on hearing any story from whatever person should demand that the person give chapter and verse. Do not accept on face value what you hear, you have a right to demand that if a member/s is being accused of anything that the accuser should be named and evidence of any alleged wrongdoing produced.

As with the story being pushed in the Sunday Tribune of Vincent Browne and other capitalist newspapers concerning the alleged receipt of 'Moscow Gold'. We repeat once again for the benefit of all members. There was no Moscow Gold, there is no Moscow Gold and more importantly there will be no Moscow Gold. To put this story in context members should realise that at the present moment there is a vicious and widespread witchhunt of Soviet Communists. Any person or organisation that had any contact or connection with the old C.P.S.U. is fair game for the turncoat Yeltsin's gang who will receive all possible assistance from the papers of Rupert Murdoch and Vincent Browne. A leading newspaper correspondent based in Moscow has stated, quote "For 500 US dollars you can get an authentic K.G.B. document stating that Mother Teresa was a K.G.B. agent". Enough said.

The 1990 and 1991 Ard Fheis passed resolutions by a large majority endorsing the concept of Democratic Centralism. The motion of 1991 whilst not directly mentioning Democratic Centralism, according to P De Rossa speaking on a number of occasions during the past year, embodied the principle and concept of democratic centralism. He was in favour of it then - so what has changed that he now adopts an entirely different attitude or perhaps this is another sign of opportunism.

The words and the concept of democratic centralism have become much abused over recent years. It is regrettable but true to say, that democratic centralism was abused particularly by E Harris and his cohorts. We attempted for many years to have people who at one time were mesmerized by E Harris and who later broke from him, to come forward and give evidence as to the actions and behaviour of Harris and his clique. These people never did come forward to confront Harris.

Democratic centralism means simply and solely that members discuss and decide any issue democratically, at Branch, Constituency, Ard Comhairle and Ard Fheis and then having voted by majority vote that this decision becomes

binding and must be implemented by all members. It is open to any member to raise any or the same question at any other time if they disagree with the majority decision. In essence the majority decides and the minority accept this decision. This is democracy. If as we said some individuals have over the years abused the centralist concept of the process this does not negate the concept or the basic integrity and effectiveness of democratic centralism in building a revolutionary party.

What is proposed in its place we do not know. Obviously some loose arrangement which will allow parliamentarians to ride roughshod over members rights and give them free rein to do their thing as a parliamentary party. Of course it is logical for this group to oppose and denigrate democratic centralism because they recognise that it provides an effective organisational means of providing members with the ultimate decision as to what the party does and what direction it goes. Let us state clearly that the party is only a vehicle for us to achieve our aims and that if any member can provide/propose any organisational alternative which will achieve our goal, which will be more effective in developing class consciousness and organising the working class then it is to be welcomed. So far we have not seen any such proposals.

Panic or Threachery

It has long been recognised that amongst all the difficulties and dangers that a revolutionary party faces the threat of the party degenerating into social democracy was always present and is one of the gravest. Many other parties in other countries have experienced this problem. Since the beginning of the Socialist Working class movement it has had to face the issue of defectors and splitters. In almost all cases this betrayal was initiated and carried through by people who have been trusted by the party, by party leaders many who had, up to their betrayal on occasions suffered imprisonment and great hardship in their personal lives. It is indeed difficult to explain such defections but it is impossible to condone their betrayal no matter how close we are to the individuals involved.

Obviously there comes a time in any personal life of revolutionary activity that some people become tired, depressed with the long hard road of struggle and that they are at that time susceptible to the most malign and destructive tendencies of opportunism. We must accept that this has now happened to some of our own members, people who we once regarded with affection and respect because of their previous commitment and work in building the Party.

The sum total of what P De Rossa and his group propose is nothing more nor less than the LIQUIDATION OF THE WORKERS' PARTY. We appeal to all those members and supporters who have the interest of the working class at heart to resist and deny this group their aim. Too much sweat and indeed blood and tears have been shed to establish and build a Workers' Party for it to be destroyed now for the ambitions of a few individuals. The Party is the members and is not the property of any individual or clique. It was the members who over twenty years of struggle developed and brought into existence an independent democratic socialist party committed to establishing a secular socialist Republic of Ireland.

In their determined, even on occasions frenzied campaign to liquidate the party our opponents have through the capitalist mass media by innuendo and by using the Fianna Fail trick of a nod and wink, tried to smear members of the Party in Northern Ireland as reactionary, unthinking bully boys. It is clear that they have no knowledge and indeed no understanding of the situation that the vast bulk of party members have faced in Northern Ireland for decades now. Yes, there have been incidents where people defended the party and themselves against the thugs of the Provisional I.R.A./I.P.L.O. We believe that on the issue of the right and wrongs concerning particular incidents in Belfast or anywhere else that members have an unqualified right to defend their party, their homes and their lives. We will never accept the word of the Provisionals/I.P.L.O. gangs their supporters or their fellow travellers in the media against that of our comrades in Northern Ireland who have to face these fascist gangs everyday.

The party in Northern Ireland has been and is the most outspoken, the most courageous in the fight against sectarianism and terrorism. Members in Northern Ireland, as you know, have been murdered, many more injured, their homes broken up, they and their families have often had to face daily intimidation from terrorists and indeed state forces. They have refused to take the easy option and go with the sectarian forces, instead they have said clearly and unambiguously the terrorists shall not pass. Are we to forget this struggle, to desert our comrades who have given this party an honoured place in Irish political history. The easy option is, as some of our opponents want to do, is to build a cosy Social Democratic Parliamentary Party in the 26 counties. Some of them may deny this claim, and perhaps some are genuine in their denials, but many more of them have the hidden agenda and the break with the party in Northern Ireland is a major part of their agenda.

It has always been our view that the Workers Party was and is the legitimate heir to all the democratic revolutionary movements of the Irish people. Some

of our opponents sneer at this belief and tradition and would want to rewrite Irish and Party history.

Ours is a party which draws its principles and ideals from the French Revolution, Wolfe Tone and the Society of United Irishmen, down through the Fenians, from Davitt, Connolly, from 1916 and 1917, from Mellowes, to our own comrades like Billy McMillen and Malachy McGurran. This is our heritage and through our activity over the past twenty years we had begun to make a reality of our party slogan, Peace, Work, Democracy and Class Politics. We cannot and must not surrender now to those who would betray our party's history and its future. Stand with us and give the opportunists and pessimists their answer - we stand for Socialism, for Peace, for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. For the working class through its own party to achieve its liberation and freedom.

For Party Unity, Class Politics and Socialism

Speech to party members and supporters in Dundalk, Co Louth,
11th February 1992

Des O'Hagan
Member of Political Committee and Ard Comhairle

The essential sense of the resolution proposed by P De Rossa and seconded by S. Lynch is to liquidate the Party, not as presently constituted in terms of rules and membership, but in the deeper sense of destroying the inner life of the Party, which has been based since its modern development on the principles of scientific socialism, with emphasis on class politics and incorporating the organisational concept of Democratic Centralism. This is the real issue which confronts the Party at this Ard Fheis whether we are to go forward as a revolutionary working class Party determined to bring about a democratic, secular, socialist Republic or whether we are to become "just another political party". This issue cannot be judged by presenting what would appear to be "progressive, modern democratic" proposals, the end result, if the resolution in front of the Ard Fheis were adopted, would be to place the Party in exactly the same camp as labour, conservative, social democratic, green, liberal etc. We will return to the implications of this later.

Analysis of the Resolution

It is clearly very important that we try to make an honest and objective assessment of the views of those advancing this resolution. Broadly speaking they are as follows: scientific socialism is a failed entity, proof of this lies in the experience of Eastern Europe and elsewhere. We have been smeared by the collapse of communism and the ongoing exposes of various aspects of those states. Certain events in Northern Ireland linked to the OIRA have damaged our credibility and cost us support. Allied to this, accumulated debts and democratic centralism have strangled the Party and in actual fact fund raising was inadequate and ineffective. This means that reform of the Party must be "open, democratic and clearly seen to be moving away from failed philosophies and forms of organisation."

The Party has really only begun to succeed from 1988, according to P De Rossa, any further major break-through depends on these proposals. The new identity will be clear cut, democratic socialist and therefore more acceptable to the electorate. In this new situation we can expect major gains taking us alongside Labour in the Republic and securing a strong position for the first time in Northern Ireland. The medium term future is open-minded but if we make these changes it will certainly be rewarding.

Hidden Agenda

However, at the same time we must look behind the stated positions to discover whether or not there is a hidden agenda and also to establish the ideological source(s) of these views. There are a number of features which should be obvious if we probe even slightly beneath the surface.

First there is the suggestion that if only we do this "one big thing" then everything will be solved. Clearly this is not only simplistic and utopian but it also lacks any total view and class understanding of the political situation. Second one cannot help but feel that the proposers and their supporters are flooded with relief. Having always either been unsure of or uneasy with the socialist project, they can say, particularly the public representatives, "Now I can get on with MY job and especially, in the current climate, with saving MY seat".

