

CLASS STRUGGLE

● AFTER THE SOUTHERN ELECTIONS

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN POLAND

EL SALVADOR

*SOCIALISTS AND REPUBLICANS -
WHAT BASIS FOR UNITY
IN ACTION?*

*Crisis Deepens For World
Capitalism & Stalinism*

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Page 12: Committee for Fighting Unemployment, 1919

Page 24: The Communist International, cover of journal No. 1, 1919.

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WHY WORKERS NEED A FIGHTING PROGRAMME & A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The February General Election in the South showed as starkly as ever since Partition the outright political treachery of the Labour movement leadership in the disgusting role of the Labour Party and the silence of the Trade Union leaders. At the same time it warned the Irish bourgeoisie and its financial overlords that its two-party parliamentary system of hoodwink has worn precariously thin. What the elections have not done, however, despite the many claims, is to provide any alternative political voice speaking for the real needs of the exploited and oppressed.

The newly elected 3 deputies of SFWP and the 'Left' TDs T.Gregory and J.Kemmy when faced with the chance to vote against both capitalist nominees for Taoiseach, instead pledged their support to the capitalist parties. In this they squandered a key opportunity to force the capitalist parties either to ally together as the kind of anti-working class government they both stand for, or else to take full responsibility for another election. However much local sections of the poor may celebrate temporarily the 'concessions' wrung from Haughey for their support - for which the class as a whole will be made to pay and not the wealthy who will pass on their costs to us - their opportunism in supporting the capitalist parties undermines the fight for working class political independence and sacrifices the chance to begin to smash their Tweedledum Tweedledee sham party system which serves centrally to deny the working class its own independent political representation. The role of the Left TDs offers the exploiting class a major gain in allowing it to resume a deepening offensive on the working class on all fronts.

FIANNA FAIL

The Southern electorate, predominantly working class, returned neither Fitzgerald nor Haughey with an overall majority. This was so despite Fianna Fail's calculated adaptation of its propaganda to "the needs of workers", "equity" etc., promising to "put jobs first", to levy the finance houses and to keep major risk enterprises in production, and despite the explicit savagery of the Fine Gael rival programme fully supported by the Parliamentary Labour clique under Michael O'Leary.

Fianna Fail failed to get a majority also in spite of an improvement of 2% (to 47%) in the first preference vote due to the recovery of a full half of the H-Block vote - support which the Republicans had squandered after the June '81 Elections.

The reality of the Southern bourgeoisie's common interest with Britain, expressed in Haug-

hey's 1980 talks with Thatcher, set new limits on FF anti-Partitionist rhetoric. Thus in June '81 Haughey was unable to deflect popular anger over Thatcher's murder of the hunger strikers in which he was seen to be implicated. Not only did the H-Block vote lose him that election, however, but the nemesis of his pre-election fiscal opportunism undermined him in the seven months of the resulting hung Dail. While the bourgeoisie would prefer a stable single-party government to relying on coalition of Fine Gael with a Labour Party that cannot deliver up either the workers or their votes, the ruling class have come to have grave doubts about FF under Haughey. Hence the massive rallying of urban middle class support to the Fine Gael banner of budgetary "responsibility" which has again denied Haughey's Party an overall majority and also weakened his wing of the party.

Haughey's immediate declaration on assuming power that National Unity was his Government's primary concern, when all around him the oracles of bourgeois opinion are pointing to economic catastrophe, is all the more now than ever a desperate effort to use every last ounce of FF populism to silence the growing protests and create breathing space to engineer a new General Election and a stable bourgeois majority.

REPUBLICANS - NO ANSWER

The Republican movement continues to attract sections of working class youth in the Northern State whose elemental anger and hatred against oppressive tyranny is channelled into the military war against the repressive apparatus of the Northern Ireland system. Stripped of platitudes about "socialism" the policies of modern republicanism are defined by a historically and politically one-sided nationalism that wrongly equates its understanding of the Minority's oppression and Partition with the revolutionary socialist, i.e. Marxist, internationalist, understanding of exploitation and oppression of the working class by capitalism, native and foreign. It leads to the wholly one-sided emphasis on military struggle as the overriding means of destroying the presence of colonial rule and partition and the ending imperialist oppression of the Irish People.

They completely fail to consider the relevance of their struggle to the vast social, economic and cultural changes in the class structure of the Southern State and its relation to the British since Partition, which have more and more weakened the significance of the traditional republican goal of a united Ireland in the eyes of the majority of workers.

Republicans continue obdurately denying reality believing that their traditional conception of the national question and how to fight on it is still a burning issue for the "Irish People" and that the Irish People can be mobilised for their war against the Northern State.

Such politics embody a blind refusal to confront the concrete historical development of Ireland. The colonial and semi-colonial nature of the two states in Ireland express the development of capitalism which has given them their particular form and content. Such facts have only rhetorical significance for Republicans.

The Republican misrepresentation of the nature of imperialism and capitalism in Ireland is expressed by 'Left' Kevin Burke in APRN 25 Feb.: "The emphasis must always be that native capitalism and British imperialism are inter-dependent and the former can only be overthrown when the latter, its prop, is broken". The official SF line in the election issue of APRN (11th Feb. p.2) was even more bald: "The reality is that we must first of all drive out the foreign occupying power which is a cancer in our midst, and then build an Ireland in which the Irish people themselves own and control all the wealth and resources of the country and share in them equally without social or economic distinction: a free united socialist Irish republic". Such a view allows SF to constantly relegate even the most pressing needs of the working class in struggle against native capitalism in favour of an exclusive focus on the war against British military presence in the North.

Neither of the republican groups is capable of responding to the crisis of the Irish working class as a whole including the Protestant working class.

A movement which subordinates all questions of class, programme and strategy to the primacy of the military campaign - Nationalism First - is disarmed in the face of an election in which the key issue is a class offensive against the workers by their native capitalist exploiters.

It is no surprise therefore that the Irish Republican Socialist Party, in areas where no republican candidate stood, called for votes for Fianna Fail, partners in the murder of the hunger strikers: "Irish socialists always face unpleasant choices at election time between the nakedly pro-imperialist party of Fine Gael (with Labour usually tagging onto its coat tails) and the more populist Fianna Fail who identify more closely with the majority of Irish people but who eventually act against them. In the absence of larger revolutionary forces ... republicans cannot ignore the election in pious disgust. Socialists and republicans should vote against the Coalition at all costs given that there is nothing further to the right of the political spectrum than Fine Gael." (Starry Plough, election issue, back page). Thus did the self-styled socialist wing of the Revolutionary Nationalists boast its political bankruptcy and opportunism which is but the other side of the coin to the "strategy" of pure physical force.

Provisional Sinn Fein, as if in fear of discovering its own electoral opportunism, has for two decades abstained from elections, justifying its stand with the abstraction of "not recognising" the institutions of Partitioned Ireland. But after the taste of success in the H-Block vote of June '81 the Sinn Fein "left" claimed a victory in having this position reversed at the 1981 Ard Fheis.

The approach of SF in the election suffered from the same "nationalism first" logic as that of the IRSP without going so far as voting Fianna Fail. Their programme, centred around the reported 500 millions annual spending by Southern Governments to police the Border, contained a confused mixture of the most limited reforms (school entry age, housing etc.) without any mention of a class alternative for Southern Irish workers against native capitalism. "Left" Sinn Fein accounts for the poor election performance could only put it down to a regrettable dilution of the emphasis on military struggle in the North.

In his assessment of the disastrous results in AP/RN (25th Feb. p. 5) SF's Kevin Burke noted "there was a tendency in Sinn Fein, under a barrage of media scrutiny, to apparently attempt to distance itself from the armed struggle in the North." He argues against pandering electorally to the "clientelism by which the twenty-six counties is governed" - i.e. precisely the kind of electoral platform of SF's Dublin candidate. "Sinn Fein", he says, "came to the social and economic struggle only comparatively recently and so, in this election, was struggling to develop a policy to put on offer." What is significant however is that even the Left in Sinn Fein in two years of debating the "economic resistance campaign" has not had the internationalist class understanding of imperialism and capitalist Ireland from which to begin to hammer out a mobilising action programme for the working class. The petty-bourgeois nationalist outlook dominates SF and merely adapts its rhetoric to the working class by borrowing the phrases of the well-intentioned but politically rudderless Left. The election platforms of SF and IRSP reeked of utopian nationalism, economic and political, nationalist illusions of creating a "free" "neutral" Ireland outside the influence of the imperialist capitalist economic framework, but offered mere rhetoric in answer to the actual problems of the Irish working class.

THE CENTRISTS

P. D. & MC ALISKEY

Peoples Democracy (Irish section of the international USFI) which claims to be Trotskyist, has a history of continuous opportunistic adaptation to the traditional nationalist perspective and thus falsifies the perspective of Permanent Revolution. In practice they reduce it to the 'national struggle first' as the means of mobilising the Irish masses for socialism later.

The election campaign of PD's candidate Bernadette McAliskey did not argue the need to mobilise and unite the Irish working class on a fighting platform of all-out resistance, on all fronts, to the capitalist regime in the South, including its collaboration with British Imperialism in the Partition of Ireland, the repression of the Minority and the division of the Irish working class. Instead it focussed exclusively on the traditional National Struggles - "For an Independent United Ireland", "a just solution to which can only come about when the Irish People are allowed to sort out their own differences without any British interference". Tagged on to this is a Left Nationalist economic and social programme, none of which mentions the class nature and structure of the Southern State.

PD proposed an "anti-imperialist united front" to fight the election but their conception was nothing more than an electoral propaganda bloc. Marxists and Revolutionary Nationalists have no basis for common propaganda, even in explaining the agreed goals of common action. The ending of repression, British occupation, the Border, are understood and explained from a fundamentally different point of view - that of the international working class - by Marxists.

Despite the setbacks in the election and the H-Block struggle for their brand of opportunism PD refuse to learn the simplest lessons. Their latest attempts to regroup the shattered remnants of the H-Block campaign as a "broad anti-imperialist" front promises to duplicate all the tragic errors of the five years of H-Block struggle. Their transparent and shameless opportunism is an object lesson in how NOT to go about winning the most class conscious Republicans to Bolshevik politics and the building of the revolutionary workers party.

While PD may not be responsible for their candidate's utterances it has yet to be heard that they repudiate her reported statement that she would probably vote for a Fianna Fail Government rather than Fine Gael in the Dail - a ploy finely tuned to grabbing the second preference votes of FF'ers but denying the principle and need for independent class politics in a concrete question that was placed squarely before all for the 'Left TDs' to answer when the hung Dail resumed.

VOTES FOR MC ALISKEY?

Revolutionaries might have correctly called for votes for McAliskey on a critical basis had she been the candidate of a mobilising movement of struggle. In that way, continuing with their own independent propaganda and criticisms revolutionaries would also have handed out the official campaign literature stating openly their political support not for McAliskey but for those who looked to her in struggle as a leader. In that way propaganda for mobilising demands on McAliskey could be argued on a principled united front basis. PD, however, made it clear they would not allow other groups distribute their own propaganda alongside their official leaflets calling for votes. There was no need of such rights, however, on this occasion for unlike the H-Block candidates in June '81, McAliskey was not the candidate of a struggle of any section of the working class. Nor could her campaign be argued as preserving the political gains of the previous period. She and PD were in no small way responsible for the politics of the Campaign that had squandered the potential of those gains.

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT

The SWM group's approach to the Southern election flows directly from the syndicalist nature of its politics. While correctly emphasising the economic struggles of workers against capitalism as the key issue of immediate and vital interest to Irish workers faced with the Irish capitalist class offensive, they fail completely however to offer any kind of programme and strategy for resistance on the basis of which a mass working class movement of the exploited and oppressed must be built to challenge and overthrow capitalism.

Calling for votes as they did for an unemployed candidate on a very limited programme of struggle, in no way substitutes for the duty of revolutionaries and socialists in a bourgeois election to provide the class-wide answers that any alternative revolutionary strategy must. Significantly there is no mention at all of the oppression of women, especially at a time when divorce, contraception and abortion are posed as issues. Similarly their support for the National Struggle notwithstanding their correct criticism of PD's non-class presentation of that struggle, does not flow from an understanding of the need to re-integrate the Irish national question with a strategy and programme for workers unity, including the Protestant working class, and workers' power, as the only solution to capitalism in Ireland.

For revolutionary Marxists there can only have been two options:- resources permitting, to stand their own candidate on an unfudged programme calling workers to action for the major transitional demands that would counter the offensive of the class enemy and to explain how such mobilisation would open the road of struggle for a socialist workers' state; or in the absence of such a candidate, raise the slogan among workers - "Don't Vote - Organise" - on the basis of the action programme of the major immediate and transitional demands.

LABOUR PARTY'S COALITION TREACHERY

The IWG in previous elections argued a critical support vote for Labour (in June '81 secondary to votes for the H-Block candidates of struggle) in order to solidarise with that minority section of class conscious organised workers who looked to this "Party of the trade Unions" at times as their political voice. In doing so IWG argued a programme of action to arm workers for a struggle in which their demands, placed also on the Labour Party, would expose its treachery and win the most politically conscious sections to the building of a revolutionary workers' party. That tactical orientation to Labour became increasingly less applicable as the limited combative sections of organised workers, who had moved towards Labour in the late Sixties abandoned it increasingly throughout the seventies.

IWG's critical support was never advocated on the basis of Labour's programme nor on any of its spurious "left turns" such as the 1969 programme which was the touchstone of the Labour Left Liaison driven out of the Party in 1977. The tactic was based in the need to set the limited base in struggle against the leadership of Labour. IWG refused to call for such a vote for Labour in the Feb. '82 Election in which Labour's anti-working class treachery was so explicit as to inspire only open revulsion among the minority of class-conscious workers who had loyally voted for it rather than for the capitalist parties. So, despite their continuing reformist outlook in general, Labour was no longer, for the present, a political focus for those workers to which revolutionaries could tactically relate with their propaganda.

Elements on the 'Left' of Labour might have provided such a focus. Revolutionaries would seek to confront Labour-affiliated sections of the unions or local mobilised working class sections with the task of extracting public pledges from

self-styled 'socialist' candidates such as Labour Chairman Michael D. Higgins to oppose Coalition with their vote in the Dail, by breaking the Party Whip in the interest of working class political independence, and by voting against the the Party to defeat measures such as the Jan. '82 Coalition Budget. In so far as such pledges, extracted by mobilised workers, concretely faced those Lefts with either destroying Coalitionism or suffering the destruction of the hold of their left reformism, Marxists could tactically call for votes for such candidates but without ever muting their warnings or revolutionary criticism.

It is true, however, that Labour returned with 15 seats. But its loss of 1% of the vote must be added to the 3% lost in June '81. Its present standing at 9% of the popular vote compares with previous heights of around 20%. But even that 9% owes much to the rallying power of the Coalition's appeal to middle class and petty bourgeois "responsibility". Fine Gael even mentioned some Labour candidates by name for support in its literature in Dublin where Labour did consistently better in the middle class areas where Fine Gael's vote was also improved. Added to this is the important fact of the provincial nature of the core of Labour's support.

Labour's rural conservatism was used by the bureaucracy to extinguish the urban working class radicalism partially drawn into the Party in the sixties but which was allowed limited expression only through local area branches and never through delegates of the affiliated union rank and file from whom the Party was kept separate and unaccountable. Of its gains in the cities Labour retained little other than the liberal intellectuals, environmentalists, and civil-libertarians who, when they couldn't win seats by popular vote, were put in the oxygen-tent of the Senate. Thus of its 15 seats, Labour won seven in large rural constituencies with small towns that rely on agriculture, scattered industry and tourism. Those 7 were won with an average share of the 1st preference vote of over 20% in stark contrast to the vote that won the 8 city seats. The 5 Dublin Labour seats were won on an average less than 15% of the vote (despite the middle class Coalition support) and the 3 in Cork and Galway on an average less than 13%. Labour's vote elsewhere was disastrous and especially reflected the organisational collapse of the party since 1977.

a new Party of Labour ?

The events that dramatically cut down Labour's support to the present level were mistakenly interpreted by the IWG in *Class Struggle* 8/9 after the June '81 election as defining a qualitatively new political situation for the working class. It is a mark of the seriousness of revolutionaries to assess such mistakes but also, in relating to the developing consciousness of workers, to creatively propose principled tactics and slogans which can be the means of arguing the revolutionary programme with them while going with them through their experience of groping for class-wide political answers to their needs. It was such an attempt that was involved in IWG's call for a new "All-Ireland Anti-Imperialist Party of Labour". IWG believed that the official Labour Party was definitively discarded by the working class and that this was expressed in the election outcome, the adherence of the most combative sections of workers to the

anti-imperialist cause of the H-Block hunger strikers, and Labour's self-liquidation into a new Coalition even against the arguments of the leading trade union bureaucrats in June '81. IWG believed on the evidence of resurgent anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist militancy by workers who clearly and rightly had fewer and fewer illusions in either Sinn Fein or Labour, and for whom revolutionary Marxists were too few and too isolated to be directly a rallying point, that this changed situation was an appropriate one in which revolutionaries should articulate the widespread groping for a political alternative.

Thus IWG proposed a slogan latching into the sense of movement in the class, the slogan for a new Party of Labour which on an all-Ireland basis would be defined in struggle in conscious opposition to capitalism, Partition and imperialism. In arguing for the fight through the mass trade union organisations for such an "algebraic" slogan IWG was openly determined to give it the unequivocal "arithmetic" of a revolutionary action programme as the means of fighting in the movement for the full programme, perspective and organisational form of a mass revolutionary party, intent in no way to advocate any form of diplomatic half-way house for opportunism between a revolutionary and reformist party.

This tactical perspective, however, was mistaken, partly but not primarily in IWG's belief that the upsurge of significant workers' militancy in response to the Hunger Strikes was more than episodic. Beyond scattered elements this did not crystallise in any form capable of independently outlasting the self-liquidating H-Block Campaign. More importantly, the role of the Labour Party, despite even further loss of support, was not in effect smashed. Crucially important in preserving it in their own interest, was the trade union bureaucracy.

The trade union bureaucracy is the historic agent of imperialist capitalism and its allies, in Ireland and everywhere. It is the broker between capital and labour, determined in the last analysis to preserve the economic and social system from which it derives its special and privileged role within the labour movement. In Ireland, imperialist Partition of the island and of the working class this has produced a politically enfeebled proletariat with the result that capitalist rule has functioned effectively without the general need for a mass reformist party within the trade union movement, so typical of European imperialist countries. The trade union leadership North and South has been able to act as the instrument to discipline and control, to bind and gag politically the mass of Irish workers within the stunted limits of trade union routinism, divided and sectionalised. As a matter of principle, it has isolated workers from all ideological questions of Government, Party and power. Its rump "Irish Labour Party", rather than embodying the reformist illusions of the mass of Irish workers seeking their own political representation, expresses the stifling of political aspirations of a working class divided and imprisoned within two reactionary states.

To this very end the bureaucracy has used the Labour Party to usurp the mantle of James Connolly. He, despite the profound defects of his political method, nevertheless sought to establish a mass political labour and trade union movement and argued for the overthrow of national oppression and the conquest of social and economic power in the nation as the historic mission of Irish labour.

But Connolly left no formed political vanguard capable of putting the rapidly growing union movement on a war footing as an independent class force in the war for national independence and against the Partitionist bourgeoisie who accepted an imperialist "solution" in its own class interests. The developing bureaucracy faced with disciplining the swelling ranks of the unions in its own interest as broker with capital, defined the labour movement politically within an acceptance of the two Partitioned states. Unable to explicitly repudiate the tradition for which Connolly's heroism had earned undying prestige among workers they adopted his name and memory as a rhetorical cloak for a stunted Southern Labour Party which rejected Connolly's perspective of the Workers Republic. They went on to insulate it organisationally from rank and file trade union demands and struggle.

Thus the Irish working class movement already embodies the experience of a failed search for a political leadership in the form of a Party of Labour. For revolutionaries to advocate a new Party of Labour would be to ask the workers movement to go again through an experience the outcome of which is objectified already in the Irish Labour Party. The ILP functions politically for the bureaucracy as their proof of belonging to Connolly's tradition and as their 'answer' to any demand for political action which might filter through the tightly controlled and remote official organs of the unions. The delegate to union conference who asks for some accounting for the Union's political affiliation will at best be directed to express her or his interest by joining, outside of the union, a constituency branch of the Party. Of the political levy funds, care is taken that as little as possible be said by officials in order not to raise questions among the members whose only concern would be to hear any reason for continuing to pay it.

In its brokerage with the bourgeoisie the union bureaucrats have no need of Labour. When compelled to divert worker's militancy (e.g. the tax mobilisations) into the illusory road of parliamentary reform, they have bargained directly for a 'National Understanding', on social and economic goals, with whatever was the governing bourgeois party. The elements of the bureaucracy who feebly argued against the June '81 Coalition of Labour with Fine Gael could scarcely hide their preference for economic dealing with Fianna Fail. Neither could they hide their concern that Labour should not be so obvious in its lust for the spoils of office that it would sacrifice the last residue of its limited support only to destroy the bureaucracy's political camouflage and the marginal privileges of standing for public office which is part of the career of the trade union official.

Although workers in struggle have no active illusions in it, the Labour Party, however stunted, is the "official" party of the major unions in the South and stands as an obstacle to the fight for revolutionary socialist politics in the organised trade union movement. The fight to make the bureaucracy accountable for Labour's treachery, the fight to bring the union affiliations under rank and file democratic control, the fight to impose rank and file demands in struggle on Labour, the fight to force it out of Coalition - all continue to be important tactics, not in any way based on the illusion of reforming the Labour Party but directed at smashing and discrediting it and its reformist politics as part of the struggle for a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) alternative.

LABOUR'S NEW 'ANTI-COALITION' STAND

The key trade union bureaucrats who last June opposed Labour's entry into Coalition were John Carroll of ITGWU and Paddy Cardiff of FWUI representing over 200,000 workers. It was clear that Cardiff was not opposing Coalition but perhaps trying to dissociate himself from, if not prevent the further crumbling of Labour's organisation that would result, for he argued that Labour should nevertheless support a minority Fine Gael government! Carroll's formally more correct position masked his union's preference for Fianna Fail over Coalition. He became a member of the Labour Parliamentary Party by taking a seat in the Senate. His record of acquiescence in Coalition is thus clear.

Michael D. Higgins is believed to be the leading anti-Coalitionist within the Party. But his stand was not one of principle either. He obeyed party discipline to vote the Coalition into office after June '81. Obedience to party discipline also ensured his support for two savage Coalition budgets. Being Party Chairman he was in a key position to wreck O'Leary's acceptance of a joint budget-based election platform with Fine Gael in defiance of the Party council, but he diplomatically argued there was no fundamental conflict and retrospectively claimed that his and O'Leary's avoidance of public conflict showed their "political maturity".

Inevitably he did not challenge O'Leary's confirmation behind the back of the Party members as parliamentary leader after the election! Yet in the new Dail he is pinioned as the man who wrecked the chance of a new Coalition by his campaign and his casting vote in the Party council the day before the new Dail. The truth is that, when the chances of securing a Coalition majority were seen to be extremely slim, and that even if achieved it could only last the briefest time, he was able to get a single vote majority NOT for a politically independent Labour opposition but only for 'independently' supporting without joining a minority Fine Gael Government! Labour AND its Lefts are congenitally incapable, of their own accord, of breaking from political support for the capitalist parties. Only the demands of workers mobilised in struggle can guarantee the smashing of Coalitionism. The so-called Lefts cannot be trusted to lead that struggle.

'MILITANT' PROPS UP LABOUR

The Militant Group, the pseudo-Trotskyist "Marxist wing of the Labour Party" also displayed its unshakeable loyalty to the Labour Party despite every sellout on policy, on independence and on party democracy and despite repeated and conscious anti-working class attacks by Labour leaders.

What the Militant's leaders teach under the name of Marxism is but the crudest opportunism decked out in fantasies of the imminent turn of the working masses to Labour, "labour to power on a socialist programme", hysterically uttered often enough to induce political amnesia and choke any shred of honest political inquiry. Their deliberate deception of recruits to Labour can be tested in a single question:- where have they ever called on a single one of the "lefts" in whom they sow illusions, to break the Party Whip, even in the most favourable circumstances, and to vote against savage anti-working class measures such as the two

Coalition budgets, or even to pledge to do so if elected; that is, to bring down the Coalition as the means of breaking Coalitionism?

Never having put to the fore the fight for independent rank and file mobilisation on a revolutionary action programme (always making their vacuous slogans of struggle conditional on waiting for a lead from the official leadership!), never having fought openly in the official union organs to call the Labour Party to account, never having fought to set the base against the leadership, Militant knows that it could call on no-one beyond their own circle to defend them against expulsion, nor could they be the focus to rally any leftward moving current looked to by workers in the event of the split which any principled stand against Coalition must risk. For Militant, political principle is a luxury rather than a defining point and a rallying standard. The rotten 'unity' of the Labour Party is more important than political principle, for ultimately they are dogmatists in whose immutable credo a mythic historical process must inevitably, however long it takes, and despite all the claims of intelligence, turn the Irish Labour Party into the mass revolutionary weapon that will overthrow capitalism in Ireland. Objectively Militant Tendency is an asset to both Right and rhetorical Left, a ginger group of dedicated recruiters and vote-getters in a party that has suffered a severe degree of organisational collapse, providing left cover as loyal opponents who can always be prevailed upon to trim their sails in the interests of Party unity.

LEFT T.D.S— LEFT WING OF THE BOURGEOISIE

After the June '81 Election Limerick TD Jim Kemmy and SFWP's Joe Sherlock (Cork) put the Coalition in power and kept them there, supporting (or in Sherlock's case selectively abstaining on) anti-working class measures for seven months. That is - until the savage January Budget made it impossible to go on, not because of its savagery but because its attacks on workers were ineptly, nakedly, too obvious. That is the meaning of Kemmy's return to supporting Fitzgerald! The second hung Dail has added Tony Gregory for inner-city Dublin and two more SFWP to the supposedly independent and supposedly socialist benches from which the call went out for a "socialist alliance" in the Dail. It was hardly a promising start that the proposers of a "socialist" group couldn't agree on which bourgeois party to support!

KEMMY'S SOCIALISM

Politically, Limerick's TD is an exile from the Labour Party, factionalised in that city of intense Catholic reaction by family claims to the nomination and by clerical interference. Kemmy is a relatively vigorous propagandist, has a strong political clinic following and an unusual degree of anti-clericalism which has many positive features. All of these however fail to take him beyond the crippling limits of craft-union labourism. It was the Labour Party's organisational collapse that gave him the Limerick seat at a time that worker's sympathies were bending exactly opposite to Kemmy's anti-republicanism.

An explicit "two-nationist", Kemmy was seized on by the pro-Partitionist stalinist sects, B&ICO and the (ex-SFWP) 'Socialist Party' who decided to form a Democratic Socialist Party around their parliamentary sponsor, opposing themselves to the goal of "national unity" under the pretence of opposing nationalism. Their one service to his parliamentary career was to help him make the "difficult decision" to oppose the second Budget. That single act of toppling the Government obscured the seven months of his treachery and returned him with a massive vote. His acceptance of the bourgeois "responsibility" of supporting one or other government and maintaining that support however "unpleasant" is in essence a reformist national-centred perspective that reveals his stand against "nationalism" as merely a pro-Partitionist and pacifist hostility to Republican anti-imperialist fighters.

SINN FEIN THE WORKERS PARTY

Sherlock made the parliamentary breakthrough in June '81 for a Party, again, hostile to the H-Block struggle. Sherlock represents a more traditional wing of SFWP believing in a reformist road to an all-Ireland Workers Republic and in conflict with the Party's theoreticians who argue a utopian stage of democratic reform under Unionist majority rule in the Six Counties.

Never a workers' party, the Official Sinn Fein ostensibly dumped its arms to build politically upon the radicalised students, the organised slum and city tenants and the rural small-holders aroused by the rapid social developments of the sixties. They were the new compromiser wing of the revolutionary nationalist current of Sinn Fein, but petty bourgeois as distinct from their bourgeois Fianna Fail predecessors. They disguised their sellout to British imperialism with rhetorical "socialist" opposition to "economic imperialism" - against the EEC and its trampling on smallholders, against multinational mining companies, and for defence of the bureaucratically degenerate Workers States as "socialist" countries.

Disillusioned with the EEC campaign failure and the failure to move towards nationalising the new American-owned mines through appeals to national sovereignty, Official Sinn Fein's urban radicals (including students active in Stalinist IUS bodies) attempted to re-think a new programme within the framework of counter-revolutionary stalinism which would break out of the CP-like sterility of those first years.

Ignoring the economic and political role of British Imperialism historically in shaping the framework of Irish society they falsify history to justify their acceptance of Partition. In a parody of the Menshevik error they argue that the weakness of the industrial working class is due historically to a failure of will and initiative of native capitalists to develop industry. Industrial development under capitalism is seen as necessary before any struggle for socialism is possible. Outdated native industry and small farming must therefore be superseded by capitalist modernisation.