The last argument applies with most strength to democratic centralism which has been consistently and deliberately mis-represented.

What disturbs some of the public representatives is the present position which demands that they be subject to the control of the democratically elected leadership. In actual fact then, this opposition to democratic centralism means that the Party, i.e. the membership, even in a watered down form, would be understood as a threat to their "freedom of action". Consequently the next step, the logic of their position, demands the creation of a parliamentary party. (Just another Party)

State Control

Allied to this, is the unstated belief that "Socialism is Dead" i.e. unrealisable. (The last Ard Fheis, and the position adopted on such a key resolution as ownership of the financial institutions, illustrated this). Having accepted this, great play has been made of "expanded democracy, alternative economic agenda, womens' issues, green issues" etc. Certainly all critical matters, but in fact, they have been used to displace the fundamental questions. "Who shall control the state and the critical economic institutions", which goes to the heart of the socialist project. There is in fact an unstated, but firm rejection, of the need to deal with the power realities in a modern urban, industrialised society.

There is also the subtle, and not so subtle, writing off of the history of the Party, in particular its ideological history and the significance of key world events e.g. 1789 and 1917. Equally the last two and half decades have been telescoped into the past three or four years. To say that is not too long for a golden age, or to wallow in nostalgia, but to insist on a clear historical perspective and recognition, that it is just that history warts and all, which led to electoral successes. Some recent electoral setbacks in local government elections have enabled a number of explanations to be trotted out to explain that. But these setbacks have also been used to play on members natural fears of losing seats and insinuating that the sole explanation is a combination of Eastern Europe/alleged OIRA activity.

Organisational Malaise

Whatever weight one attaches to that, we have to note that certain areas outside of the Dublin metropolis (and indeed some within it) made significant gains in terms of votes and seats e.g. Waterford and Cork City; questions must be raised as regards the management of the Party within Dublin, its clear fragmentary character, and the deliberate withdrawal of some constituencies to within their own boundaries.

This political and organisational malaise has its roots, not in the USSR or Northern Ireland, and it is a deliberate smokescreen to suggest otherwise. Points that need to be raised are: how far the holistic (integrated) view of the Party was replaced by the "Public representatives and the Party" and what are the implications of this for members' morale and the public perception: what contradictions have been introduced through emphasising the "absolute" importance of elected representatives, demanding a campaigning party and at the same time seeing the Party as simply an election machine: there is also the pursuit of respectability which, like it or not, generates opposition to breaking the law on political grounds.

Class Betrayal

Undoubtedly the most significant and damning aspect of these proposals is the clear abandoning of a class viewpoint. The only possible explanation of this incredible betrayal is the collapse of the socialist countries. A number of things must be said about this.

First, did our struggle for socialism only depend on the fact of the socialist countries or was it a relatively independent struggle developed by the Party from our own experiences and understanding. The answer is obvious.

Second, it is equally incredible that those who keep insisting on facing up to reality blandly ignore the deepening division in all urban industrialised societies along clear class lines. This is not to argue that that gulf and its demands are

understood by the masses involved but it should be understood by anyone claiming to act within the socialist tradition. The locus of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle has collapsed, but that does not and cannot mean that a fresh locus or loci will not emerge within this decade.

It is here one also can see the absence of a truly revolutionary socialist perspective - the world has shrunk to the dimension of the European Community which apparently is understood as insulated from future world crises of capitalism and labour's revolutionary struggle.

Third, one can detect an increasing individualism within the Party and growing efforts to combat the principle of collectivism both in terms of leadership and pronouncements. Never before has the use of the personal pronoun I been so dominant.

This has led to many members feeling that the Party is actually being changed before their eyes, not as a result of majority decisions, but by individuals pursuing lines, and constantly reraising issues which have their support, but which have already been endorsed, rejected or supported by the majority. This is not to say that there can only be one single viewpoint, but the pursuit of factions and factional activity is excluded by the Constitution.

It is here that one must come to the conclusion that the present ideological conflict, which is disguised by the immediacy of the socialist collapse/OIRA smokescreen, has been a long time germinating within the Party. It would appear that loyalty and commitment to the Party principles of class struggle and international class solidarity were used in an opportunistic fashion, and once no longer "perceived to be fashionable", could then be ditched in favour of a middle class liberalism.

It is this, possibly more than anything else, which has contributed to the present situation.

Within the Socialist Tradition

Part of the campaign being waged against the concept of a revolutionary democratic socialist Party has relied heavily on using the media to implant the idea that the "traditionalists" are holding the Party back. This is not simply an abuse of language, it also lacks any philosophical depth. All developed human skills whether in the arts, sciences or fabrication are within a tradition. That is part of the human condition.

It would be a different matter if those who support the continued development of the Workers' Party as a revolutionary working class party were shackled by tradition but this clearly is just not the case. For the Party was developed from

a radical republican movement into a modern socialist party. But this was not done by going outside of our tradition, it was achieved by developing the tradition to meet our needs.

Certainly further development is and will be required but not in the manner that the jibe of "traditionalist" suggests. This in fact exposed more about those who use that jibe i.e. it points to the fact that they wish to abandon the key components of the socialist tradition and therefore must be understood as opportunistic or populist or pragmatic.

This is clear in three critical cases: democratic centralism; class; and individualism/collectivism.

To reject democratic centralism as the principle of organisation is to argue for some other form of organisation (or simply anarchy). Equally it is to ignore the oligarchical tendencies in all organisations. Indeed the primary curb on such tendencies is the democratic control of the members and the regular election of leadership at all levels.

It may be indeed that further dimensions to democratic centralism should be introduced, for example curbing tenure of office, strictly limiting the number of senior positions an individual can occupy, introducing time intervals before any individual re-occupies a senior Party position etc.

The point here is that democratic centralism offers the best safeguards against abuse of office and that it, like all other principles, can be more effectively developed.

Equally disastrous is the claim being made that class and class struggle is no longer central to the whole question of control of the state. One can see here the success of capitalism in its campaign to deideologise the political arena when given the facts of mass unemployment, the world wide crisis of capitalism the direct opposite is taking place. But that is only true of those who analyse from a clear class perspective. Once again one has to ask what in fact is being said. The extreme version was Thatcher's - there is only the individual and the family. The more liberal view adds various important social groups and society. But by denying class and class conflict what is in fact being said is that the current relations of production are immutable and therefore the whole socialist project must be abandoned. That is the bottom line no matter what socialist rhetoric is employed.

Both these issues, democratic centralism and class are linked to collectivism. Individualism is the creed of capitalism. So the insidious introduction of an individualistic style of leadership into the Party rather than the previous

collective form, can only be understood as a further shift away from the fundamental principles of the Party.

The value of collectivism is not only emphasis on shared responsibility and leadership, it does in fact mean that individuals are assured of the close attention and support of their comrades in carrying out, developing policy and activity. The collective enhances the individual if it is truly functioning as a collective.

The Party in Crisis

Communist, socialist and workers parties throughout the world have been severely shaken not only by events in the former socialist countries but by the advanced ideological war which has been carried on by capitalism and its agents over decades. This is not to ignore the culpability of parties which held state power. The weight one attaches to this must be considerable. However, capitalism's undoubted successes from 1973 in Chile to the present time is only over a twenty year time span. Our concern now must be the immediate future of the Party as well as planning for the next decades. We are faced with widespread disillusionment with the political process, shortage of personnel and funds and the present attempt to divert the Party from its struggle for socialism.

We must recover our former dynamic, vastly increase our funds to enable extensive reorganisation and development, recognising that in advancing class struggle and promoting socialism as the only alternative to capitalism, that there is a vast potential reservoir of support in our class.

This will only be won if it is understood that we are not just another political party and that our commitment to revolutionary change in society through the democratic process is not simply rhetoric.

We have to face up to the fact that there are those in our ranks who do not believe in this. We must endeavour to win them to our viewpoint, but failing that we are obliged, if we are to remain true to the socialist vision, to ask them to review their position in the Party.

Democracy in theory and practice

Article published by De Rossa faction in party paper
Tomorrow's People, February 1992

The decision to have a special Ard Fheis to reconstitute the Workers' Party has been represented by some critics as a panic measure by a parliamentary cabal who would be better off in the Labour Party or even the Progressive Democrats. It is supposed to create the conditions for a witch-hunt against 'real' or 'revolutionary' socialists in the Party. It will also serve to insulate a 26-county social democratic Party from the contagion of the North. Careerism, it is claimed, would sacrifice the Northern members for its own narrow purposes.

These arguments obscure the true sources of division. These have their origin, in part, in the collapse of Eastern European bloc and the disintegration of the USSR. The Right throughout the world has greeted these developments as a vindication of economic liberalism and liberal democracy, and as final evidence of the intellectually bankrupt nature of Marxism. This has all added to a long-standing set of conflicts and tensions in the major Western communist parties.