Just as Fianna Fail compromised with Partition, became in 1932 a bourgeois party leaning on populist rhetoric and eventually turned to economic modernisation through private enterprise co-operating with multinational capital; so the Official Sinn Fein accepted Partition, entered on the parliamentary road as a petty-bourgeois party leaning

on the working class with "socialist" rhetoric and turned dramatically to a perspective of modernisation through State-enterprise alongside multinational capital. Their new economism reversed their attitude to the EEC, to the multinationals and to the small farmers. They equated socialism with State ownership of profitmaking industry - as appeared to be the reality in the Stalinist countries - but this would have to be built on gains from development stimulated here by multinational capital. In other words they advocate State Capitalism as a road to independent industrialisation under imperialist capitalism - an impossible illusion but one widely shared by the intelligentsia of the backward countries. Such a national perspective has no place for a mobilised working class but has every need for a working class disciplined and controlled from above. Thus the Officials became SF-The Workers Party in a conscious turn to the trade unions where they have systematically filled a large number of full-time unelected positions, significantly among white collar sections. They are in part responsible for the silence of the Irish union movement on the question of supporting the Polish Solidarnosc. SFWP is a by-word for the most brutal bureaucratic methods and its opposition to unofficial action knows no limits. It supports wage restraint as part of its statecapitalist planning perspective, just as it opposes the fight to expropriate failing capitalists under workers' control lest the capitalist state be lumbered with uneconomic holdings!

Protest votes in the Feb. Election gave SFWP two more seats, helped in Finglas by the organisational collapse of Labour and in Waterford by the return of votes "borrowed" by the H-Block campaign from the nationalist elements that SFWP is still forced to rely on. (It thus still calls itself "Sinn Fein".) Its overall vote improvement over 1977 was negligible. The terrain on which they seek to build is in direct competition with the Labour party. They are incapable of being a focus for the most combative workers who oscillate between nationalism and syndicalist unofficial militancy.

THE NEW DEPUTIES - LEFT WING OF THE BOURGEOISIE!

Ten years on, the SFWP, facing its fourth General Election with only one seat, called in vain on the Labour Party to break with Coalition and form a working class opposition in the Dail. This was done in order to win disaffected and second preference Labour votes, but also, because it was limited to Labour's own terrain and had to relate to Labour tactically to argue for a future share in the funds and sponsorship of the trade unions. However their support of FF in the new Dail and previously of PG shows that their "opposition" to formal Coalition has nothing to do with working class political independence from the bourgeoisie but is simply seen organisationally as a means of afterwards ducking responsibility for the worst government decisions and as insurance against losing their own organisational identity in pursuing the spoils of governmental office.

So Kemmy and SFWP on two crucial occasions when they held the balance between the capitalist parties, chose to vote one or other into power! Reflecting the mentality of the petty bourgeoisie they claimed this was a democratic duty. For socialists to support the formation of a bourgeois government is an inexcusable act of treachery to the working

class and its fundamental need for political independence, even if their votes make it impossible for the bourgeois parties to govern. But to do so when two bourgeois parties dominate the parliament with 160 of the 166 seats is an act of criminal political lunacy which squanders the chance to define the working class deputies as a class-based opposition and to force the bourgeois parties into alliance. Those capitalist parties tarred the Left deputies with the charge of anti-democratic blackmail, of holding the country to ransom for expensive concessions in exchange for supporting one side or the other. If these Lefts stated a determination to vote against both bourgeois options and symbolically offered their own candidate for Taoiseach they would have forced the bourgeois parties to ally together or at least to account for their political differences which from a class perspective are sham differences cultivated as a cover for their competing networks of patronage and clientelism.

SFWP boasts that their 3 seats are a beacon of hope for overcoming the mould of "civil war" politics and re-dividing Irish political life along the lines of class interest. Yet their first and repeated parliamentary act is to concede to the bourgeoisie the right to obliterate class politics, to maintain the "civil war" Party lines, to "confirm" that there is no class war but that all classes may alternate their support between bourgeois Government and bourgeois Opposition. They have conceded the 'right' of the exploiting class to rule. Such is the terrible price of the national-centred reformism of the Left TDs whose essence is the acceptance of the institutions of bourgeois rule on terms dictated by the bourgeoisie. That effete reformism follows, as night follows day, from any political programme that believes socialism in one country can come about by preserving and gradually capturing the existing nation state of the capitalist class and its apparatus, so as to eventually expropriate their property. Chile is warning enough against such fantasies.

GREGORY - THE ILLUSIONS OF MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM

It is tragically ironic that Tony Gregory claims to be a Socialist Republican in the mould of James Connolly, for it was Connolly who remained the hardest critic of municipal reformism as the means of building a socialist party. Whilst obviously a person of honest and integrity, Gregory was forced by the logic of his politics to vote Haughey's FF into power while knowing they are bent on attacking the Irish working class.

'Gregory's Deal' will give a new lease of life to illusions in parliamentary reformism - and in Fianna Fail.

Michael Mullen, marvelling at Gregory's achievement on radio (March 13th), wished he could have him as a union official and outrageously claimed that Gregory's stand embodied the spirit of James Connolly. He was asked why his powerful union was not long ago able to achieve what Gregory appears to be achieving for the city poor. He had no answer, but that is precisely the question that the union mis-leaders must be forced to answer. Asked why his own Labour Party had not won those gains Mullen hypocritically claimed that unfortunately the Parliamentary Labour Party did not always heed the advice of the unions. But where have Mullen or his fellow bureaucrats ever mobilised organised workers to force Labour to fight for working class needs?

Gregory's action is one more setback in the principled and unbending struggle for a programme and party truly and independently representing all of the interests of the working class.

The capitalist bourgeois calculates: 'while I have in my hands lands, factories, workshops, banks; while I possess newspapers, universities, schools; while - and this is the most important of all - I retain control of the army; the apparatus of democracy, however you reconstruct it, will remain obedient to my will. I subordinate to my interests spiritually the stupid, conservative, characterless middle class, just as it is subjected to me materially. I oppress and will oppress its imagination by the gigantic scale of my buildings, my transactions, my plans and my crimes. For moments when it is dissatisfied and murmurs, I have created scores of safety valves and lightening conductors.

At the right moment I will bring into existence opposition parties, which will disappear tomorrow, but

which today accomplish their mission by affording the possibility of the lower middle class expressing their indignation without hurt therefrom for capitalism. I shall hold the masses of the people, under cover of compulsory general education, on the verge of complete ignorance, giving them no opportunity of rising above the level which my experts in spiritual slavery consider safe. I will corrupt, deceive, and terrorise either the more privileged or the more backward of the proletariat itself. By means of these measures I shall not allow the vanguard of the working class to gain the ear of the majority of the working class, while the necessary weapons of mastery and terrorism remain in my hands.'

(From "Terrorism and Communism" - Leon Trotsky)

WHAT WAY FORWARD?

A FIGHTING PROGRAMME FOR WORKERS UNITY AND WORKERS POWER

No programme of parliamentary reforms can meet even the immediate needs of a working class faced North and South with an offensive by imperialist capitalism attempting to make workers pay for the collapse of their crisis-ridden system.

Less still can workers have any trust in a parliamentary "left alliance" of deputies whose opportunism in voting to install a bourgeois government only serves to prove that they subordinate the needs of their class to the "national interest" and the "responsibility" of propping up the political institutions of the bourgeoisie.

The self-organised fight of workers on a classwide basis for a programme that answers their needs and leads on in struggle to the seizure of political power is the only basis on which genuine Socialist workers' deputies can be put forward to use the platform of parliament to advance the class struggle.

Force the Left TDs to use the platform of the Dail to call for the mobilised action of workers - extra-parliamentary action.

Only within such a strategy of mobilisation can organised workers put demands on the "Lefts" in the Dail as the means of testing their claim to represent workers and to expose the treachery that we believe is the inevitable outcome of their whole political outlook.

Such a mobilisation is impossible without at the same time fighting for the fullest workers' democracy in the trade union and labour movement.



FOR WORKERS DEMOCRACY

- *Fight to break Coalitionism! Make the so-called Labour Party accountable to the rank and file to destroy it as a weapon of the bureaucrats.
- *Election of all union officials subject to recall, paying them the average wage of members
- *the putting of union branches under direct workplace control and full access by the ranks to full minutes of all Branch and Executive meetings.
- *recruitment drives, positive discrimination, creches and meetings in worktime to actively involve women workers
- *for a single united Congress and an end to the separate and divisive Northern Committee
- *for all Trades Councils and conferences of unions and Congress to comprise only elected and recallable delegates of the rank and file
- *for bargaining by united workplace committees and Combine committees of rank and file delegates across each industry nationally and with the workers of Britain and other countries
- *for a trade union press to combat the bosses' propaganda, open to political debate in the movement and for embargoes on bourgeois media to enforce right of reply to all slanders of workers in struggle.

Such measures of fighting democracy are vital in transforming the whole working class movement to put it on a war footing.

CANCEL THE DEBTS

Income tax on wages and social welfare, wage levies and deductions, VAT, duties etc. are piled up into a crushing burden on workers in order to pay off "debts" to international banker capitalists and their local partners and brokers. State borrowing has as its purpose to subsidise the private accumulation of capital through new infrastructure, training, and massive free grants for business which pays 10% or no tax at all and produces no net increase in jobs or alleviation of widespread poverty. The working class must reject every shred of responsibility for those debts and there is only one slogan that can answer the lies of the bourgeoisie: "Cancel the Debts!". Such a slogan can be a weapon for militants to cut through the mealy-mouthed deceptions of bureaucrats, labourites, Left TDs who will cry horror at the plain truth however much they say "of course workers are not to blame but...". At the same time such a slogan begins to pose for workers the political questions of what strategy and what party is needed to fight for the political power of the class to cancel those debts, for the bourgeoisie will not do it. Levies on their finance houses are only passed on at workers' expense. Demand the Nationalisation of the Banks under workers control.

Cancel interest payments of public service authorities.

OPEN THE BOOKS

But workers cannot be content to accept the propaganda of Haughey or Fitzgerald about debts. In attempting to embarrass Fianna Fail, Fitzgerald allowed Haughey to see the books of the Finance Dept. The trade union movement must assert its need and its right also to see the books, to expose the whole machinery of the financial parasites and the subsidies to private capital, the clientelism that

buys support for the bourgeois parties. The unions must be won to demand "Open the Books of the State to Trade Union Inspection!". Through taking up such demands the working class can begin on the road to become a ruling class.

MAKE THE RICH PAY

Workers, who never enjoy more than a fraction of the wealth they produce, must never accept that they should have to pay taxes. The reformist SFWP, Labour and the bureaucracy all accept the "duty" of workers to pay taxes on their meagre earnings for the illusion of a "social wage" of ramshackle health and welfare services. Make the capitalists and the wealthy pay.

- *In all union bargaining wage demands must be calculated in terms strictly of take-home pay!
- *For a steeply progressive wealth tax and income tax on wealthy self-employed.

FOR A SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES AND HOURS

In the whole history of the Southern "Free" State there has been no increase in the total numbers of labourers and small farmers able to earn a living under its semi-colonial regime. The working class suffers not only the agony of 14% unemployed but the social impoverishment of the million women and men whose emigration sapped it of fighting spirit. Likewise the British-contrived Six County statelet has compounded the haemorrhage of emigration with systematic sectarian discrimination and a destruction of industry by imperialism that has put an average over 20% on the dole, much higher among Catholics but disastrous too for Protestant workers. With their farcical pretence of putting "jobs first" the two regimes make the employed pay for the unemployed and pass good money after bad from workers' taxes to fan the embers of "private enterprise". In answer to state incentives for the private building industry which puts up house prices and profits workers must be won to fight for:-

- *Nationalise the building industry and building land. Expropriate non-resident landlords! Houses for the homeless! The jobless must pay no rent.
- *For permanent schemes of useful public works under union control and rates of pay to meet social needs and employ the jobless, especially youth.

In answer to bosses threatening closures and redundancy, playing the hopes of some against the needs of all, workers must:-

- *Impose a sliding scale of wages and hours; five days pay whether or not there's five days work;
- full compensation for each new rise in prices;
- share out the work under union control without loss of pay; consolidate overtime earnings and bonus payments in the basic wage, ban overtime and control rates of work to force employers to maintain all jobs.

Nationalisation Under Workers Control

*Fight for an end to business secrecy. Open the company books to public inspection by workers' representatives. Occupy plants which are being closed! Hold the property to ransom and build solidarity to force nationalisation under workers control without compensation to the bosses whose profit lust creates the "strike of investment" that even destroys the means of production themselves in their deadly competition with each other.

NATIONALISE DE LOREAN, ENKALON etc.

In the Six Counties it is especially vital for militants to stand firm against the Republican and centrist illusion which opposes the fight for nationalisation because it would supposedly deepen British involvement. To reject the fight for nationalisation is to reject the most powerful response with which workers can rally the class against redundancy. Such a fight can be the rallying point for forcing the ICTU to mobilise the working class North and South but it must not hold back for the union leaders to call for solidarity - including that of British workers. Nationalisation, forced on the British State depriving the bosses of "their" property, actually begins to undermine that state power by creating an alternative class power organising itself initially from the base of the factories. Only in that kind of struggle which pits Catholic and Protestant worker shoulder to shoulder against the enemies, British, Orange and Green capitalism, can the two sections overcome their mutual fears and understand their common goal. With nationalist workers who cannot yet see the revolutionary character of such a struggle, militants must argue the primary importance of maintaining employment, even under British state ownership as the higher good in order to have any organised strength for a more effective battle afterwards.



ORGANISE THE UNEMPLOYED

Organised strength at the point of production is the central weapon of the working class movement. Militants must fight to tie that power of the strong to the needs of the weak not merely through the unions' demands against unemployment but by setting about openly organising the unemployed in mass sections of the unions with full access for unemployed delegates to all conferences and trades councils where they can directly hammer home their appeal. Such a move will be resisted with every spirit-numbing deception of a bureaucracy which puts up even less show of concern for the unemployed than the electioneering bourgeois parties.

Not holding back, therefore, for their official backing, and precisely as the means to mobilise the jobless to hammer on the doors of the unions and the factories, militants must seize every opportunity to organise the unemployed directly from the dole queues and especially where large numbers are being laid off and are on the point of dispersion from their mines, factories and construction sites.

AGAINST PARTITION!

The social backwardness of the two parts and the political weakness of the working class are particularly deep because of Partition which has permitted the intensification of sectarian hostilities and the entrenchment of confessional laws affecting education, sexuality, fertility, the family and women's status. Obscurantism, censorship, the suppression of radical ideas and the double oppression of women as insecure cheap labour, a reserve army of the unemployed chained by domestic toil and herded into the so-called "women's work" of social care - all are intensified by the outcome of the aborted national revolution.

The H-Block struggle again shows that Republicanism, whose hold is unchallenged by the labour movement among the Northern Catholic workers consciously opposed to Partition, is itself politically bankrupt and counterproductive in its methods despite the heroism of many in its ranks. Revolutionaries and militants must fight to win the anti-Unionist workers and unemployed to an independent working class movement that champions their just cause. To this end we must fight to put the struggle firmly under the lead of a working class movement in the whole island, for the working class alone has a material and incorruptible interest in winning democratic rights, women's emancipation, the separation of Church and State and the ending of Partition.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM

In defence of the oppressed Northern minority the labour movement must be won to fight for British troops Out Now, disarm and disband the RUC and UDR and free all anti-imperialist fighters. Building at every point on the basis of independent working class united front action, such a movement must also enter into joint action alongside Republicans in order to break the hold of their Catholic nationalism by winning the anti-Unionists to working class methods of struggle under a revolutionary working class leadership. Such a leadership must base its action programme on the strategy of Permanent Revolution which seeks to bring the working class to the lead of the "national struggle" in opening up the road to working class power within the nation.

FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

In order to mobilise women as the vanguard of the fight for their own emancipation, women and men activists must agitate especially in the unions and working class areas to build a working class based mass women's movement. Such a movement can be built in a struggle around key needs and rights - for the right to work and equal pay; for legal equality; for free preschools and community creches, free workplace creches for male and female parents; for free legal and safe contraception and abortion on demand; for divorce at the request of one partner backed by adequate state child maintenance.

AGAINST REPRESSION

In order to defend democratic rights of expression, political organisation and the rights to demonstrate and strike, organised trade unionists must be mobilised to lead with their industrial power in the fight to

*demand abolition of emergency laws and no-jury courts and to disband the Special Branch; and defend all activists harrassed by police or arrested under emergency laws

*dely all court action against pickets; smash all laws restricting trade union rights and independence.

AGAINST SECTARIANISM FOR WORKERS UNITY

The last Dail showed, in Fitzgerald's Constitutional 'Crusade', the readiness of the bourgeoisie to hijack the banner of "non-sectarianism" and "harmony of different traditions" as an excuse for deeper collaboration with imperialism against Republicans and as a cover for rehabilitating Orange rule in the North.

Activists and revolutionaries must not permit that usurpation of the slogan for unity between the national majority of workers and the Protestant workers of the North. The fight on an independent class basis for that all-important unity can only be realised in joint struggle against all sections of the bourgeoisie. It cannot be built on a basis of "agreeing" to put aside the question of Partition which underlies the sectarian divisions, but the deepening economic offensive of the bourgeoisie starkly presents the need and growing possibility of solidarity in struggle between workers of the whole island and both sections in the North.

The organisational autonomy of the North within Congress, engineered by the bureaucracy in the interest of its peacable wheeler dealing with the bourgeoisie in the two separate states, is an obstacle to the fight for that unity. The separate Northern Committee must be ended as one step in making the Congress in struggle what it claims to be in name - All-Ireland.

The bureaucracy which accepts the "different situation" of the Protestant State equally has preserved its own Catholic 'complexion' in the South - from the use of Jesuit industrial relations courses to the official commemoration of Larkin solely with an annual Mass for his union's members.

In fighting against sectarian division in the Irish working class militants must oppose all such confessional trappings - insisting even on the removal of religious emblems in union offices - as a matter of principle in openly establishing by rule, penalties and practice the necessary secular character of the unions. Though minor in substance such sectarian details are linked to the bureaucracy's acceptance of Catholic social teaching which is an obstacle to putting organised workers at the head of the fight to separate church and state, to end church control of education and hospitals and to take action on the unions' token commitment to divorce rights and free contraception. Without such secular democratic demands inscribed on fighting banners of the unions there is no basis to allay the fomented fears of Protestant workers that the Workers Republic is not another form of Rome Rule and less still any basis on which to break them from the noxious poison of Loyalist sectarianism with its virulent hostility to secular democratic rights.

FOR WORKERS DEFENCE

In any deepening industrial confrontations with the bourgeoisie, workers' occupations, pickets and demonstrations will come under physical attack by the bourgeoisie's armed bodies of police and hired thugs as surely as the ruling class clings to its property, privilege and power. Equally the military machine of British capitalism already confronts all organised resistance in the North and has proven its readiness to act even against limited trade union militancy. Workers' self-defence is a slogan which serious militants must argue for in the struggles of the working class as a strategic need in which Connolly has given the Irish working class a priceless precedent.

Beginning with picket defence squads, and leading to trade union based militias North and South, the slogan of Workers Defence is not a matter of ultra-left fantasy but one of life and death for the working class movement as shown in Chile, Turkey and Poland. Opportunists, Stalinists and Centrists and even the "physical force" Republicans will oppose it outright or equivocate or say "leave it to us" in fear of an armed working class beyond their ability to control. Or at best they will say "it is too soon and provocative" even while workers' will to resist is being sapped by the creeping use of army strike breaking, police raids on occupations and massed police smashing of pickets which they increasingly dare not resist because they understand all too clearly the implications of so doing without being physically prepared to defend themselves.

BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Thus to-day's action programme must be one to mobilise the rank and file beginning with the most immediate attacks of the bosses and imperialists, but also a programme which when taken up leads the working class to organise politically under the lead of its own Party for workers power based on armed workers councils - the dictatorship of the proletariat. In that fight the most combative workers must be welded together into a revolutionary rank and file movement based in the trade union organisations, initially as a revolutionary minority. Within that fight the IWG seeks to win the most class conscious to build the nucleus of a Revolutionary Party. To that end the IWG is irrevocably committed to polemic, debate and discussion towards revolutionary regroupment of all genuinely revolutionary socialists.

The building of a revolutionary International for world socialism is an indispensable part of that fight that cannot be postponed on any pretence. All programmes rooted in the national terrain ultimately capitulate to the 'national interest' which is the interest of the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary programme proceeds in the very first instance and at all times from the international perspective of the working class. Only the fight for a revolutionary internationalist programme can therefore provide the instrument for a revolutionary workers party in Ireland that cannot be compromised in its fight for the Workers Republic as a step to international socialism.

The 18th Brumaire of General Jaruzelski

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER- REVOLUTION IN POLAND

THESES ON POLAND ADOPTED BY THE I.W.G. AND WORKERS POWER

1. The bureaucratic caste that usurps political power in the Workers States and parasitically lives off the planned property relations cannot coexist with independent organisations of the working class. Neither can it tolerate the erosion of its privileges, its political power or the destabilisation of the repressive internal security apparatus upon which its power ultimately depends. For these reasons it was inevitable that the Stalinists would launch a bid to recoup the gains made by the Polish workers since August 1980. This is the objective of the military coup. It could only have been prevented or resisted by the working class taking political power directly into the hands of its own workers councils (soviets) and workers militia. A failure to take political power - to make a Political Revolution - paved the way for the Stalinists' bloody counter attack.

2. But the bureaucracy's privileges, their inability to rationally plan and effectively organise the economy coupled with the political oppression of the working class all mean that open conflict periodically erupts between the working class and their bureaucratic overlords in the workers states. The specific political revolutionary situation that Poland has experienced since August 1980 had its roots in the following factors.

(a) THE CRISIS OF THE BUREAUCRATICALLY PLANNED ECONOMY

The Gierek regime after 1970 hoped to finance a new round of industrialisation by massive borrowing from Western banks and governments which was to be repaid by the exports of Polish manufactured goods to the West. By late 1981 Poland, in relation to the size of its population, was the second most indebted country in the world. But the bureaucracy proved incapable of raising the productivity of the working class to which it denied elementary rights of organisation and self-expression. (Between 1976 and 1979 labour productivity grew by only 3.8%.) Recession in the Western capitalist economies definitively removed the hoped for markets of the Polish bureaucracy and further undermined their entire economic strategy.

(b) THE MILITANT TRADITION OF THE POLISH WORKING CLASS

The working class in 1970 and 1976 had forced the bureaucracy to carry an enormous subsidy on prices of essential foodstuffs. Bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption ensured continued scarcities of essential goods. In the face of mounting foreign debts the Gierek regime sought to push down the living standards of the working class through the price rises of the summer of 1980.

(c) THE CRISIS OF AGRICULTURE

Approximately 75% of Polish agricultural land is in the hands of the small-holding peasantry (the average size of holdings being around 12.6 acres). The Stalinist regime tolerates this anachronistic agricultural system for fear of conflict with the peasantry and the Catholic church whose roots lie in rural village Poland. But the shortage of needed manufactured goods, and the small peasantry's control of essential food supplies provoked a 'scissors crisis' in Polish agriculture. The peasantry refused to sell their products to state agencies because the state could not in exchange provide goods required for agricultural production. Hence the tendency of the peasantry to hoard and to sell goods on the more lucrative private market. Shortages of foodstuffs in the state shops, escalating prices on the private market served to further impoverish the living standards of Poland's industrial working class.

(d) THE CONTINUED RENEGING BY THE STALINIST BUREAUCRACY ON THE DEALS AND COMPROMISES STRUCK WITH THE WORKING CLASS AFTER PREVIOUS CONFLICTS.

After 1956, 1970 and 1976 the bureaucracy promised the redress of grievances and the extension of workers rights. On each occasion the Stalinists, having secured the demobilisation of the working class, ripped up the agreements and attempted to reinstitute repression. This meant that by 1980 there existed a definite layer of workers ready to fight in their own defence but deeply distrustful of the official unions as a direct result of their own experience.

(e) THE FLAGRANT CORRUPTION OF THE THE GIEREK REGIME

The special rations, fine houses and fat salaries of the bureaucracy stood in sharp and visible contrast to the hardships and privations of working class life. The inability of these privileged parasites to organise production and distribution effectively, further sharpened Polish working class hatred of inequality.

(f) NATIONAL QUESTION IN POLAND

The social and political regime that has existed in Poland since the end of the second imperialist war was imposed on Poland by the Soviet armed forces counter to the immediate rhythms of its class struggle. Since that time the army of the Soviet bureaucracy has served as the ultimate sanction against political change in Poland. Hence all struggles against the bureaucratic caste, against political oppression and inequality are necessarily interwoven with the sense of national oppression bolstered by the very existence of the Stalinist regime in Poland.

THE RISE OF SOLIDARNOSC

3. The crisis of the summer of 1980 was sparked initially by a struggle against food price rises but was dramatically intensified by a struggle in defence of victimised militants in Gdansk. It passed through a stage of immediate local economic demands on work conditions and wages to the formation of the national Solidarnosc and the demand for free independent Trade Unions. In the face of a mass exodus out of the Stalinist official unions, mass recruitment to Solidarnosc among rank and file Party members and universal hatred and contempt for the corrupt and discredited Gierek regime, the Stalinists had no immediate alternative to the official recognition and registration of Solidarnosc.

But the concessions wrung from the regime - on pay, on union recognition, on Saturday working - and the new self confidence of the working class could only have been defended and extended by the working class finally destroying the political power, repressive apparatus and economic privileges of the bureaucracy - by POLITICAL REVOLUTION. Having taken power into the hands of its own workers councils and militia the working class would proceed to reorganise the plan from top to bottom under workers' management.

The potential for such a political-revolutionary resolution to Poland's crisis was always present in the dynamic of the workers' struggles from August 1980. The inter-factory strike committees could have laid the basis for soviet type organisation and at a number of stages workers were forced to form their own rudimentary workers defence squads. The working class base of Solidarnosc has consistently given voice to demands for an end to privilege, for democracy in the factories and for the extension of workers control and management in the plants and in the economy as a whole. None of these demands was realisable short of the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucratic rulers.

4. Neither could Solidarnosc hope to achieve a permanent status as a trade union representing the Polish working class in negotiations and bargaining with the Bureaucracy. The limited programme of es-

tablishing a Trade Union in a bureaucratically degenerate workers state is a utopian one. Under capitalism Trade Unions represent workers against individual capitalists in a market over which neither employer nor workers has control. The very dynamics of the market economy keep alive trade unionism as a form of representation of the working class within bourgeois society. Within a healthy workers state Trade Unions would initially continue to represent the interests of sections of workers within a state that was under the direct control of the working class as a whole. They would be essential training grounds for workers to learn to control and manage the economy, 'schools for socialism', as Lenin liked to call them. But in a bureaucratically degenerate workers state such as Poland neither the market mechanisms through which workers bargain with individual employers nor the prerequisites of the functions of Trade Unions in a healthy workers state are in existence. Every major demand of the workers - on the length of the working week, the sacking of an individual manager, the allocation of goods or wages - inevitably pits the working class against the central bureaucracy which monopolises the central planning mechanism. And lasting success for the workers cannot be secured by bargaining with the central bureaucracy. The nature of its power and privileges is such that it cannot for long co-exist with independent organisations of those that it oppresses. The centralisation of its power and the scale of its privileges make it too tempting an object of revolutionary overthrow unless the masses themselves are forcibly deprived of the right to organise.

5. Solidarnosc could therefore only be a force for political conflict with the bureaucracy. Either it could have laid the basis for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy that we have outlined above, or it could have developed a programme of collaboration with, and reform of, the stalinist regime. Thirdly, it could have moved in the direction of a counter-revolutionary overthrow of the regime which would have paved the way for the restoration of capitalism in Poland, and whatever the nationalist slogans it was fought under, this would mean the turning of Poland once again into a semi-colony of Western Imperialism.

The leadership of Solidarity, and its conferences and national commission were overwhelmingly under the influence of tendencies supporting the latter two political programmes.

THE WALESA GROUP

6. THE TENDENCIES IN SOLIDARNOSC

(i) The Walesa Group which was tied particularly closely to the Catholic hierarchy of Wyczynsky and Glemp who in their turn were the active agents of, and in regular contact with, the reactionary Pope John Paul II.

On a world scale the Catholic church is inevitably committed to the maintenance of the exploitative order of capitalism and to the destruction of those 'Godless' states that have overthrown the private property that the Church sees as sacred. For that reason the Catholic hierarchy is a force ultimately fighting for capitalist restoration in the workers states.

In the immediate situation of Poland's political-revolutionary crisis it fought to use the mobilisations of the working class and its hold

over large sections of the working class to strengthen its own bargaining position with the regime. Its hold over large sections of Polish workers flows from, (a) the rural background of a large proportion of the workforce, particularly the first generation workers of Gierek's "industrial boom"; (b) the Church's ability to pose as a force representing national independence in the eyes of the masses; (c) the fact that in conditions of Stalinist repression, and of its oppressive and stultifying cultural life the Catholic Church was able to appear as what Marx termed 'the heart of the heartless world. The soul of soulless conditions.'

It sought to be a broker between the regime and the workers - before and after martial law - in order to guarantee both the preservation and extension of rural capitalism and church control over 'social bodies'. Notably the Church wants to use its bargaining strength to erode crucial rights secured for women in Poland (including abortion rights and contraception facilities). It aims to drive women back into family life as child rearers and unpaid child minders. In this way it hopes to tighten its own grip on the minds of the young by eroding the need for nursery and child care facilities in the hands of the 'Godless State'.



Lech Walesa

It also intends to wring from the bureaucracy concessions in the field of education, media time for religious sermonising, of family life and even food distribution. The Stalinists were prepared to concede to the Church in these spheres - including Ministerial responsibility for 'family life' - in exchange for Church calls for order and calm.