One of the reasons why the Workers' Party has had its recent travails is the intolerant attitude taken by leading members of the 'revolutionary' tendency to any criticism of the Soviet bloc. For some, during the 1980s, it was sufficient to label a proposition or argument 'Euro-Communist' to have it dismissed out of hand. During the discussion of the new Party programme the same approach was used. Any serious attempt to face up to the bankruptcy of the stalinist tradition was dismissed as mealy-mouthed reformism.

It is a travesty of the intention of those of us who have been arguing for applying an unsentimental and critical focus to the current state of the party to claim that we have a social democratic agenda. The choice is not as threadbare as that between a superficial radicalism expressed in the managerialism and economic 'realism' of Spring and Kinnock. There is a space for democratic socialist alternatives to both Stalinism and social democracy. But we cannot make an effective challenge to social democracy so long as there are serious doubts about our own commitment to democracy.

The tendency to sneer at 'bourgeois democracy' and abstract attacks on parliamentarianism which is also linked to notion of the 'revolutionary vanguard' and 'democratic centralism' can only serve to reinforce ordinary people's doubts about our commitment to basic democratic values. We cannot ignore the damage that association of any radical form of socialism with the Soviet Union has done to the cause of social transformation. The English socialist RH Tawney summed up the choice very clearly: *They (socialists) must face the fact that, if the public, and particularly the working class public, is confronted with the choice between capitalist democracy, with all its nauseous insincerities, and undemocratic socialism, it will chose the former every time.*

In the case of the Workers' Party, both a certain kind of Soviet Marxist ideology and the associated ideology of the vanguard party and democratic centralism may have served a positive transitional function as the republican movement struggled to transform itself and shed backward nationalism and militarism. But times change and vanguardism did not challenge one key aspect of the republican tradition - its elitist and conspiratorial approach to politics. In Northern Ireland this was overlain by a history of bitter conflict with the Provos and other terrorist organisations. It is now being argued that those of us who have raised the need for a clear and fundamental break with any last vestiges of elitism are 'forsaking' the members in the North. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We have long argued that there was no military solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland, that what Northern Ireland needs are new structures of democratic accountability, an entrenched Bill of Rights and structural reforms in the economic and social sphere. We have won respect for standing out against knee-jerk anti-RUC sentiment.

We had won ground in the 1980s because it appeared to increasing numbers of people that we have shown the ability to change, to rethink our positions, to jettison the ideological baggage of our past. Unfortunately that capital, that was hard won, has been largely squandered by evidence that we can ignore but which the public won't: that what we have been led to believe was behind us is still a reality.

Contribution

Reconstitution is aimed at establishing a more adequate relation between the democratic socialism philosophy and values set out in the party programme and the structures, behaviour, atmosphere and inner life of the party. At present it is quite possible for someone to be attracted by what they know the party says it stands for, and then be shocked and sickened by what they read or

see on television which seem to show a different and seamy side to the present Workers' Party. We are deluding ourselves if we think that demagogic denunciations of the 'capitalist media' whatever effect they have internally, will do more than confirm an image of a defensive sect with something to hide. The Workers' Party has made a major contribution to producing an Irish Left with a serious and critical edge to its policies. It has achieved more in the intellectual and strategic renovation of Irish socialism in the last twenty years than the rest of the left in the whole period since the execution of Connolly. It would be a tragedy if it was to become no more than an interesting chapter of Irish political history - another Clann na Poblachta, a 'surge' party with no long-term influence. If the road to reconstitution is rejected then we all risk spending the next few years writing the party's obituary.

Dynamic, democratic or drifting into obscurity

Article published on behalf of party in party paper
Tomorrow's People, February 1992

Every member of this party, at the pending Ard Fheis, will resolve once and for all the clear, central issue in this conflict - whether the Workers' Party will reassert itself, unambiguously and without guf, as a principled democratic socialist party, and develop as such, or whether it will bow to the Right and to the Establishment until its distinctiveness is lost, its goal of a socialist Ireland blurred, and its struggle meaningless.

A section of the party has tried to invent the terms of reference of this debate through self-serving, anonymous and damaging media leaks. The line was peddled that the conflict was between an elitist and conservative "Old Guard" and progressive "Reformers". Open minded party members and supporters will see the conflict for what it is - a struggle between principled and practical socialist idealists and those who see politics based on the realities of class oppression as a burden.

The descent by that section of the party into populist and political fudging has confused many members and disturbed others. Their desire to win general, all-embracing approval in society and fit into the system has overwhelmed their duty to articulate a clear socialist position on behalf of Irish workers. An unhealthy overemphasis on parliamentary activity has come about at the expense of such vital socialist activities as political education, on-the-ground involvement with the working class, and political analysis itself.

What distinguished the party from all others and made it the clear and dedicated voice of the oppressed in Ireland has been damaged by political fudging. It has been put about that those in the party who have been unhappy with this switch to "all embracing populism" are in some way against change. The opposite is the case. Those of us who have been in this party from the start have always pushed debate for change and have never feared change. The formation of the party itself reflected this capacity to change and a clear willingness to take new paths to develop socialist ideas in Ireland. Socialism itself, of

course, must be willing to change and adapt to win its objectives - but the changing of its objective is another matter.

Democratic centralism has been attacked within the party. Effective democratic centralism ensures that the direction of the party is determined openly and democratically by the members. It is this principle, not democratic centralism, which is under attack. Every member of this party, from rank-and-file activist to TD or party president, must carry equal clout in the formation of policy, and equal responsibility to propagate that policy. This is a key element in what makes us stand out amongst other political parties. It should not be dropped - it should be strengthened.

The campaign against it reflects an impatience with democracy. Like the proposal to "re-register", it highlights a lack of trust in the members.

Moves to ditch democratic centralism are part of the plan to appropriate the Workers' Party by purging it of those "troublesome elements" who dissent from the clear drift towards political aimlessness and obscurity. And it is this drift which will ensure that the Workers' Party will become a mere footnote in Irish political history.

The push to "reconstitute" the party should be likened to Pol Pot's declaration of "Year Zero". Some people, it seems, are uncomfortable with the authentic Republicanism which has always been an open and freely expressed element of party philosophy. Is there to be no place now in Irish politics for radical, non-sectarian, non-nationalist Republicanism? Is the Republicanism which seeks common cause among the people against the privileged and propertied in some way in conflict with socialist belief?

But the real issue is the future, not the past. Every member must make a grave decision on what their vision of the future is. Will it be a party with a steadily fading identity and sense of purpose, or will it be a dynamic, democratic and campaigning party with a commitment to root out the core of almost every injustice in Irish society - class inequality and the hoarding of wealth?

Socialist at all levels of the party and from all parts of the country are confident that members will make the right choice, both morally and strategically, and will reject attempts from any quarters to split the party in pursuit of dominance.

Utopian illusion which ignore lessons of the past

by Paddy Gillan member of the De Rossa faction - published in Irish Times, 15th February 1992

The divisions in the Workers' Party can be traced to tensions which first surfaced in 1989 - ironically, the year of the party's greatest electoral success. These tensions have their origins in different sources - the presidential address to the 1989 party conference with its dismissal of Marxist-Leninist dogma, the party's financial crisis (and some of the remedies and proposed remedies) and responses to the collapse of communism.

A major problem was the emerging gulf between the traditional party leadership and the parliamentary group. This, in turn, stems from the historical antipathy of republicans to politics, an antipathy which was reflected in the recent complaint by an opponent of reforms of "an unhealthy overemphasis on parliamentary activity" (What are Workers' Party TDs to do? Revert to the abstentionism of Sinn Féin? Refuse to be elected?) What in fact is resented is the success of the parliamentary group and its emergence as a centre of influence in the WP and in the country. What it reveals is (as Feud wrote of impotence) "a pervasive fear of success".

According to this view, the left should always be on the outside looking in. Revolutionary purity should on no account be contaminated by success. Instead, we should angrily shake our collective fist at injustice and oppression, but do nothing practical about them. We can always find consolation in revolutionary rhetoric, empty slogans of class struggle, and utopian flights of fancy.

Revolutionary rhetoric is, in itself, harmless. However, it often begets a revolutionary "morality" whereby the end (utopia) justifies the means. But utopianism, as the architect of perestroika, Alexander Yakovlev pointed out, can blind, so "that the most horrible things become possible; a crime today for the sake of a better future, immorality for the sake of morality. An autocratic world perception and grisly delusions for the sake of eternal truths. Blatant injustice for the sake of illusory happiness. A bloody road strewn with the roses of tragic illusions.

And illusions are all that those opposing reconstitution have to offer. They are asking WP members to put their faith in "the worldwide crisis in capitalism and the possibility of a major social explosion" as a basis for the renewal of socialist fortunes. This approach is historical in that it ignores

the lessons of the 1930s, particularly the rise of fascism and that it pins its hopes on catastrophes rather than politics as a means of change.

Utopia should be firmly rejected; we must live in the real world. And in the real world people don't ask what they can do for socialism, they ask what socialism can do for them. They're not too impressed with Romania, the paranoia of East Germany, and the economic failures of the Soviet Union all combined to make a vivid impression of failure. So it's not surprising that when beseeched to man the barricades of "revolution" the vast majority of people are more inclined to go home for their tea and watch television.

Not that everything in the garden of capitalism is rosy. The worldwide recession shows no sign of ending, but appears to be deepening. The gap between rich and poor countries is widening, a gap mirrored in the richer countries (including Ireland) by the emergence of the one-third/two-thirds society.

The scandalous levels of poverty and unemployment in Ireland show the extent of the failure of the present economic system, and point to the clear need for an alternative.

Those in the Workers' Party who once believed that "actually existing socialism" showed the way forward have been proven wrong. And some of us have shown that we can learn from our mistakes. The party programme Democracy, Freedom, Equality, marks a break with revolutionary rhetoric, vulgar Marxist dogma, and any residual deference to a mode of socialism which proved to be a sick joke.

But not everyone was ready to make the break. The programme was opposed by those who now oppose the reconstitution of the party, which, they claim, amount to "liquidating" the party. They have rallied around the practice of democratic centralism to make their stand.

Democratic centralism was the product of circumstances which do not apply in Ireland today. It is totally incompatible with the concept of democratic socialism. The choice facing the Workers' Party is simple: democratic socialism or democratic centralism - the possibilities of reform and renewal or the wilderness of retrenchment and regression.

Great personal sacrifice has gone into building the Workers' Party. That sacrifice would be dishonoured if a rigid, inflexible attitude towards politics is adopted at today's conference. We must be open to the world, take on board the changes that occurred, and address ourselves to the new realities. Above all, we should remember that it is infinitely better to work for what is possible than to yearn for what is not.

Appeals for fair play will not help the working class

by John Lowry

Chairman International Committee, member Political Committee and Central Executive, Chairman Belfast regional executive Workers Party. published in The Irish Times, 15th February 1992

Very many committed and sincere Workers' Party members face a demoralising and palpably ludicrous situation this weekend. They have been summoned to what is, ostensibly, a debate. But they have been more or less told by the other side that if they express disagreement and decline to abandon the beliefs that spring from their honest analysis, then the other side will simply walk away.

This weekend could represent the destructive culmination of a headlong drive to manufacture an intractable conflict. Its objective is not any sort of democracy, but dominance. Its means, through the frenzied and damaging tactic of effectively sacking the membership and forcing it to reregister, is a purge.

The terms of reference of the debate were invented some time ago by a faction of the party and fed anonymously to the membership and the public through the media. Most of the party's membership and supporters saw and see terms like "Old Guard" and "the Reformers" as transparent cliché. A very silly scenario has been crudely painted - fossilised paramilitary Stalinists massing in the hills, waiting for the password (in Russian) to seize the G.P.O. And on the other side, the political Steve Silvermints.

Those who believe that the direction which Proinsias De Rossa and some of his supporters wish to go is the wrong direction come in all ages, from all areas of Ireland, and from both sexes. It is an untruth that these people fear change and want to shirk democratic debate - and most importantly, that they will not abide by the decision of the democratic majority.

It is a very urgent hope that this debate can still take place in the context of an *ard fheis*, but up to now the handling of divergent views by the parliamentary leadership and others has ensured that the situation degenerated into a series of political "OK Corrals".

A growing number of members find it genuinely extraordinary that a section of the parliamentary leadership is more than willing to risk

consigning the party that we built together out of intellectual bravery, drudgery, and blood, to a political Boot Hill.

No one side in the conflict is composed exclusively of saints or sinners. But it was deeply damaging to the whole party and its unity to present to the media almost every recent issue that had to be decided as a showdown. Honourable dissent was clearly treated as treachery. There has been no signal, at the time of writing, that diversity can be accommodated.

The proposition that those who oppose the drift towards unfocused electoral populism do so out of a hankering for the "reassurance" and "comfort" of stale jargon and lifeless verities is an intellectual insult. What is and is not baggage is always a matter for discussion and democratic decision. But the primary focus should not be on the baggage, it should be on the destination.

The politics of class should not be seen as in any way outmoded, as some sort of a redundant crutch which was of service during the transition 30 years ago from arid nationalism to socialist analysis and socialist involvement. The reality of class inequality in modern Ireland is undeniable. That economic oppression, and the closing off of opportunities to working class people, is, in fact, growing, is also undeniable. Surely the ending of this oppression and the liberation of Irish society from it should be at the very core of the philosophy and activity of a workers' party? Surely the Workers' Party can agree that the redistribution of wealth required for a free society will only be achieved through the politicisation of this class and its transformation into an active and powerful voting bloc?

This core aim will not be achieved by appealing to some broad "humanitarian" constituency. It is not a "humanitarian" mission, it is a political task requiring an unambiguous socialist agenda. Economically devastated and socially alienated communities will lift themselves up through political organisation and unity, or not at all. Social democratic appeals for fair play will not do the job.

This is not a repetition of lifeless, outdated verities - it is a political position. It is not articulated for the "comfort" or "reassurance" of some "Old Guard". There is nothing comforting or reassuring about it. It is a daunting task, especially in times of mass unemployment and grinding cuts, when expectations are low, and morale lower. It is apparent that some people have found the task too daunting.

It is not tenable to propose that the implosion and collapse of sham socialism in Eastern Europe in any way invalidates the job of offering principles political leadership to the Irish working-class. Where there is injustice and oppression, democratic socialism must be there to propose the remedy, with clarity and conviction.

"Democratic centralism" has been attacked by Proinsias De Rossa and others as some form of Stalinist control mechanism wielded by an elite, or by that other phantom piece of political furniture, a "kitchen cabinet". The term democratic centralism is not sacrosanct. Any formula which upholds the principle that policy, direction and the pace of change is determined equally by every member of the party, from the bottom up, and that the thrust of collective thinking is articulated and defended by party representatives, would be overwhelmingly welcomed by the majority of members.

This necessity for democratic accountability was underlined recently by Proinsias De Rossa's unilateral statement which proposed the countenancing of internment without trial. Very many members on the ground in Northern Ireland have frequently said that internment would be a boost to terrorism, especially Provisional terrorism. The Dail statement received wide media coverage in the North. Our members there have never shirked standing up to the murderers and against sectarianism, in the name of decency and democracy, but this statement was, to say the very least, politically unhelpful, and a dismissal of the Northern membership.

It must never be forgotten that Northern members live, work and organise cheek-by-jowl with those who are among the most unpredictable and depraved armed fascists in the world. They should not be exposed to odium, or worse, unnecessarily.

The pell-mell push for split and purge could well end in disaster for the Irish working-class this weekend, but those who wish to see democratic socialism clearly expressed, and whose experience tells them that a distinctive and forceful socialist position is in no way an electoral liability, will not be walking away this weekend. Those who do will be entering a desert of opportunism.

Speech proposing the Reconstitution of The Workers' Party, Proinsias De Rossa T.D

At the outset of the Sixties, and in response to a changing Ireland, the Republican movement decided on a new departure which heralded an exciting phase in politics. Out of the shell of failed nationalism, typified by the Fifties Campaign, grew a movement committed to new thinking, new methods, and a new politics. Some of the architects of that New Departure are here today - Sean Garland, Cathal Goulding and Tomas Mac Giolla. Some have died - Billy McMillan and Malachy McGurran - and some (unable to cope with change) left to lead the most vicious sectarian slaughter this island has seen for generations.

The movement gravitated towards a socialist view of the world. It wasn't a perfectly formed view, nor was it fully informed. But it was honest and it attracted a generation of radicals who went on to build in the Seventies and Eighties what is now the Workers Party.

Rejecting terrorism and declaring against all forms of paramilitary activity, the evolving Workers Party established citizens' advice bureaux, concerned itself very deliberately with questions of housing, always emphasising the conflict between accommodation and profit as philosophies of social action. The Party also published a series of pioneering economic critiques, and identified strongly with peace and civil rights in Northern Ireland.

Yes, there have been a number of traumatic milestones in this Party's development. The provisional split is well-documented, as is the history of the formation of the IRSP. And who would argue that we should have remained manacled to those gangs?

But there are other milestones which deserve as much attention. The publication of the Irish Industrial Revolution in 1977 helped to reshape our view of the 'national question' in keeping with an intelligently revisionist position where the former 'visions' have proved to be blinkered. For example, the decision to contest the 1979 European election marked an end to the residual isolationism, which was a legacy from our Sinn Fein past. In keeping with this, the decision to name the party the Workers' Party, after a prolonged debate, placed us firmly in the socialist camp and signalled a final farewell to nationalism. The special Ard Fheis of 1983 in Liberty Hall committed us to developing a mass party.

All of these decisions involved a challenge to dearly held convictions about the nature of our party and about its future. They were not lightly taken, and they involved a great deal of soul searching. Some comrades, having examined their consciences, found that they could not go along with them and left. The majority, however, stayed with the party and saw its influence and support grow. In these circumstances, party unity has to be founded on a four-part basis: - a shared objective, a shared world view, a shared acceptance of ethical norms, and a shared commitment to party democracy.