While significant sectors of the working class looked to the Catholic hierarchy for a lead, celebrated Mass in occupation strikes and decked out their demonstrations in religious symbols, the Catholic Church was not always able to force the ranks of Solidarnosc to obey its bidding. On many occasions the same workers who would abase themselves before the cassock and cross would refuse to heed Church calls for a return to work. Similarly the Church, in Poland and Rome, has been set on doing a deal to find a Polish 'Tito' - a patriotic decentralising authoritarian leader who would make concessions to the private farmers, to small businessmen and to the Church itself. This programme, that led Glemp to ultimately plump for Jaruzelski rather than for the struggle to overthrow martial law, runs objectively counter to the democratic aspirations of the base of Solidarnosc.

The Catholic hierarchy, which supported the anti-semitic Great Polish dictatorship of Pilsudski after the first imperialist war, has not changed its spots. Better a Stalinist Pilsudski figure and order, than the uncertainties and disorder of a political-revolutionary crisis. That is the reasoning of the Catholic hierarchy in the face of a working class striking for its own emancipation. Until the threat of a working class thus mobilised is removed the Catholic Church is willing to temporarily hold back in its long term goal of restoring capitalism.

Walesa - until December 1981 as his project crumbled before his eyes and the eyes of millions of Solidarnosc supporters too - sought to strike a compromise deal with the authorities that would guarantee joint participation in a National Front for the Church, for Solidarnosc appointees and the Stalinists. His programme included the distribution of state farm land to the private peasantry, self management committees in the factories and 'social Council' control of the economy by which he meant tripartite administration of the plan and the bolstering of the Church's role in all aspects of social and political life.

In order to secure that deal Walesa attempted to hold back the unofficial strikes of October and November which involved 250,000 workers. In order to prevent bureaucratic reprisals against strikers and the passage of anti-strike legislation he counselled Solidarnosc itself to outlaw unofficial strikes and to build a disciplinary machinery that could put such a ban into effect. (In late October and early November the Solidarnosc Praesidium called for an end to strikes.) At the bidding of Archbishop Glemp Walesa unilaterally left the Gdansk meeting of the Solidarity National Commission to meet with Jaruzelski and Glemp to set up talks "aimed at specifying the general principles to which the construction of national agreement in our motherland should be subjected". Not until the Stalinists braced themselves for hard line action against Solidarnosc did Walesa break from this perspective of collaboration with the Stalinists.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC K.O.R.

(ii) The Social Democratic KOR grouping - most notably represented by Kuron and Michnik. The programme of this grouping - reconstituted in late November as the 'clubs of the self-governing republic' - was the reform of Poland on the road to its 'Findlandisation'. By this they mean the establishment, by stealth and encroachment, of a Parliamentary democracy accepting the limitation of foreign policy alliance with the USSR and decisive repressive machinery and foreign policy matters remaining in the grip of the Stalinists. Kuron explicitly calls for the replacement of centralised planning with a decentralised economic order.

Kuron, and the Social Democratic and lay Catholic intelligentsia, express a classic distrust of - in reality a profound fear of - the self-organisation of the working class. At each key stage in the crisis after August 1980 they counselled against showdown and conflict with the Stalinists. But the credibility of the KOR grouping as defenders of workers' rights after 1976 and their links with the Catholic intelligentsia ensured for them an influential role in the counsels of Solidarnosc. It was Kuron for example who played a vital role in securing the agreed compromise deal between Solidarnosc and the regime on workers' management.

The Social Democratic intelligentsia in the workers states is a central conduit of bourgeois ideas and programmes into the ranks of the working class. Most vitally they foster illusions in Parliamentary Democracy (a form of government that can only take root in a stable imperialist country capable of maintaining a relative harmony of interest between the political representatives of Labour and Capital). To workers who themselves are not consciously restorationist they offer as an alternative to their felt political oppression the chimera of Parliamentary Democracy, and of the societies that can maintain it, as the means for realising political emancipation.

In the face of Stalinist totalitarian tyranny revolutionary Marxists must ceaselessly fight against the anti-working class programme and tactics of the Social Democratic intelligentsia. However in certain situations, and on specific issues, revolutionaries would find themselves (as an independent force) fighting alongside such groups as KOR to defend the rights of workers and militants to organise free of bureaucratic repression. In the wake of the 1976 riots, for example, communists would have found themselves alongside the KOR militants who were opposing the imprisonment of workers involved in the riots.

THE RESTORATIONISTS

(iii) The consciously restorationist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN).

The KPN explicitly aims at redrawing Poland's borders so that they correspond with those achieved after the First Imperialist War. It explicitly aims at re-establishing capitalist property forms in Poland. In Poland after World War One, only 69.2% of the population were Polish (figures for 1921). The Poland of Pilsudski savagely oppressed the sizeable minority of 4.5 million Ukrainians who found themselves under Polish rule. Whatever the claims of the KPN leaders, a capitalist Poland would inevitably become a semi-colony of Western Capitalism. The effects of the crippling debts that the bureaucrats have taken on and the attacks on workers' living standards to pay for them, are just a hint of the future open to Poland and the masses should the KPN leaders successfully carry through their counter-revolution and deliver up Poland to the imperialists.

Revolutionary Marxists have no solidarity with these conscious agents of counter-revolution and would give them no defence. For the Polish workers movement, in the name of democracy, to have defended the KPN leaders as "political prisoners" along with the organisers of the trade unions arrested by the Stalinists, reflects the very real presence of counter-revolutionary forces within the Solidarnosc movement.

THE SOLIDARNOSC RADICALS

(iv) The Solidarnosc 'Radicals'

We see no evidence that those elements who opposed Walesa's collaborationist leadership - Jurczyk, Rulewski, Gwiazda - differed qualitatively from Walesa in Programme or perspective. All were committed to a programme that intended to prise control of the economy from the Stalinists and their chain of appointed managers, to take over local government through Solidarnosc candidates in 'free elections', to guaranteeing the security interests of the Soviet bureaucracy in Poland while leaving the central repressive state apparatus intact. They differed with Walesa, and with each other, only over the pace at which to carry out

this project. The inevitable refusal of the Stalinists to negotiate such an erosion of their power forced these elements into empty demagogic conflict with the regime. By early December (as evidenced by the Radom Tapes) Rulewski was urging that Solidarnosc itself form a Provisional Government of National Unity, given the failure of Jaruzelski-Walesa-Glomp negotiations to reach a National Agreement. Knowing the depths of popular support for Solidarnosc against the Stalinists, the National Commission in Gdansk immediately prior to Jaruzelski's coup called for a referendum to back their claim for power sharing with the Church and, at least temporarily, with the Stalinists too. Rulewski's formula as announced in the Radom tapes was for power to be shared until 1984 elections on the basis of 30% to the Stalinists, 25% to the peasants organisations, 25% to Solidarnosc with the rest going to lay Catholic organisations and the counter-revolutionary KPN.

But for all the demagogic froth of Rulewski there is no evidence that he was urging, or that Solidarnosc was preparing an armed insurrection on the eve of Jaruzelski's coup. Jaruzelski had broken off negotiations with Glomp and Walesa. He was visibly preparing an offensive against Solidarnosc. But still "the radicals" expected a referendum to defend them and their notion of power sharing against the Stalinists. True, by December, leading militants were urging the formation of workers' defence guards (Bujak and Palka, for example). This call was strengthened after riot police broke up the Warsaw fire academy student sit-in in early December. But the sporadic nature of the resistance to Martial Law underlines that there were no concrete and developed plans for Solidarnosc to organise to seize political power from the Stalinist bureaucracy on the part of Walesa's famed 'Radical' opponents in the Solidarnosc leadership. The political programme of these figures underlines that they were not qualitatively different in political character to the dominant Walesa tendency on the Praesidium.

7. Taken together as a contradictory whole, the dominant tendencies in Solidarnosc revealed the following crippling weaknesses:-

- (a) Subordination to the Catholic hierarchy which fought to implement its own anti-working class programme throughout the crisis, on the backs of the workers movement in collaboration with the Stalinists.
- (b) Illusions in the bankrupt policies of Polish nationalism. We do not deny that Poland is nationally oppressed. But Polish nationalism itself, since the October Revolution of 1917 in particular, as an ideology and programme, binds and gags the working class, opposing any independent struggle for its own interests. Since 1917, when Poland achieved its independence because of the revolutionary workers in Russia, anti-Russian Chauvinism in Poland has meant that Polish nationalism's content has been formed in counterposition to the October Revolution itself. Hence the character of Polish nationalist ideology has to be defined as overwhelmingly reactionary because:-
 - (1) it binds the working class to the capitalist, restorationist clerical and even Stalinist elements in its society in the name of the unity of the Polish nation.
 - (2) its historically stamped anti-Sovietism opens the road for restorationist illusions in Western Democracy and in the capitalist market economy among broad sections of the masses themselves.

There can be no independence for the Polish working class without the active assistance of the workers of the other states at present in the political grip of Stalinism. Only as the spearhead of an international political revolution against Stalinism could the Polish Workers' Political Revolution guarantee its own survival. But the anti-Soviet, Catholic totems of the Polish nationalists necessarily drive a wedge between the workers of Poland and the workers of the USSR - a wedge that can be exploited by the Stalinists of the Kremlin should they decide to use Warsaw Pact forces to finish the job for Jaruzelski.

(c) It has a programme for the Polish economy that could strengthen the forces of capitalist restoration.

Born of the collapse of the Polish plan and the continued existence of small peasant agriculture, the predominant tendency in the Solidarnosc leadership was towards the decentralisation of the economy, the strengthening of market mechanisms and the complete subordination of agricultural production to the law of value. While elements of this programme could have been, and still can be, carried out alongside sections of the Polish bureaucracy (who look enviously at the market mechanisms of Hungary and Yugoslavia) it would inevitably strengthen the tendency towards, and the forces fighting for, the complete smashing of the planned property relations of Poland.

Our programme recognises that the centralised command planning of the Stalinists can never realise the POTENTIAL of the socialised property forms and has, through its shortcomings, necessarily blackened the very name of planning to the workers of Poland. We fight for a plan centralised in the hands of the organs of the working class itself. But behind the Solidarnosc leaders' talk of self-management - which itself reflects the workers' basic striving for control - lies a programme of 'market socialism' which would firstly introduce the Catholic Church, with its own anti-working class anti-socialist priorities, into the central 'social council' of the economy. Secondly it would, through decentralisation, prevent the Polish workers, AS A CLASS, from managing their economy, strengthen the law of the market and necessarily drive down the living standards of the Polish workers. The Solidarnosc leaders, no less than the Stalinists, accept that their programme for economic 'reform' will mean unemployment for Polish workers.

(d) Crippling illusions in Western Imperialism. While Poland is politically oppressed by the Kremlin bureaucracy, the 1970s saw it becoming ever more economically exploited by the Western banks and governments, albeit as a result of the policies of the Stalinists themselves. While ultimately aiming to prise Poland loose from Comecon on the road to restoring Capitalist property relations, the Imperialists therefore had no interest in a victorious political revolution of the Polish working class. A victorious working class Political Revolution would jeopardise the debt and interest payments upon which the imperialists' exploitation of Poland rests. Polish nationalism has served to blind large sections of the Polish workers to the root of much of their present miseries in the rapacious demands of the financial institutions of imperialism.

(e) Its strategy for advance left the central levers of Stalinist power intact, but hoped instead to encroach on that power through its points of least resistance. The Solidarnosc strategy for challenging managerial power in individual factories, for standing their own candidates against discredited party candidates in local elections and, eventually, a referendum appeal for power sharing over the heads of the Stalinists, AT EVERY STAGE avoided a direct challenge to the armed central power of the bureaucracy. As a result, the militia, the Internal Defence Force (WOW), the riot commandos (ZOMO police used to break the Fire Academy sit-in) and the military high command remained intact to choose their moment to strike back. Once again the Polish workers learned the bloody lesson that Stalinism can only be overthrown by a movement that prepares an organised armed insurrection against its central political apparatus in order to pass power into the hands of the workers themselves.

8. In search of an illusory national agreement with the Stalinists and the Church, the Solidarnosc leaders demobilised the workers' organisations. They held off strikes and, with Glempl's blessing, appealed for calm. The Stalinists showed their gratitude with a bloody coup, with a declaration of war against the Polish workers.

But just because the programme of the Solidarnosc leadership could not lead the 10 million Polish workers who looked to them for final victory, it does not mean that we do not solidarise with Solidarnosc, as a movement of the Polish workers against their bureaucratic oppressors. The existence of a mass base, often raising demands in conflict with the aims and intentions of the Solidarnosc leaders, clearly reveals that, despite its leadership, Solidarnosc was not a counter-revolutionary organisation per se. It was, and if it survives, could well continue to be, a dynamic movement, rife with contradictions but possessing the potential of resolving them in the direction of political revolution, given the intervention within it of revolutionaries.

As is usually the case then workers enter into struggles against their capitalist exploiters or their bureaucratic oppressors, they do so without a ready-made and fully-formed revolutionary leadership. The task of revolutionaries in Poland was to struggle within the mobilisations of the Polish masses:-

(a) to support and extend those mobilisations against the bureaucracy to their victorious conclusions, and

(b) in so doing, popularise the international programme of Trotskyism, fight to build the nucleus of a new revolutionary communist Party that could expose in practice, in the school of struggle itself, the bankruptcy of the programme and tactics of the clerics, nationalists and restorationists who took strength (as they did in Hungary in 1956) from the first shocks of the political-revolutionary crisis in Poland.

The central problem facing the workers of Poland is that such a revolutionary leadership was not built. Revolutionaries were not able to re-articulate the emancipatory programme of Marxism to this working class which was prepared to sacrifice and struggle but was at the same time blinded by Stalinist oppression and clerical obscurantism to the potential of workers' power, of a workers' managed planned economy, of SOCIALISM as the road to the equality and the workers' democracy that millions of Polish workers fought for.

THREAT TO THE BUREAUCRACY

9. The August 1980 crisis paralysed the Stalinist bureaucracy. Significant sections of the party, approximately one-third, joined Solidarnosc. The Party (PUWP) is the key mobilising agent by which the central Stalinist bureaucracy ensures that its wishes are carried out at every level of the economic and political apparatus, and in every social organisation. For that reason it must remain, essentially, the property of the central bureaucracy itself. But in order to perform its function it has to organise layers of society outside of, and politically oppressed by the central bureaucracy. Hence any upheaval in the Stalinist states must necessarily send shockwaves throughout the Party itself serving to weaken the mobilising potential of the party leadership.

Successive Stalinist regimes in Poland as elsewhere have deliberately nurtured a layer of materially privileged labour aristocrats as an element of the base of the Bonapartist bureaucracy inside their specific working class. For the Gierek regime this had been most noticeably the miners and steel workers of Silesia. The defection of this group of workers to the ranks of Solidarnosc was decisive both in undermining a vital base of support for the Stalinist regime, and forcing a compromise recognition of Solidarnosc.

This was even reflected in a movement at the base of the Party for greater internal democracy, for the right to horizontal communication between Party units, and for contested elections of Party posts. While this movement represented a destabilisation of bureaucratic rule, it could never have become the means for replacing it. The Stalinist party is, by its nature, irreformable; it can only exist as the agency of the central Stalinist bureaucracy. If it ceases to perform this function it will be purged or even replaced as the immediate instrument of bureaucratic rule.