It is in this particular regard that, today, we have arrived at another milestone. And the questions we have to address is not only the future of the Party but also whether the Party has a future. I do not want to dramatise the situation, but neither am I going to understate it.

It is basically a conflict between the realities of the present and memories of the past. The language of 'democratic centralism', together with a clear vision of 'the class struggle', and not forgetting 'liquidation' harks back to what some people saw as the heroic age of the working class. Then, the masses sweated in factories owned by identifiable and individual exploiters. Above all, they were debarred (as a property-less class) from voting. In such a situation, it was quite feasible - even necessary - that heroic figures should stand up in the wilderness and gather the disenfranchised into a formidable political movement. I am not suggesting for a moment that winning the vote was the final triumph in these struggles for working-class emancipation. But I am however, strongly suggesting that universal suffrage conditions every nook and cranny of the post-revolutionary age.

Conditions today may pose problems of the same magnitude as those faced by our predecessors, but the general situation is totally different in its nature. No group is excluded from full participation in the political process, however faulty and prejudiced the process may be in this place or that. Like it or not, virtually the entire adult population has been incorporated into a complex socio-economic system which is unimpressed by slogans coined decades before the economic and ideological foundations of today's world-system were laid down.

This system transcends national boundaries; simultaneously, the relations of production which earlier generations of socialists had neatly analysed in terms of a class structure have been undermined by new forms of industrialism (embracing even Irish agriculture), new strategies of planned unemployment, manipulations of welfare

psychology, and the propagation of junk culture and addictives both legal and illegal. What is crucial for socialists now is to explore how new and renewed concepts of class and of power may serve to illuminate and transform their new situation. Heroes from the Thirties, with their confident old concepts, their loud, cheery but empty rhetoric, merely distract us from the urgent business of real political analysis.

There is no outpost in the wilderness from which to launch a crusade: there is no pure and undefiled class poised to intervene in history: everyone is on the inside of society, but many at the bottom are being trampled down even lower. This is the inescapable consequence of a historical development in which, between the beginning of the century and the victory of the USA in 1945, our movement experienced not only some remarkable successes but also some massive and savage defeats worldwide.

Nowhere has the defeat run deeper than in Ireland. Endemic emigration and cultivated sectarianism have taken turns to exclude generations of workers from the political process. In Ireland, the experiment of social incorporation went hand in hand with such traumatic disturbances. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Land Acts established a deeply conservative mood in rural society even as they eliminated landlordism from the economic system. We can now see how the radicalism from which land agitation had originally sprung was extinguished by its own success.

That may strike some people as ironic, but if you have no stomach for historical and political ironies then you have no real grip on socialism. We occasionally pay homage to Fintan Lalor and Michael Davitt - and that's proper - but they would quickly dismiss any grander celebrations. The age of heroes is dead and gone. The brutal simplicities they faced in the fields and in the shipyards, in the small factories of our small towns, have been replaced by far more complex forms of exploitation and repression. Nor is it enough in itself to denounce sectarian allegiances as if they were an aberration always locatable on the other side of a fence. They too are real, and only if we acknowledge that unattractive face can we hope to attend to their often lethal consequences. In connection with land, in connection with sectarian difference, Ireland has endured the bitter experience of what Raymond Williams called 'the tragedy of premature revolution'.

It is true that the problems confronting the party both north and south extend beyond those forcefully symbolised, for example, in the Beef Tribunal currently sitting in Dublin Castle. What the parliamentary

group has done in forcing that inquiry on a very reluctant administrative system is an earnest of how the Workers' Party can keep the real enemies of the people in view. This promises no quick victories, provides no catchy slogans. But Tomas Mac Giolla and Pat Rabbitte has been tenacious and profoundly courageous in their presentation of socialist priorities and their insistence on ethical standards in public life. More generally, each and every member of the group which I have the honour to lead in the Dail, deserves the unreserved gratitude of the party and indeed of the public as a whole.

Inquiry into these scandals has called for action of a distinctly political kind. Observations, on the other hand, can all too often be a substitute for action. One of our comrades, choosing the Business Post as his platform announced recently that a north-south total of 390,000 unemployed proved that capitalism has failed. On the contrary, the problem is that society has been conditioned to accept such gross wastage of human lives. It is the colossal success of capitalism, in packaging unemployment and putting this over, which we must oppose root and branch, politically. To say that we are witnessing 'a rapid escalation' in consciousness to the point where the 'system will become crisis-ridden' is either blinkered nostalgia for a victory we never won in the past, or a cynical offer of pie in the sky. Capitalism is alive and well, and YOU must oppose it by something more dynamic, more concrete, than writing its epitaph.

To oppose these depressing insights, you have before you two contrasting programmes. You can stay if you wish in the age of heroes, rely on the very methods and catch-cries which characterised some of the great defeats of early twentieth-century radicalism. The document circulated by Sean Garland and John Lowry certainly brings it all back in a wave of nostalgia, like a Thirties sound-track from the Last Picture Show, in which no unpleasant reminders of Capital's present operations are allowed to intrude. Oh, yes, along these lines we could certainly defeat William Martin Murphy - blind him with hindsight. Inspired by this document, we might even win the Spanish Civil War. But - and this is the most urgent question on our agenda - does this document do anything to prevent the outbreak of a new Irish Civil War?

I appreciate that a genuine preoccupation of those proposing this document as an alternative to the reconstitution recommended by Seamus Lynch and myself is the grave situation existing in Northern Ireland. That situation is more dreadful and dangerous now than at any moment in the last twenty years. Indeed it is more ominous politically in 1992, because the fundamental elements, social and constitutional,

on which the politics of the past have conducted are now in jeopardy. I mean the nation-state, national economics, long-term and stable industrial employment, and cohesive communal integration (at least as an ideal). Yet what do the Defenders of the Party have to say on these crucial questions? Nothing.

Instead, their principal concern is to adjust a small part of the record on issues which we'd all love to consign to the historians. And this what they say. Let me quote:

Yes, there have been incidents where people defended the party and themselves against the thugs of the Provisional IRA/IPLO. We (that is Sean Garland and John Lowry) believe that on the issue of the rights and wrongs concerning particular incidents in Belfast or anywhere else members have an unqualified right to defend their party, their homes, and their lives.

I know full well, and the Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Committee knows even better, that Party members in Northern Ireland have been murdered or had their families broken up, their working lives ruined. But the position of these who cast themselves as defenders of the Party now becomes clear in a way which is profoundly disturbing.

Sean Garland and John Lowry refer to rights and wrongs in 'Belfast and anywhere else'. That is a charter for widespread indiscipline, adventurism even, with no indication given as to whether legal recourse to the use of purely defensive weapons is the bench-mark of action. Furthermore, the insistence on an unqualified right to do this or that transforms one's disquiet into outright rejection.

Yet there is more. The same comrades also refer to defence of the Party as something separate from the defence of individual lives. That is a chapter from some metaphysical theory of parties which has no place whatever in any socialist philosophy, democratic or centralist. If a member of this Party is forced to defend him-or-her-self against attack or intimidation, he or she does so as a citizen under the law, and not under any other kind of authority. The Workers' Party is a voluntary association of members: as such it must and willingly does concede absolute priority to the jurisdictions in which it conducts its political activities. This is not to reject civil disobedience as a tactic in extreme circumstances. But civil disobedience requires the 'offenders' to accept the legitimacy of whatever the law may visit upon them, as the price willingly paid for the exercise of conscience.

But I am afraid there is yet more. Sean Garland and John Lowry lump together all too readily the intimidation presented by terrorists and by 'state forces'. While no one here will underestimate the pressure exercised by combat troops or special unit police functioning in civilian surroundings, no one here should contemplate actions or approve actions which disguise or discredit the civilian basis of the party's activities in each and every particular respect and details.

As if to mask the covert militarism of their position, we are assured that 'the terrorists shall not pass'. Once again, we're just about to win the Spanish Civil War on the big screen while County Tyrone and the Ormeau Road shudder in anticipation of the real thing. Tragically, these reassurances bring no guarantee of success. Last Saturday's paper printed a photograph of a Belfast child staring into his father's grave. The UFF were the villains, two weeks earlier it was the IRA. In answer to these most sombre developments, we are offered heroes again who, as they used to say back in the day when the great defeat was in full swing, 'stand for Socialism, for Peace, for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'.

Our society has entered a wholly new cycle of exploitation and redeployment of human resources. The child at the graveside has been betrayed by a nationalism which has outlived the economic viability of cosy little nations; he has been abandoned by a welfarism which never looks deep enough into Belfast's misery. The new order will offer him endless distraction on global TV and turn him into a compliant zombie. The old order will give him a gun. These responses are not mutually exclusive. Have we nothing to offer? If we adopt a New Departure here today, it is precisely because the old destinations and destinies are gone.

Speaking in Opposition to the Motion to Liquidate the Workers' Party, Sean Garland, said:-

Comrades

At issue here today is the future of our party, what kind of party we are and what kind of party we are going to be. Many and varied reasons have been advanced to justify this motion to liquidate the party. However, P De Rossa, S Lynch and their supporters, dress it up they cannot hide the fact that they wish, they now actually demand, that the party changes its character, its direction.

I must confess to being not only surprised but bitterly disappointed at the spectacle of people whom I once regarded as tough fighters in the class struggle, bowing down to appeasement and succumbing to pessimism in the struggle to build a working class party. It is not a pretty sight.

The impression has been given that it is only recent events in Northern Ireland and democratic centralism that have brought this crisis about. Let me put it on record that there has been a steady degeneration of our party over the past two/three years. I have mentioned elsewhere the legacy of E Harris and I have also said many months ago at various meetings that a poison had been injected into the Party and it would take sometime before this poison was cleared out. This poison has been fed in particular by some members of parliament who with the help of the mass media spread slander and distortion of comrades opposed to their point of view.

And what is their point of view, it is that Socialism has failed, that the class struggle is irrelevant, that the way to go is the Social Democratic way, look at Sweden they say, the great progress made there by Social Democrats, a matter of much dispute among Swedish workers, and of course they conveniently ignore the fact that many countries in Europe over the past fifty years, have had social democratic governments and have not altered in any fundamental way the nature or character of capitalism. They in fact became in some cases better managers for capitalism than the old conservative reactionary parties.

I have no anger or hostility to people who have a genuine programme of Social Democracy. Let them put it out on the table for frank full debate, let the members see what they have to offer. It is when they conceal their agenda, when they cloak their aims and intention under a smokescreen of lies, distortion and incidents unrelated to the political issues and struggle that I get angry and become hostile to them.

This vendetta against longstanding comrades, against the party in Northern Ireland, against the party's history and its future was conceived in deceit and has been implemented with a ruthlessness that would do justice to Josef Stalin. Every kind of tittle tattle, rumour and lie, ranging from attacks on a persons lifestyle, their home, their character, has been used to undermine the political integrity of individuals and the party. And for what? So that a few individuals may take upon themselves the authority to do whatever they like and use the membership as some kind of election fodder. It is late in the day I know, now to say it, but action should have been taken against the promoters of this faction at the outset of their campaign, and really if you think about it, if we had the kind of anti-democratic regime in the party that the liquidators speak about they must admit they would not be in the party. Instead they were allowed free rein to undermine comrades, to distort events and engage in factional activity.

I know that there are many genuine people who have been fed a particular line over a period of time. I would appeal to such people now, stop and reassess your position, don't follow the opportunists into the cul-de-sac of a social democratic parliamentary party. Help us to preserve the unity, the integrity of the Workers' Party. Remember E Harris had, as indeed the proposers of this motion have, on the surface many good reason for deserting the party. 3 years ago E Harris did desert the party and drifted into social democracy, then finished up a short while later in Fine Gael, so much for principles and new thinking. This is the inevitable and logical road for those people who have been infected with opportunism.

Nobody would deny that times are difficult for a Workers' Party but we have experienced difficult times before and we overcame them in a spirit of unity and comradeship. We can and we will achieve the same again.

Times are as I said difficult and indeed have always been difficult for Socialists worldwide struggling to build a class conscious party endeavouring to use every possible opportunity to organise the working class.

We, up to recent times, have had some success in this struggle. Frankly I believed after our success in 1989 in the Republic that we were now set firmly on the path for winning bigger and more important victories.

Why then this apparently sudden and almost hysterical determination to liquidate the Workers' Party. Clearly some people in the party, never had the principles or ideals, the commitment to build a Workers' Party. There is nothing new or unique in what the liquidators want to do. All over the world in the recent past opportunists have emerged in progressive parties, many of them with a longer history of struggle than ours, but all of these opportunists are singing the same song.

The failure of Socialism, the problems that 'Democratic Centralism' cause, the lack of 'so-called democracy' in the party which incidentally is only a codeword for to allow the activities of factions. Look at the reports from Canada, Hungary, Italy, Cyprus - the same story, change the direction and character of the Party. These parties and countries don't have the smokescreen of the so-called O.I.R.A. which our opponents have used so maliciously and dishonestly. Let me state here and now for the benefit of the membership and indeed the media, I am totally and utterly opposed to any secret group or clique operating in this party to the detriment of the members and the party's aims and principles. We have been in the forefront in demanding that if any person has information concerning any illegal activity they should go to the proper authorities. Not to Vincent Brown or to the papers of Rupert Murdoch.

We have been to the forefront in establishing the democratic rights of the members to the ownership and control of the party and we will continue to insist on this principle. Let me repeat comrades. Beware there is a hidden agenda. Yes we will hear all kinds of reasons why we should vote for this motion but we have not been given the real reasons which is first and foremost to liquidate the Workers' Party. There is a unprincipled alliance gathered together for this purpose and they will stop at nothing to achieve their aims. In the process of achieving this aim the conspirators have torn the heart out of the party, they have smashed the hopes and dreams of men and women who have spent their lives working and fighting to build a party of their own. The liquidators have betrayed those who have gone before because they don't care about our history or indeed our future as a Workers' Party, they are attempting to undo all we made.

This country, our class, needs a Workers' Party to fight for it and to win the victory. We are optimistic for the future. We believe that given clear leadership, by a party of integrity, the working class will rally to our programme. If people want to establish a Labour Party Mark 2, as is the aim of the supporters of this motion then the working class will choose the original Social Democratic Party. This is the lesson of history and the liquidators will learn this to their cost.

Many years ago, I recall we had the custom of having a slogan on our platform. One particular one comes to mind now, it is from Connolly, a man who has gone out of fashion with the liquidators, a quote I think particularly apt for today, Connolly said, "*It matters not the extent of your march, but the direction in which you are marching.*"

I believe our members and supporters do not want us to change direction. Let us continue our long march in the direction we set out on so many years ago, for a Workers' Party and for Socialism, and give the liquidators their answer by rejecting their motion to liquidate the party.

' I will not buy a pig in a poke '

Dear Member/Supporter

I very much regret the events of the past few weeks which led to the resignation of 6 Deputies from the Workers' Party to form a new party. I had no part in any of the moves for a breakaway. In fact I supported the President, Proinsias De Rossa, on all occasions including his motion to the Special Ard Fheis, on Saturday 15th February. All of the delegates from Dublin West voted for the motion. The fact that it failed by 9 votes to get a two-thirds majority was no reason to proceed to break up the Party the following week, especially as a Special Delegate Conference was already arranged for March 14th to adopt new structures and rules for the Party.

However, by Tuesday morning it was clear to me that the other Deputies were proceeding to set up a new party. I therefore gave my first interview to RTE TV at 12.30 and made it clear that I was remaining in the Workers' Party and standing by the policies which the members of the Party laid down for me and which over 8,000 voters in Dublin West voted for. Following their announcement I was put under great pressure on Tuesday and throughout Wednesday to join the others in forming a new party. I refused to buy a pig in a poke - no one knows even yet what the name of the new party will be and what its policies will be.

It is interesting to see the warm welcome the new party is getting from all the newspapers, radio and TV as well as from all the establishment parties. From day one The Workers' Party has been attacked and abused or ignored by all these people. They saw us as the one great danger to the cosy political arrangement that has existed here for decades - "I step out again, you step in again" arrangement between Fianna Fail and the Fine Gael/Labour Coalition. The Workers' Party which I am proud to have helped in building was the finest political organisation of the working class that ever existed here. It defied all attempts to smash it from the outside, but has been undermined and severely damaged from within, in the space of a few weeks.

Many hundreds of members of the Workers' Party throughout the country are totally baffled and confused by what has happened. So are many thousands of supporters and voters. All I can say to them is that I am just as confused and baffled as anyone else. They haven't given the real reason for their actions. The reasons they present are that the Party was Marxist/Leninist or Stalinist and that there were people connected with the Party in the North who were allegedly in a group called the Official IRA.

Let me answer these two issues as I believe they are smokescreens to hide their real purpose. There were and still are Marxists in the Workers' Party but we were never a Marxist/Leninist Party nor were we ever a communist organisation. In fact some of the leading Marxists in the Party have left with Deputy De Rossa. They came to the Party from the British and Irish Communist Organisation (B and ICO) and in fact one of them wrote the document which Proinsias De Rossa and Seamus Lynch presented to the Ard Fheis on February 15th: so much for communists and Marxist/Leninists.

In regard to the Official IRA, I have spent a great part of my political life trying to change Republican thinking from military to political campaigns. I understood that I and others, had succeeded in doing that with the formation of the Party which eventually became The Workers' Party. There have been regular allegations of gangsterism by groups in Belfast which the media have referred to as the Official IRA and in which some people connected with the Workers' Party were alleged to be involved. All I can say is that I tried, as I am sure Proinsias De Rossa and Seamus Lynch of Belfast tried, to ensure that Workers' Party people were not involved in these activities and, where they were, that they were expelled. Seamus Lynch was in charge in Belfast for about 15 years and he knows that what I am saying is true.