In the face of the Gdansk strike wave the central bureaucracy itself divided over the tactics for preserving their caste rule. A significant layer of that bureaucracy - security chief Kania for example - was prepared to jettison the discredited Gierek leadership and negotiate a compromise recognition of Solidarnosc. Only a small minority of the central bureaucracy attempted to resist this tactical retreat by the Stalinist core of the party.

But the party itself fragmented under the impact of the developing crisis. There were significant defections from its ranks. At the last Central Committee before the coup it was reported that PUWP, which was 3 million strong in August 1980, had in "recent months" lost 244,000 members, expelled 180,000 and accepted only 30,000 new recruits. Factory branches of the PUWP joined Solidarnosc wholesale. In the face of the Polish workers' movement the party withered as an effective instrument of bureaucratic rule.

The hardline defenders of bureaucratic rule - Jaruzelski for example - conducted a concerted strategy of attrition against Solidarnosc and the softs and compromisers in their own ranks. They did this by allowing economic chaos and food shortages to demoralise significant sections of workers and the population at large. It was hoped also to swing layers of workers behind the administration through blaming Solidarnosc for privations and supply breakdowns.

Polish workers queue for food under martial law in Leszno



They also provoked conflict with the Solidarnosc leaders so as to play on, expose and exacerbate their divisions and demagoguery. In concert with Glemp, Jaruzelski was prepared to open negotiations with Solidarnosc on power sharing in exchange for their calling off strikes. Hard line anti-Solidarnosc bureaucratic militant Olzowski was the first to offer the carrot of a new National Front to the Walesa-Glemp axis.

Having lured Solidarnosc's leadership into negotiations, Jaruzelski proceeded to play on the divisions in Solidarnosc's ranks. While guaranteeing peasant property (to a doubtless unbelieving peasantry), promising electoral reform and attaching councils of "experts" to the Cabinet, Jaruzelski was not prepared to concede on a union veto on Stalinist representatives in the new National Front or on free elections. Instead the Stalinists braced themselves to apply military force against Solidarnosc.

The late November break-up of the negotiations, the police raid on Kuron's meeting to establish his social democratic clubs, the late November Central Committee meeting at which Jaruzelski announced his intention to take out powers to ban strikes and the early December raid on the Fire Fighters Academy; all signified a stiffening of the Stalinists' resolve to break Solidarnosc. They represented a dress rehearsal for Jaruzelski's coup of December 13th.

Jaruzelski's provocation elicited squeals of protest from Walesa. "There is no national agreement, for there is no one to agree with. The other side cheats", and at Radom: "They've been thumbing their noses at us from the very beginning", and at the last Gdansk National Commission:

"They've been thumbing their noses at us from the very beginning", and at the last Gdansk National Commission: "The policy of small steps has produced no results". It placed him under great pressure within the Solidarnosc leadership, which he tried to placate with the promises bugged by the Stalinists in their 'Radom Tapes': "Confrontation is inevitable, and will take place. I wanted to arrive at it by a natural way, when all sections of society were with us. But I have been mistaken in my calculations because I thought that we would be able to wait until the Sejm and councils would collapse by themselves. It has been proved that we can have no success with this tactic".

However, Jaruzelski knew that Solidarnosc was not prepared to resist a coup, that its leaders were long on words and short on preparations, and that Glemp would be continuing - until the very eve of the coup - to keep alive the hope of arbitration in negotiations between the two sides.

The army and security forces had been consciously groomed for a coup d'etat. The dramatic break up of the cohesion of the party made it imperative that the bureaucracy prepare to defend itself through the hated armed squads who themselves also had everything to lose from a triumphant workers' political revolution - the militia, WOW, ZOMO, etc. Not only were these forces politically reliable, but the army could appear as an arbiter, as a patriotic force, as an agent of national salvation. The beleaguered Stalinists prepared to raise a new military dictator to power.

The intended Bonaparte - Jaruzelski - replaced Kania as party chief in October. In the same month "operational" units of troops were sent into the Polish country to supposedly deal with local problems and food bottlenecks. They were withdrawn at the end of November in order to report to the Council of Ministers!! The army had been practised, ZOMO was rehearsed to carry through the 18TH BRUMAIRE of General Jaruzelski.



11. The coup was carried through with bloody precision. Crack troops were sent to strategic Solidarnosc strongholds - the Lenin shipyards, Nowa Huta, the Ursus works, Katowice and key Silesian mines. Most Solidarnosc leaders and noted activists were immediately interned. While thousands of PUWP members threw in their party cards the Stalinists prepared for a ruthless purge of the party (by report members of the Politburo were even arrested).

The workers met the coup with heroic resistance even though their leaders had been rounded up. But the resistance was not sufficient to counter the tactics of Jaruzelski. The Stalinists hoped to use only reliable special units to attack the workers. They wanted to use the 350,000 strong army, half of which is comprised of the conscripted sons of workers and peasants, only as back up and for patrol and supervisory duties.

Only methods of struggle that enabled the workers to win over the conscripts and their arms could have smashed Jaruzelski's coup.

The Catholic hierarchy openly counselled passivity in the face of the coup. While refusing to go so far as to condone the crackdown, they offered to calm the population in exchange for the release of detainees. And the Solidarnosc leaders counselled tactics that prevented the workers making an open bid to win over sections of Jaruzelski's Army Reserve. The bloody repression of Poznam in 1956 and the Baltic coast in 1976 has understandably strengthened a tendency amongst Polish workers to keep off the streets and to use the occupation and the 'go-slow' in the factory as the most effective means of resistance and defence from Stalinism's bloody militias. Yet, as a tactic this isolates the

more militant workers behind their factory gates, at the mercy of the crack troops, while the mass of the workers are consigned to passive resistance.

Only by pulling the vast majority of the working class onto the streets in demonstrations - defended by a workers' militia - can the workers ever prove to the conscript army that there is an alternative superior armed force with which to throw in their lot. Only mass organised defiance can break the morale of the army and therefore save the lives of the militants who otherwise are left

Jaruzelski announces coup.

Troops at crossroads Warsaw.



Armoured car in Warsaw.

alone to face the specialised paratroops and commandos as they choose their time to force their way into factories, docks and mines. That is why we say that at the time of the coup, and after, the workers' leaders should have fought for:

- * An indefinite general strike of the entire working class to break the military government. To conduct that strike, councils of the representatives of the workers and councils of the peasants must be formed in every locality and be coordinated nationally under a Central Workers Council. This was the road of struggle along which the heroic Hungarian workers started in 1956.
- * In the face of the Stalinist thug squads the workers must defend themselves and their organisations. They must build their own armed squads to protect their strikes and demonstrations, and seek to win over the conscript ranks of the army together with their arms. For Workers' Defence, For a Workers' Militia. Only a workers' insurrection carried out by workers' councils and militia and under the lead of a Revolutionary communist party could destroy the central stalinist bureaucracy and ensure the political rule of the Polish workers.

* For workers' control of production. All decisions on the length of the working day, on the pace of work and on what is to be produced to be taken by

factory committees and the workers' councils. Revise the plan from top to bottom in the hands of the Central Workers Council! Take the planned economy under the direct control of the workers themselves. State property in Poland must be defended as the means by which the workers can organise production consciously to meet their needs and not the privileges of the bureaucrats or the rapacious demands of the Western banks.

* Distribution and allocation of goods should be taken into the hands of the workers and peasant cooperatives. In order to overcome the anachronistic system of small peasant farming, a triumphant workers' Political Revolution would commit itself to a programme of (a) taxation of the rich peasants, (b) investment in and production of tractors, fertilisers and agricultural implements, (c) credits and education to provide the material base for, and win the mass of the poorer peasants to cooperative farming as part of the planned economy.

* Renounce the debts to the western banks. End the economic exploitation of the Polish workers by imperialism. Only by renouncing the debts that have been piled up by the bureaucrats can the Polish workers free themselves from the domination of the banks and finance houses of Western Europe and the USA.

* For the complete separation of the Church and State. The Stalinists have increasingly conceded control of family life, of women's rights, of education, to the Catholic church. Solidarnosc leaders have fought to increase the power of the church. But that power will be used to strengthen the reactionary mission of the Catholic hierarchy to destroy the struggle of the workers for their own emancipation, to further enslave women and to bolster and extend capitalism on a world scale.

* Take Poland out of the Warsaw Pact. The armed might of the Kremlin stands behind Jaruzelski. Since August 1980, the Kremlin has regularly reminded the Polish masses of the armed might they have at their disposal to intimidate and, if needs be, directly smash, the workers of Poland.

The Warsaw Pact is the direct agent of the counter-revolutionary policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Its command structure embraces and coordinates all the national Stalinist armies in Eastern Europe. For that reason the USSR was actively involved in the preparations for the coup and plays its part in the administration of the crackdown. Polish workers should refuse to subordinate their armed forces to the Kremlin oligarchy. But they will neither realise their emancipation, nor defend themselves, under the banner of clericalism and Polish nationalism. The abolition of capitalism in the USSR, as in Poland, was an historic gain without which the working class could not hope to plan production in its own hands and for its own purpose. That gain is at present in the hands of a bureaucracy but it nonetheless remains a gain that workers everywhere must defend against the drive of imperialism to destroy it.

An independent Workers'-Council-Poland should therefore guarantee that it will defend the USSR and the other workers' states unconditionally against capitalist attack and restoration. In this way the Polish workers can hope to win real support amongst Soviet workers and soldiers and thus serve to initiate a struggle for political revolution throughout the states ruled by Stalinism.

In 1956 Soviet troops wavered in the face of the stark contrast between the lies of their bureaucratic oppressors and the aspirations of fraternising Hungarian workers. The only road to stopping the armies of Brezhnev, Husak and Hoenecker is to confront them with a programme of genuine proletarian internationalism, to win their troops to international political revolution. However, in the face of intransigent military oppression from Warsaw Pact forces, the Polish workers have every right to take all necessary steps to defend themselves.

* It is a matter of life and death for the Polish workers that a Party is formed to fight for this programme, a Trotskyist revolutionary communist party. Of necessity it would struggle to build the nuclei of fraternal parties in the other degenerate Workers States as a part of a rebuilt Revolutionary Communist International in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. In these conditions, underground and illegal work is a necessary method.

THE CENTRISTS AND POLAND

12 The international organisations claiming to represent continuity with Trotsky's Fourth International have yet again demonstrated their bankruptcy when it comes to presenting a strategy for Political Revolution. The two largest claimants to Trotsky's mantle, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) and the Fourth International (International Committee), FIIC, offer the spectacle of opportunist grovelling before the existing leadership and consciousness of the Polish workers. On the other hand the International Spartacist Tendency (IST) demonstrates the truth of Trotsky's dictum on sectarianism:- opportunism in fear of itself. In this case, their fear of the "impurities" of the Polish workers' consciousness drives the IST into support for Jaruzelski and the Stalinist bureaucracy.

13 The USFI has in its various statements (1/2/81; 3/4/81; 7/10/81) failed to raise the question of revolution against the bureaucracy. It has failed to pose the need for a revolutionary leadership except as an organisational grouping together of existing tendencies around a series of "minimum measures". The USFI has followed the Polish workers into the blind alley of "self-management" schemes and a Solidarnosc "alternative plan" allowing these to confuse and obscure the question of the political-military dictatorship of the bureaucracy. The logic of self-management or workers control, which ignores the question of political power and control over the state, is necessarily a concession to "market socialism", decentralisation. Syndicalism in a Degenerate Workers' State leads to the strengthening of the operation of the Law of Value and to disarming the workers in the face of the Tito-ite or Kadar-ite wing of the bureaucracy. The complete absence of Trotsky's programme of soviets, of the armed overthrow of the bureaucracy, is reflected in the USFI's bizarre espousal of Solidarnosc's plan for the "free election of a second chamber of the Sejm by all the self-management bodies". This naive utopian scheme is justified in terms of the need to create "dual power bodies". The Stalinists' first chamber would then "see its area of responsibility correspondingly reduced". This lifeless schema, a farcical

parody of February 1917, emasculates the reality of soviets, presenting them as organs of dual power rather than as organs of struggle, or insurrection, for working class power.

The ideas of "free elections" to the Sejm is rejected by the USFI not because of the parliamentary bourgeois democratic illusions it would foster, not because such a parliament could be a focus for restorationist forces, but because "this demand could lead to a confrontation with the bureaucracy on a terrain that is less favourable to the masses than that of self-management". The evolutionary logic of the USFI's position is more brazenly expressed by the SWP(US)'s David Frankel (Intercontinental Press 20/4/81). In quoting Joseph Hansen's definition of the political revolution as "the total series of reforms gained through militant struggle culminating in the transfer of power to the workers", Frankel suggests that this transference itself can only be discovered after the event: "It is only when the process is viewed as a whole, in its origin, its fundamental gains and final results, that it appears for what it really is, a revolution; an organic qualitative change in whatever structure is involved".

Since the qualitative leap (i.e. the point at which revolution has occurred) cannot be pinpointed in advance, it cannot, for the USFI, be programmatically prepared and argued for. Such a position, worthy of a Kautsky or an Otto Bauer, indicates the organic centrism of the USFI's leaders. It explains, but does not excuse, their failure to offer a programme for revolution.

14 The FIIC in contrast seizes on the demand of Solidarnosc radicals for "free elections" and "plurality of parties", and develops this in a bourgeois-democratic direction. Are these elections to be "free" to bourgeois, White-Guard, restorationist forces? Is the plurality of parties to include parties openly organising for counter-revolution? For the FIIC, "democracy" is given no class content. The class rule of the proletariat, its dictatorship, is quietly shuffled to one side. The FIIC may write abstractions on paper, but political life will fill their empty democratic phrases with a real bourgeois content. If the USFI has its "second chamber" of the Sejm, then the FIIC can go one better - a Constituent Assembly.

What is a Constituent Assembly? It is a body elected by universal suffrage which shall decide the constitutional basis of the state. It is potentially a revolutionary (bourgeois) democratic demand. Revolutionary communism makes use of this in capitalist countries where bourgeois democratic tasks (land question, national unity and independence, democratic rights) clash with the conditions of bourgeois, pre-bourgeois or imperialist rule. In such conditions revolutionary communists would pose a revolutionary answer to each of these issues, culminating in the transference of power to the proletariat. In a degenerate workers state the organ to which political power must be passed is an organ of proletarian democracy which will maintain the dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, not an instrument of bourgeois democracy whose only function would be to effect a social counterrevolution. The Polish workers need Soviets, not Parliaments. For a National Congress of Soviets, not a Constituent Assembly!

15 The International Spartacist Tendency, IST, in terror of contamination by Cross-kissing workers (echoing their jibe of "mullah lovers" during the

struggle against the Shah of Iran) have rushed headlong into the embrace of the Polish Stalinists. They accept, without question, Jaruzelski's claim that Solidarnosc was organising a counterrevolutionary rising. They warn the Polish workers against any resistance to martial law. These miserable pedants who can only imagine winning the working class to Trotskyism in the propagandists' schoolroom (i.e. in the absence of struggle) call for a return to Gierek's regime of the 1970s: "If the present crackdown restores something like the tenuous social equilibrium which existed in Poland before the Gdansk strikes last August (1980 - IWG) a tacit understanding that if the people left the government alone, the government would leave the people alone - conditions will be opened again for the crystallisation of a Leninist-Trotskyist party" (Workers Vanguard 18/12/81). They have blood on their hands. Safe at a distance from responsibility they content themselves with the call for the stamping out of political revolution, in order to allow for the "peace and quiet" (of a Stalinist dictatorship...) to allow them to build a "Leninist-Trotskyist" party.

Jaruzelski plots with Grabski. Stalinist butchers, hypocrites, display Lenin's picture



16 Thus the self-proclaimed inheritors of Trotsky's banner drag it in the mud of syndicalism, reformism and stalinism. Against this monstrous defamation of Trotsky, we fight around the slogans:

- * Down with Jaruzelski's military-Bonapartist regime!
- * Power to workers councils in Poland!
- * Defend the statification of the means of production, the monopoly of foreign trade and the centralised plan!
- * Revise and democratise the plan from top to bottom in the interests of the proletariat and the working peasantry!
- * No bloc with the priesthood, the mortal enemies of democracy and socialism!
- * Defend the secular basis of the workers state - the rights of women against clerical obscurantism!
- * For a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party of the Polish workers!
- * For international solidarity with the Polish workers' organisations and the worker victims of Jaruzelski's repression!
- * Black all imports from Poland whilst the repression continues!
- * No unity with the Imperialist or White Guard false friends of the Polish workers! Defend the USSR!

SOCIALISTS AND REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISTS

The building of principled alliances between socialists and anti-imperialists has been a major tactical concern of the IWG since its formation, one we believe to be crucial for revolutionaries in exceptional circumstances of struggle not only in Ireland in the present war but in El Salvador and previously in Nicaragua etc. Since the present offensive against British Imperialism opened up twelve years ago and quickly came under the dominance of the petty bourgeois Republican movement the IWG has raised the slogan for a United Front Against Imperialism of workers, socialists and republicans. Throughout that period, however, all of the campaign organisations involving the revolutionary nationalist Republicans and "far left" organisations were in fact living denials of what for revolutionary socialists a United Front must be.

This article discusses this crucial tactic in the light of how it was formulated and understood by the greatest leaders and parties of revolutionary socialism in this century and how it is crudely misused by socialists whose record of "alliance" with nationalist forces has negated its very purpose.

This key issue of making gains for the independent socialist programme in united front action with revolutionary nationalists is at the heart of any struggle against the allies of imperialism who masquerade as socialists within the labour movement. The so-called socialists of the Irish Labour Party and of SFWP, and the groups around two-nationist Jim Kemmy T.D. claim that it is precisely the national struggle that is responsible for the liquidation of the fight for socialism in Ireland ever since Connolly's proletarian banner went under the Green flag in the 1916 Rising.

The exact opposite is the case; for, the impotence of these currents (best expressed in the stunted and deformed Labour Party) stems directly from their profoundly wrong and counter-revolutionary attitude to the anti-imperialist struggle which has thus, only by default of a conscious workers' leadership, remained historically in the grip of conspiratorial petty bourgeois revolutionary nationalists. The preponderance of the Green flag over the Red was in fact noted by Trotsky in an article in July 1916 in 'Nashe Slovo':

"The young Irish working class, coming into existence as it did in the atmosphere saturated with the heroic traditions of national revolt and clashing with the egotistically limited and imperially arrogant trade unionism of Britain, has naturally wavered between nationalism and syndicalism, and is always ready to link these two conceptions together in its revolutionary consciousness. It has attracted to itself the younger intelligentsia and some nationalist enthusiasts, who in their turn have ensured the preponderance, in the working class movement, of the green flag over the red."

But Trotsky notes the essential fact that it is not a revolutionary bourgeoisie but a movement of the exploited that constitutes the social force of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland:

"Thus, the national revolution in Ireland has amounted, in practice, to a revolt of the workers, and Casement's clearly isolated position in the movement merely emphasises this fact more sharply."...

"The experiment of an Irish national rebellion, in which Casement, with undoubted personal courage represented obsolete hopes and outdated methods, is over. But the historical role of the Irish proletariat is only just beginning. Already it has brought into revolt, even though under an archaic flag, its class indignation against militarism and imperialism. This indignation will not now subside."

The official misleaders of the Irish working class movement, however, have fed on the division of the class as a prop for their handsomely rewarded collaboration with imperialist capitalism since that rebellion was aborted by Partition. While it is not the purpose here to show that the struggle to end Partition remains the central political task for a revolutionary proletariat, it can be said of the self styled socialists who claim otherwise that their treachery to the working class is more nakedly exposed now than ever in their trade union bureaucracies, their Labour Party and parliamentary oracles, Browne, Kemmy and Sherlock acting as lackeys of Thatcher and Fitzgerald. However, in doing battle with those pro-partition currents who masquerade as "socialists" in the working class movement and in order to win youth and women and the militants of a working class that increasingly despises petty bourgeois Catholic nationalism, especially in the South, it is vital for Trotskyists to make no concession whatever whereby they would lower the red flag in favour of the green; and only a correct use of united front tactics in struggling alongside Republicanism can preserve the independence of the proletarian banner and open the road to its victory.

Among those styling themselves Trotskyists there are socialist groups active in the anti-imperialist struggle who in practice all capitulate to petty bourgeois revolutionary nationalism in an opportunist way, yet all of whom paradoxically share with us the correct claim that only an independent revolutionary socialist mass workers party can be relied upon to take the national struggle to completion and overturn capitalism. The League for a Workers Republic, Irish affiliate of the Paris-based Lambertists (OCI), the Peoples Democracy which after three years of dithering has affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI),

and the Socialist Workers Movement, affiliate of the SWP in Britain - all openly opposed IWG's fight for the tactic of the anti-imperialist United Front and in all cases for opportunist reasons linked to wrong ideas and theories about the tactic and method of the United Front. In the fight to re-elaborate the

revolutionary programme as the basis of principled revolutionary regroupment it is important to confront directly their ideas and theories when we discuss in the second half of this article how the tactic has been argued in the Irish situation in relation to the Provisional Republican movement.

Anti-Imperialist United Front

THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION AND
THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST UNITED FRONT

The "United Front" is historically a tactic put forward by revolutionary Marxists in struggle. It is a principled tactic subordinated always to the programme and strategy for workers power. As a tactic it is proposed by revolutionaries precisely and only as the means to defend and advance the independent class interests of the working class in situations which concretely impose the need for fighting mass unity in action in the form of unity of different parties and organisations. In fact its central feature is an agreement reached between different parties or organisations, which have different programmes, to ACT jointly in specific concrete struggles. Thus, concretely the United Front may take varied forms but that is in no way to dignify all forms of "unity" with the name of United Front. The history of workers' struggles is stained again and again with blocs proposed by Stalinists and reformists which have resulted directly in defeat after defeat and in the massacre of workers, such as in China in 1927, Germany 1933, or Chile 1973.

The general principles of permissible united fronts were nevertheless outlined with crystal clarity by Lenin, the early Communist International and Trotsky, especially in relation to anti-imperialist struggles.

(The Communist International - also called the Comintern and the Third International - was organised under Lenin's leadership as the revolutionary successor of the Second International. In Lenin's time, the World Congress was held once a year - the First in 1919, the Second in 1920, the Third in 1921 and the Fourth in 1922 - despite the civil war and insecurity of the Soviet Union. Trotsky regarded the theses of the Comintern's first four congresses as part of the programmatic cornerstone of the Left Opposition and later the Fourth International. Stalin's machine was already in control by the Fifth Congress in 1924 and the 1935 Seventh Congress definitively marked his treachery to the world's working class.)

Examining this revolutionary legacy enables us to grasp the principled general method whereby revolutionaries can creatively apply united front tactics in new situations and specifically in the struggle to end imperialism in Ireland.

First, the United Front is seen as an internal necessity arising in the class struggle which Marxists raise to the level of a conscious tactical task. It meets the need and responds to the desire of the masses for a fighting unity in action where communists are not in a position alone to unite the masses.



The Fourth Congress codified this key aspect in the following (from Degras, Documents of the Comintern, Vol. 2 p.425).

"The most important thing in the united front tactic is and remains the agitational and organisational rallying of the working masses. Its true realisation can only come 'from below' from the depths of the working masses themselves".

Second, the United Front is a tactic that comes into use when revolutionary communists are not in a position to directly unite the worker or anti-imperialist masses of workers and other oppressed such as the peasantry around their own programme as such, because big and crucial sections of these masses still have faith in their reformist and bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalist leaders. Further, in these conditions the United Front is an indispensable tactic for bringing revolutionary Marxists into the leadership of the masses. Trotsky

was codifying this principle in the following contribution to the debates of the Congresses (Trotsky, *First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 1, p.425).

"Does the United Front extend only to the working masses or does it also include the opportunist leaders? The very posing of this question is a product of misunderstanding. If we were able to unite the working masses around our banner or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organisations, whether party or Trade Union, that would of course be the best thing in the world. But then the very question of the United Front would not arise in its present form".

Third, though the United Front is an essential general tactic of the communist programme it is subordinate to the strategy for workers' power. In any United Front opportunists and centrists who waver between opportunism and Marxism will argue that communist criticisms must cease in the interest of "unity in action" round the few agreed demands. For revolutionary communists to accept this would be to accept that the immediate struggles should take place within the blinkered limits desired by those forces whose programme has set reformist limits in advance to the struggle. This would be nothing less than to jettison the transitional method of revolutionary communism which refuses all such limits and fights in all partial and immediate struggles to raise the masses to the level of the struggle for workers' power.

Here is how the Comintern expresses the principle of the political and organisational independence of the communists in the Front from every other organisation (Executive Directives on the United Front, 18 Dec. 1921):

"...absolute independence of every Communist Party which enters into an agreement with the parties of the Second and Second and a Half Internationals, its complete freedom to put forward its own views and to criticise the opponents of communism. While accepting a basis for action, Communists must retain the unconditional right and the possibility of expressing their opinion of the policy of all working class organisations without exception, not only before and after action has been taken, but also if necessary, during its course. In no circumstances can these rights be surrendered."

In the debate on the National Question at the Second Congress in July 1920 Lenin presented a set of Theses which were adopted by the Congress and in which he addressed the tasks of the Comintern with regard to bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties in the colonial countries. In these theses Lenin touched on issues raised by the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front and formulated the need for absolute independence of the working class and the communist parties in the context of joint action with bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces against imperialist oppression. (From Degras, Vol 1. p143-4)

"The Comintern has the duty of supporting the revolutionary movement in the colonies and backward countries only with the object of rallying the constituent elements of the future proletarian parties - which will be truly communist and not only in name - in all the backward countries and educating them to a consciousness of their special

task, namely that of fighting against the bourgeois democratic trend in their own nation. The Comintern should collaborate provisionally with the revolutionary movement of the colonies and backward countries and even form an alliance with it, but it must not amalgamate with it; it must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is only in an embryonic stage".

THE BOURGEOISIE OF THE IMPERIALISED COUNTRIES

In his theses to the Second Congress of the Comintern Lenin outlined the reason why the bourgeois nationalists, if they happen to get involved in an anti-imperialist united front, have to be as carefully watched as an enemy (Collected Works, Vol 31 p.242):

"There has been a certain rapprochement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often - perhaps even in most cases - the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie i.e. joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes."

The rapprochement referred to here by Lenin in 1920 has tended to intensify throughout this century as the specific laws of motion of the epoch of Imperialism unfolded, intensifying national oppression and national liberation wars. Specifically, in Semi-Colonial Ireland today the Southern bourgeoisie, prostrate to imperialism economically, has no compelling material interest in opposing imperialism's division of the country. Utopians such as SFWP correctly observe the fecklessness of the bourgeoisie but use idealist notions to wrongly "explain" it as the result of a historical unwillingness to develop, i.e. as an ideological backwardness, instead of seeing it in terms of its material basis in British imperialism which crudely sabotaged the developing bourgeoisie, crushed its revolution of 1798 and ever afterwards maintained its imperialist domination.

It was in the "Theses on the Eastern Question" adopted at the Fourth Comintern Congress that the most explicit formulations on the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front occur. The following is a basic statement from these theses on the tactic and on its centrality as a tactic in the communist programme in oppressed nations (Degras. p 390):

"In the conditions prevailing in the West, where the transitional period is characterised by an organised gathering of forces, the slogan put forward is that of the proletarian united front; but in the colonial East the slogan that must be emphasised is that of the anti-imperialist united front. The expediency of this slogan follows from the prospect of a prolonged and protracted struggle with world imperialism which demands the mobilisation of all revolutionary elements. This mobilisation is all the more necessary as the indigenous ruling classes are inclined to effect compromises with foreign capital directed against the interests of the masses of the people. And just as in the West the slogan of the proletarian united front has helped and is still helping to

expose social democratic betrayal of proletarian interests, so the slogan of the anti-imperialist united front will help to expose the vacillations of the various bourgeois nationalist groups."

The following principles are outlined by the Fourth Congress as guidelines for revolutionary communists in operating the anti-imperialist united front tactic. In the following terms it emphasises that communists must use the tactic to bring the proletariat to the head of the anti-imperialist struggle (Degras):

"The objective tasks of the colonial revolution go beyond the limits of bourgeois democracy, if only because a decisive victory of this revolution is incompatible with the rule of world imperialism. At first, the indigenous bourgeoisie and intelligentsia are the champions of the colonial revolutionary movements, but as the proletarian and semi-proletarian peasant masses are drawn in, the bourgeois and bourgeois-agrarian elements begin to turn away from the movement in proportion as the social interests of the lower classes come to the forefront. There is a long struggle ahead of the proletariat in the colonies, a struggle covering an entire historical epoch against imperialist exploitation and their own ruling classes who are trying to monopolise and keep to themselves all the advantages of cultural and industrial development, while keeping the broad working masses firmly in their 'pre-historic' condition. This struggle for influence over the peasant masses must serve the indigenous proletariat as training for the part of political leadership".

Fundamental is that there should be no holding back of the most revolutionary methods for the sake of involving the bourgeois nationalists. (Degras p.389):

"Equally injurious is the attempt to remain aloof from the struggles for the most urgent and everyday interests of the working class in the name of 'national unity' and 'civil peace' with bourgeois democrats. The communist parties of the colonial and semi-colonial countries have a dual task. They fight for the most radical possible solution of the task of the bourgeois democratic revolution, which aims at the conquest of political independence; and they organise the working class and peasant masses for the struggle for their special class interests and in doing so exploit all the contradictions in the nationalist bourgeois democratic camp".