Huge sums were alleged to have been involved in these activities - some millions of pounds according to one newspaper. If the Workers' Party has benefited by even one tenth of the amount these people were supposed to be getting we wouldn't have the enormous debt hanging over us which we have to-day. From the time I was elected to the Dáil in 1982 until April 1991 I handed over my monthly Dáil cheque, uncashed, to the Party and was paid a wage of £130pw which in 1986 was raised to £160pw. I ceased to do that in April 1991 because no one else was doing it and because I was also then a guarantor for large borrowings. In that period I estimate I gave to the Workers' Party approx. £70,000. Would I do that if money was pouring in from some other source?

I wish to make it perfectly clear that I will not tolerate members in the Party who are involved in any of these activities that are alleged to be taking place in Belfast. I intend at an early conference to establish a procedure - a procedure that the membership will have confidence in to ensure we can carry out the major political tasks that lies ahead of us, North and South, without being tainted with these allegations of gangsterism.

The real reasons for the breakaway were political. The Workers' Party was a powerful political machine for the working class, with clear policies which everyone understood and which daily confronted those who own and control the wealth of this country and who dispossessed and destroyed the lives of hundreds of thousands of our people. This move was designed to smash that great political instrument. I intend to stand by these people and by their political organisation; The Workers' Party.

You may have already left the Party in disgust or you may be totally confused and unsure. I don't know what stories you may have been told, but I am not telling you any stories - just the truth as I know it. Leaving the Party is a very major political decision to make and should not be made lightly.

Yours sincerely

Tómas Mac Giolla, T.D.

CONCLUSION

The Workers' Party destruction was sought by people who were insecure in their beliefs, embarrassed by socialism and consumed by personal ambition.

The episode has come and gone, and so have they. It would be good to say that the dust of proper ideological debate has settled, but there is no such dust because there was no such proper debate prior to the decision to attempt to destroy the party.

And there was no such debate because it would have unmasked those who wanted the party destroyed as politically jittery and personally ambitious. A gun was put to the head of socialists in the party who were not ashamed of being socialists: Do it our way, they were told, or get out. Apart from anything else, there was a serious problem with this - the liquidators themselves didn't quite seem to know what "their way" was. And they still don't seem to know.

Instead of debate, the party membership and the public were carefully fed a diet of smears through anonymous and cleverly orchestrated leaks to the media from "senior party sources" and the like - from the people now dedicated to "openness" and to one of the new imported, infantile buzzwords, "transparency".

Those who stood fast to the party, who were comfortable with its beliefs, who were working away for steady progress but weren't crazed by impatience, foolishly kept their mouths shut for too long. They did this out of loyalty to the idea of party unity and out of an idealistic hope that differences could be reconciled. They were outflanked by sharp practice, PR expertise and a media who willingly bought, indeed a media who on occasions manufactured, the liquidators' line in its totality.

It is clear now that whatever it was the liquidators wanted, it certainly wasn't reconciliation.

Because the Workers' Party was, and remains, a potential threat to the establishment by working for a powerful, united and socialist working-class with decisive electoral clout, it is well used to being misrepresented and abused. A few more voices in a right-wing chorus didn't - and won't - bring it down.

The choice of sticks which the liquidators, especially the party's six former TDs, picked to unsuccessfully beat the party to death with, was ironic, but also very clever. The rejection of violence and militarism as means to an end, which had been rightly inculcated in the membership by the party for decades, was suddenly turned against those in the party who would not desert the red flag of clear, positive socialism for the white flag of political surrender.

The phantom of the "Official IRA" was hastily given flesh by elements in the party - echoing exactly the longstanding taunts of political reactionaries outside its ranks - and cited as "the monkey on the party's back".

In fact, an entire colony of monkeys was seen by the liquidators as being on the party's back. These included links with some Eastern European parties (who fooled a lot of people besides the Workers' Party), "Leninism" (political activism on the ground), "Stalinism" (holding deeply felt views about the necessity of a party to represent working-class voters), "democratic centralism" (effectively, giving members a full say in shaping the party), phantom "Russian Gold", using outmoded jargon (refusing to deny the existence of the Irish working-class) and "kitchen cabinets" (friends or comrades talking about the party).

There was also the allegation by Mr Henry Patterson of the new De Rossa grouping that people in the party held views "*redolent of the Hegelian mystificatory transformation of a particular interest into a false universal/general interest*". This statement of course demonstrates how close Mr. Patterson is to the world of the working class. It also of course demonstrates that Mr. Patterson and his co writer Mr. P. Gillan of the various repetitive documents issued by the De Rossa faction are not above twisting peoples words to suit their own particular brand of 'socialism'. In all their words they have no answers to the political points made in the documents issued by the party. One major instance of their dishonesty is their public attitude to the line Eoghan Harris drafted for de Rossa in the Ard Fheis speech of 1989, at that time they claimed they were outraged at Harris and his influence on De Rossa and now we find that both Patterson and Gillan see this speech as being a good speech, the starting point, the beginning of the factions fight for control of the party.

Combined with this Gillan brings in the party debt as a major source of division, yes we can say that there were differences as to how the party should tackle the question of its debt accumulated over many years of subsidising elections and publications and staff wages. There was always opposition from those concerned to build a party of the working class to the Thatcherite proposals of the De Rossa faction to cut staff, to sell assets, to cease party publications, to close party head office. And let us state that in the 15 years

or more that P. Gillan worked or was paid he never once, privately or publicly, raised the matter of the party debt, its accumulation or its repayment. In common with many of those who have left us he accepted all of the bonuses and gains from being associated with the Workers Party progress but he never made any contribution to any proposed solution to the party debt. Again Patterson and Gillan fail to mention, conveniently perhaps, that as well as the De Rossa speech of 1989 the drive to alter the party's direction and character surfaced at the meeting in Dublin of party members in February 1990, mentioned elsewhere, at which some of the leading figures of the De Rossa faction, Rabbitte, Gilmore, McManus, Brady began their first public assault on the party.

The election of De Rossa as party president was clearly a mandate from the membership for change and growth. Before handing over the leadership, Tomás MacGiolla spoke passionately and memorably of the clear necessity for any socialist party to embrace change in a changing world. A united party greeted that message - and De Rossa - with acclaim and enthusiasm.

De Rossa took on the task of advancing the party with apparent great energy, but with little skill or political sensitivity plus a deviousness coupled with an impatience - encouraged by those opportunistic TDs and some of the others who left - that would ultimately prove destructive. The facts are that the party began to falter internally and disastrously from the first year after De Rossa became party president in 1988

Instead of being brought forward by De Rossa, many party members were sent reeling. Policy was no longer formulated democratically from within the party, but was sprung on members and supporters in a series of surprises. Routinely, discussion of sorts followed change which had been decided behind closed doors by the De Rossa faction. As in many other instances, if change had followed democratic and open discussion, the alienation of many people from an impetuous leadership might have been avoided.

This alienation was fuelled by the Eoghan Harris - scripted and rehearsed address of 1989, with its Evening Herald style populist references to "dole spongers", its new regard for "the market" as the engine of the economy, and its half-embrace of the "social partnership" trust of bogus "social democracy". Eoghan Harris, the man who articulated the widely held Darwinian view that poverty is a tragedy - for the middle class taxpayer - was the head chef in Proinsias De Rossa's own "kitchen cabinet".

The collapse of mock 'socialism' in Eastern Europe provided the Right in the party with the impetus to push for a policy of hazy populism and for a move away from key socialist tenets - that it is capitalism and the class system

which imprisons society in injustice, and that it is the working-class, whose interest in change is greatest, which must be offered the political leadership to assert their right to true equality in society, most especially their right to be free from poverty.

In the Ireland of today, as we know, the poor number well over a million. Unemployment swells their ranks daily. This should be the base constituency of a principled socialist party. It should form the locus of its policies and activities.

Nobody in the party ever said that the rallying of a demoralised working-class would not be anything other than the toughest job in Irish politics, but the party was achieving progress in this task - and with its clarity and integrity intact.

And the future of the Workers' Party, the most democratic, reflective and dynamic of Irish political parties, was gambled with by people who hungered for some sort of instant political gratification. They wanted to push the party from the left to the grossly over-populated mushy middle. Too much of what was said - and what was left unsaid - was determined solely by its across-the-board "electability" value.

Those who were steadfast to the party never disputed that it would have to broaden its attractiveness to a politically disillusioned electorate, but they were not reassured when told that this "repackaging" of the party's beliefs was not a threat to its core socialist values. The pace of change left little time for analysis. There was more than a whiff of Kinnockism in the air. It was the Kinnockite approach which ensured that the last British general election resembled a turf war between two polite, elderly ice cream vendors. The dreaded S-word, socialism, was avoided like a disease. The British class divide, widened dramatically by Thatcherism, was not dwelled on.

Now at the end of his time as leader of the British Labour Party, Neil Kinnock recognises and speaks out about the destructive power which the Tory media exercise on the British working class. Maybe even Mr Henry Patterson, a major intellectual and guru of the Democratic Left will now also recognise that the capitalist media are not benign or neutral

Populist packaging and political timidity were the hallmarks of the British Labour Party's red-rose leftishness. The only thing it excited was apathy, and embarrassment at its showbiz excesses.

Its vacuousness was echoed often at the low-key launching of the Democratic Left Group (which has stated in a recruiting leaflet that it sought to replace

"the failed politics of the left and right") and is best illustrated by the startling declaration from Deputy Pat McCartan: "I am for the people!"

Such statements are unlikely to get the deputy hung.

Mary Robinson's welcome election as President of Ireland in 1990 further fueled the rush to "pragmatism" in the then WP. It was a signal achievement for her, and for all concerned in making her "electable". The frenzied pursuit of "the Mary Robinson constituency" began simultaneously in the Workers' Party and in Dick Spring's Labour Party.

The result is that the only major policy gulf between the political omelette known as the Democratic Left and the Labour Party is Labour's gut nationalism, most honestly exposed in all its repulsiveness last year by Deputy Michael Bell - Prods out, was the message.

Writing in the Sunday Press of March 29th 1992 "The Gulliver Column" made this comment "As P. de Rossa's supporters gathered at the Royal Dublin Society premises yesterday for their one-day discussion, they would surely have thought of the fine vote they collected as the Workers Party less than three years ago. They got 82,263 first preferences, a great advance on their 1977 total when they contested for the first time and got 27, 209 votes.

Put in another way the Workers' Party had 1.7% of the popular vote in 1977 and 4.97% in 1989.

That advance took place while the party promoted socialist or semi-socialist policies and was regularly accused of being connected with the so-called non-existent 'Official I.R.A.'.

That garnered them seven seats. Six defected from the Workers Party. The questions for delegates at the R.D.S. was whether these seats could be retained under a new flag, whether they are personal to the candidates elected by the Workers' Party or whether they were party seats which might be taken by Workers' Party candidates in next year's general election.

It is as yet unclear how many people defected along with De Rossa; each side tells the tale most likely to benefit itself. But Labour Party people on the ground, who have a special interest in the left vote, believe that the De Rosa faction has enticed far fewer than was expected.

It is not a particularly cheerful outlook for those who defected from the Workers' Party. Proinsias De Rossa hopes now to appeal to electors who did not previously back the Workers' Party. Clearly there is a need for a new party to represent the interests of the young, the unemployed, the women who feel embittered and those soured by the consistent failure of older parties to improve conditions. It does not seem likely that the De Rossa group is that party".

To underline the above we would quote the political correspondent of the Irish Press, Emily O'Reilly, writing in the March 30th issue of her paper, made the following comments:-

"This weekend New Agenda gave way to the Democratic Left, a setback of sorts given the party leadership's desire to rid itself of some of its more overt socialist trappings, including any name that included the words - left, worker or socialist."

So what have we now in this new-born baby party? Well, we have a left-leaning party that is essentially against sin and in favour of good things like equality, democracy, a clean environment, rights for women, an end to mass unemployment and so on and so predictably forth.

It's doubtful whether the Labour Party could find anything to quibble with in the stated policy positions of the Democratic Left. Nuances may differ but both parties are essentially touting the same clatter of "feel good" politics to their electorates.

Where they do differ apparently is on the National Question. Labour is light green and Democratic Left is light orange. End of Story. Should however either party get a foothold in a future coalition Government, the political colour chart will be irrelevant since the knee will once again be bowed to the dictates of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and that will be that. If Fianna Fail can do it so can you guys.

So with Northern Ireland out of the way, what divides the two? Well very little really.

Labour stated that they want to become the main opposition party by the year 2000. Proinsias De Rossa made a similar highfaluting claim at his conference. Might it not be a good idea for both parties to amalgamate their glorious aspiration and begin to offer the electorate a real alternative choice?"

There are many reasons why the Workers' Party must stay in business and develop, but the two main issues are moral and tactical.

A party which puts the political focus on workers, employed and unemployed, and voices clearly the demands of the dispossessed, is needed in this capitalist society and in every capitalist society. The uneasy coalition of tendencies and motivations in the Democratic Left preclude it from taking a spirited socialist stance on the "old-fashioned" and "divisive" issue of class and inequality. The very term class is already taboo. It is not among the Democratic Left's large collection of approved buzzwords, reflected in the vote on their name at their founding conference.

This very title, Democratic Left, will come to haunt them for as we in The Workers' Party have learned, to our cost, they are neither 'Democratic' or 'Left', so will the Irish people.

The Workers' Party has a moral duty at this time. The needs and demands of those being pushed to society's margins must be clearly articulated by a party dedicated first and foremost to this task. Progressive Ireland must be offered a socialist programme as an alternative to capitalism - and half-baked trendy leftism.

The second reason why many members of the Workers' Party didn't buy De Rossa's line had to do with simple and universal political tactics.

If a political party wins an electoral base in society, it must attend to the crucial business of securing that base. The Workers' Party base is the working-class. If the working-class people are presented with a choice between two populist leftish parties, Labour and a spineless Workers' Party, they will opt for the biggest of the two. Furthermore, the adoption of a policy of political fudging demoralises party members into inactivity, slowly killing the very capacity to reorganise electorally. This had happened in the Workers' Party in the latter stages of the De Rossa presidency when members did not know what they were being asked to believe in, especially in Dublin. The last local election showing in June 1991 there reflects this.

The socialists who stood with the Workers' Party when the pressure on them to desert it was intense, have proven that they are nobody's fools. They know that there is no one dogma capable of unlocking the jail of Irish society, but they share core beliefs on liberation and society and they know the value of voicing these socialist beliefs unambiguously - without shame.

A cancer within nearly did the Workers' Party down. The party is out of intensive care and is already back at work. Proinsias De Rossa stated recently that there were no heroes any more. Those who kept their eye on the ball and stood behind socialism in the struggle for the Workers' Party might be embarrassed to be called heroes. They have been wrongly accused of a lot of things, but they are certainly guilty of one charge that was seldom made - that they have shown integrity.

Now that the dust has settled, to some extent at least, we can review the situation in a calm and objective manner. The first thing to realise is that the party remains intact, that the faction led by De Rossa did not do as much damage as they thought or hoped they had. It is clear of course that we have an almighty task on our hands, to clean up the debris and rebuild the party. Though we face a difficult time we are at the same time not without assets. We have retained the party's integrity as a democratic independent socialist party committed to the Irish working class and we have retained a substantial core of experienced and tested members and supporters in the class struggle.

With these two assets and a clear vision of the society we seek to build we will once again begin to attract the working class to our programme. Nobody should or indeed would underestimate the task that confronts us in the short and long term. We must immediately return to being an active campaigning party involved with the people in their everyday lives. We must immediately recruit into our ranks all those who are alienated from this society and in particular we must recruit the youth of this country. For as we know it is the youth who will determine the future and our party is the party of the future. But it is not enough to call ourselves that we must demonstrate this in action and by example.

Over the coming months we will continue to hear reasons why the liquidators did what they did, to justify their actions they must continue to smear the party, to attempt to undermine its credibility among the workers. Already the 'analysis' has begun, Mr. Henry Patterson one of the leading ideologues of the liquidators, has pursued the line peddled by the media that the 'Official I.R.A.'s alleged existence was a major reason why he and others such as his 'close comrade' Seamus Lynch defected. One question must strike any person on hearing such excuses and it is "when did Mr. Patterson and Mr. Lynch and indeed Mr. De Rossa and company learn of the existence of the so called 'Official I.R.A.' Was it this year, last year or the year before, surely they had a duty to inform the authorities if they had any information concerning any illegality or criminality? H. Patterson and his friends of today, again conveniently ignore the role played by the Irish Times newspaper in particular, from late December 1991 and on through all of January 1992 in which the de Rosa faction were given unlimited space to push their line of splits and divisions and of course always there ready and willing to help destroy the Workers party was the Sunday Tribune newspaper of Mr. Vincent Browne.

We would repeat here that one has only to look at what developed in other Communist/Workers/Socialist parties to recognise the similarity of views and actions by opportunists around the world. Surely it is no coincidence that in many cases after defecting from or splitting working class parties the opportunists have chosen the same name 'Democratic Left' for themselves, Italy and Britain demonstrate this fact.

The reality is and the liquidators know this in their own hearts and minds that the reasons for their attempt to liquidate the Workers Party lies in their political ambitions. They have for sometime now, in common with others of their ilk in other countries in Western and Eastern Europe, denied the role and importance of the working class and they had given up on the struggle for Socialism. They are so intent on getting into Parliament and into a cabinet,

any cabinet, that they will eventually do anything to demonstrate that they have become reliable allies and servants of capitalism and therefore acceptable to the establishment .

We for our part know what we have to do and already around the country party members have begun to demonstrate that it is the work on the ground among the people which will bring the reward of a strong united party of the working class.

**Published by
Ard Comhairle/Central Executive Committee
The Workers' Party
May 1992**

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