If the bourgeoisie are drawn into the action of the anti-imperialist united front episodically, due to the depth and pressure of the mass action by the Front and the demands it places on them, communists must fight against any restriction of freedom of action or speech for themselves or for the worker and peasant masses with the aim of accommodating them. And when the internal dynamic of the anti-imperialist struggle brings workers into direct clash with the bosses whom the bourgeois nationalist parties directly represent e.g. when workers fight to force such bosses to pay them during industrial action or to cancel disciplinary measures imposed for their involvement in strikes called by the Front communists must support such workers to the hilt, leading them on to deepen and extend such action even if the direct result is that the bourgeois nationalists in the front desert it.

THE ANTI IMPERIALIST UNITED FRONT IN TROTSKY'S CHINA WRITINGS

One of the richest sources of Trotsky's ideas on the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front is his writings on China. Trotsky lays the basis for his views of the tactic by an analysis of the colonial bourgeoisie. His most concise expression of this analysis is in his 'Summary and Perspectives of the Chinese Revolution', June 1928. First, Trotsky rejects the Stalin-Bukharin thesis that imperialism mechanically welds all the classes in China (or any imperialised country) together from without, thus imparting an "immanent revolutionary spirit" to the colonial bourgeoisie: ("Third International After Lenin", p. 172)

"To present matters as if there must inevitably flow from the fact of colonial oppression the revolutionary character of the national bourgeoisie, is to reproduce inside out the fundamental error of Menshivism, which held that the revolutionary nature of the Russian bourgeoisie must flow from the oppression of feudalism and the autocracy." This thesis is elaborated in his "The Chinese Revolution and the Theses of Comrade Stalin", the essence of which is in the following: (Trotsky on China p.161)

"It is a gross mistake to think that Imperialism mechanically welds together all the classes of China from without. This is the position of Kadet, Tai Chi-Tao but in no wise ours. The revolutionary struggle against imperialism does not weaken, but rather strengthens the political differentiation of the classes. Imperialism is a highly powerful force in the internal relations of China. The main source of this force is not the warships in the waters of the Yangtze Kiang - they are only auxiliaries - but the economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie".



Because the anti-imperialist struggle heightens the conflict of classes in colonial countries the colonial bourgeoisie finds itself, time and again, forced to reach out abroad for help from one or another imperialism; and at home to link hands with feudal and reactionary forces (such as the Church in Ireland).

From these positions flows the principle of putting no trust at all in the colonial bourgeoisie or its parties and absolute independence of them for communists and the proletariat: ('Third International After Lenin' - Trotsky, p.168-9)

"The sole condition for every agreement with the bourgeoisie, for each separate, practical and expedient agreement adapted to each given case, consists in not allowing either the organisations or banners to get mixed, directly or indirectly, for a single day or a single hour; it consists in distinguishing between the Red and the Blue (the colour of the Kuomintang flag - IWG) and in not believing for an instant in the capacity or readiness of the bourgeoisie either to lead a genuine struggle against imperialism or not to obstruct the workers and peasants."

These positions should not lead us to the undialectical view that the colonial bourgeoisie is not capable of ever joining the camp of national revolution. It may be forced to do so by the depth of anti-imperialist mobilisation in order to attempt to preserve its hold on the masses, in which case correct tactics rigorously subordinated to the right strategy - Permanent Revolution - can mean big political gains for revolutionary communism.

"But the bourgeoisie can go over 'definitely to the counter-revolutionary camp', that is, free itself from the necessity of 'supporting' the revolution again or at least of flirting with it, only in the event that its fundamental class aspirations are satisfied either by revolutionary means or in another way, (for instance the Bismarckian way).

"Can anyone maintain that the revolution of 1925-1927 has at least partly satisfied the basic interests of Chinese capitalism? No. China is today just as far removed from real national unity and from tariff autonomy as it was prior to 1925. Yet, the creation of a unified domestic market and its protection from cheaper foreign goods is a life-and-death question for the Chinese bourgeoisie, a question second in importance only to that of maintaining the basis of its class domination over the proletariat and the peasant poor. But, for the Japanese and the British bourgeoisie the maintenance of the colonial status of China is likewise a question of no less importance than economic autonomy is for the Chinese bourgeoisie. That is why there will still be not a few Leftward zigzags in the policy of the Chinese bourgeoisie. ... To tell the Chinese communists today that their alliance with the bourgeoisie from 1924 to the end of 1927 was correct but that it is worthless now because the bourgeoisie has definitely gone over to the counter-revolutionary camp, is to disarm the Chinese communists once again in face of the coming objective changes in the situation and the inevitable leftward zigzags of the Chinese bourgeoisie" (Third International After Lenin p177).

NO RESERVED SEAT FOR THE NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE

To show this we will take the second Chinese revolution, which broke out in central and south China in May 1925 and lasted till Chiang Kai Shek's second coup on April 12th 1927. Trotsky held that a united front with the whole KMT (Kuomintang, bourgeois nationalists) was the correct tactic up till

Chiang's first coup in Canton on March 20th 1926. It was in order to prepare for such an anti-imperialist united front and for the whole permanent revolution strategy to which he saw it subordinated that Trotsky fought fiercely within the Executive of the Comintern for full independence of the Chinese Communist Party from the Kuomintang. Trotsky advanced as the platform Chinese communists should propose for such a front

- (i) the transfer of all the land to the peasant poor
- (ii) joint action, civilian and military against the Northern warlords, for a united China
- (iii) the eight hour day.

As a result of his first coup in Canton in March 1926 Chiang partially established himself as a military Bonapartist dictator. In this changed context the applicability of the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front with the whole KMT was at an end. Trotsky advocated a united front of Chinese communists with the LEFT KMT including its military sections. This was on the model of the Kerensky-Menshevik-Bolshevik united front against Kornilov in 1917.

Trotsky also argued for a rapid expansion of military units under Communist Party control and a general arming of workers and peasants. The aim was to take Chinese workers and peasants a qualitatively new step forward to power through a mass armed crushing of Chiang's coup. However, so great was the mass tidal wave of revolution in China against the warlords and for national unity that Chiang was forced to mount an expeditionary war against the North China warlords three months after his Canton coup. Chiang's expedition set out in July 1926. In this context the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front with the whole KMT became operative again.

Trotsky viewed the armed anti-imperialist united front as the main form the tactic must take in these circumstances. His basic position was as follows - Participate in the military struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai Shek to prepare politically the overthrow of Chiang Kai Shek. This meant unconditional independence on the part of the Communist Party from the Kuomintang and no restrictions on its freedom of speech or action. This was indispensable to enable the Communists to directly mobilise workers, peasants and soldiers in soviets to win them to the strategy of permanent revolution while exposing every vacillation of the KMT before the masses. The overriding aim was to unmoor masses of workers, peasants and soldiers from the KMT, to win them to the side of the Communists and to mobilise them for mass armed insurrection with the aim of winning Chinese independence through the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry as a step to international socialism.

If no concessions of principle are made by communists the fact that the bourgeois nationalists are forced to get involved can have positive effects. It can contribute crucially to the destruction of their political hold over important sections of the labouring masses.

Trotsky and the Left Opposition, as we have seen, fought for an ARMED anti-imperialist united front of the KMT, the Chinese Communist Party and the mass organisations of workers and peasants when Chiang was forced by the pressure of the masses to mobilise the Northern Expedition in 1926; and again in 1935 when the Japanese invasion of China forced the KMT into a war of national liberation. It was in

such contexts that he argued for the need for the Communists and an anti-imperialist united front to place a set of specific demands on the KMT. Examples of such demands were:

1. For the KMT to enforce a steeply progressive tax on the rich to finance and properly equip the national liberation war.
2. For the KMT to open the arsenals to the workers and peasant masses.
3. For the KMT to hand over the big landholdings to the peasant committees to win them to the war.

Such demands were always envisaged by Trotsky and the Opposition with the rider - 'No holding back for the KMT to act!' and the demands to be placed expressed burning needs of the labouring masses and helped to expose the bourgeois nationalist leaders as foot-draggers on urgent bourgeois democratic tasks.

CHINA AND THE UNITED FRONT BETWEEN 1927 AND 1935

Due to the treacherous insistence by Stalin's Comintern on subordinating the Chinese Communist Party to an alliance with the KMT in which the Party was forbidden to fight independently for its class programme of social revolution, Chiang was able to move openly, in the full light of day, to organise a reactionary alliance against the working class and peasant movement. Chiang's second coup in April 1927 involved the massacre of the proletarian vanguard and established him as a full-blown military Bonapartist dictator. The stability of Chiang's rule built on the butchery of the workers and the bloody suppression of the Chinese Communist Party had to be radically distinguished, in Trotsky's view, from the situation of revolutionary upsurge in 1926-27. Tactics had to change accordingly, dictating the need to build a united front of workers, communists and peasants (but not the KMT) for key democratic demands initially.

As Trotsky viewed it Chinese workers and peasants would recover from the effects of the repression and massacres perpetrated by Chiang's dictatorship by regrouping around demands against repression, for freedoms of speech, assembly and strike; for the 8 hour day; demands which had their capstone in the fight for a sovereign revolutionary Constituent Assembly, elected by secret, universal and adult suffrage, and free from any bans or proscriptions by Chiang's dictatorship. The front to fight for these demands would be an anti-imperialist front but with a platform swivelled to the radically changed situation after April 1927.

The fight to regroup the masses around democratic demands was viewed dialectically by Trotsky.

As such it did not exclude but rather led naturally to other key revolutionary demands such as the arming of workers and peasants. As Trotsky saw it the fight for workers' and peasants' militias would have to be linked to the Revolutionary Constituent Assembly demand by communists pointing out that any Constituent Assembly would be totally at the mercy of the bourgeoisie if monopoly of the arms remained in the hands of the bourgeois army. Clearly there was now no question of the involvement, in the united front, of the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang Party or leaders who were functioning as a military bonapartist dictatorship which was reversing all the gains made by workers and peasants in the 1925-27 period.

CONCLUSION

Notice that Trotsky's handling of the tactic combines the greatest flexibility in relation to the moves of the bourgeois nationalists in the changing course of the class struggle with the greatest intransigence against any concessions to them that could inhibit the fight by communists among the workers and peasants for the strategy of permanent revolution. It is not the fact of involvement of bourgeois nationalists in the front that is the issue for him but the form and manner of their involvement.

The legacy of Lenin, the Comintern and Trotsky on the fight against imperialism is thus an uncompromising fight for the proletarian revolution at all times. The use of the AIUF tactic is at all times subordinated to that strategic goal. In the vastly changed circumstances of the present period of imperialist capitalism it is the principles embodied in their method that Marxists must grasp in dealing with struggles in which increasingly the torch of anti-imperialist struggle is carried by petty bourgeois movements in the semi-colonies of world capitalism.

Trotsky lays down the method of deciding the nature of the colonial bourgeoisie in terms of the dynamics of the class struggle nationally and worldwide: (Trotsky on China, p.172)

"The question of the nature of the policy of the bourgeoisie is settled by the entire internal class structure of the nation waging the revolutionary struggle; by the historical epoch in which that struggle develops; by the degree of economic, political and military dependence of the national bourgeoisie on world imperialism as a whole or a particular section of it; and finally, and this is most important, by the degree of class activity of the native proletariat and by the state of its connections with the international revolutionary movement".

IRELAND, UNITED FRONTS AND THE I.W.G.

Imperialist domination is crystallised in Ireland in Partition which divides the country into two backward bourgeois states, one combining advanced capitalism and social backwardness and semi-colonial in its subordination to British and U.S. capital. The other is a colonial enclave in which British and bourgeois Unionist rule has been maintained through the ideological enslavement to sectarian loyalism of the Protestant workers. For these the Unionist regime has traditionally reserved preference in housing and jobs, the effective right

to bear arms against their Catholic neighbours in the uniform of the police reserves, UDR etc., identifying Ulster as their Protestant state. In the last analysis its existence is guaranteed by the military machine of British capitalism.

In the Six County statelet the nationalist minority, oppressed and discriminated against, is consciously anti-Unionist. Its social needs are incompatible with the continued existence of that state and cannot be satisfied by democratic reform within it.

Thus for the anti-Unionists, national unity and independence from Britain are the path to ending their oppression.

In the South, however, the continuing aspiration for national unity in all classes sustains a merely rhetorical opposition to the Northern State, expressed mainly by the dominant populist bourgeois party, the economically dependent Southern bourgeoisie has no compelling material interest in resolving the incomplete national revolution which produced its "Free State" and Republic. Less still can they risk a solution by mass action from below which would mobilise the socially dominant working class. That any such upsurge must be contained by the Green bourgeoisie is made clear in their repeated assaults on revolutionary nationalists and in their rhetorical manoeuvres to defuse popular sentiment when episodically roused by events such as the assault on the Civil Rights movement, the Bloody Sunday massacre and Thatcher's murder of the hunger strikers. For revolutionary socialists the key tactics with regard to all concrete manifestations of imperialism must be those which unite and mobilise the majority of the working class against political repression North and South and against the British Army in the North, so as to identify imperialism in the consciousness of not only the Northern but also the Southern workers as the enemy that exploits them economically but for that very reason has divided their class, poisoning it with sectarianism and doubly oppressing one section of it. In other words, socialists must put to the fore all the independent class methods of the Workers United Front.

The specific tactical method of the AIUF is additionally a necessity imposed in specific periods when the petty bourgeois revolutionary nationalists capture the leadership of active mass revolt against Partition such as it has done continuously in the North since 1971. The continued ability of that political tradition to capture the leadership of the anti-Unionist working class in the North is not because it represents any socially dominant mass of petty bourgeois or peasantry for whom national unity and independence would solve major social needs. Its roots are most concentrated in the anti-Unionist petty bourgeoisie in the rural areas and urban ghettos of the North. In the latter it is the working class that dominates, with its employed mostly organised in trade unions. In such conditions the Revolutionary Nationalist republicans can dominate the upsurges of the anti-Unionist working class only because there does not exist and has not existed since Connolly any labour movement leadership prepared to mobilise workers against imperialism. The Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy express their reformist commitment to the bourgeois order (within which they bargain with capital) by explicitly accepting the frameworks of the Southern Parliament and the Northern State. The surface appearance of all-Ireland trade union unity covers a division of the class which subordinates it to the Orange bourgeoisie in the North, the Green bourgeoisie in the South.

Thus in periods such as the present struggle begun by the 1969-72 revolt of the anti-Unionist workers, the fight must be to force on the Republicans the demand for a united front of workers socialists and republicans. That is the means, and the only means, of addressing the deeply felt need for unity in action against imperialism. Within such a front, crucially, the revolutionaries can thus



openly challenge the perspectives, strategy and methods of the Republicans and argue for the revolutionary Marxist programme as the basis for rallying a conscious proletarian vanguard and creating the nucleus of the Trotskyist party.

In the South where, despite the continuous war in the North, the working class was consciously roused only partially and episodically, the fight for independent united fronts in action of workers against repression and in solidarity with the Northern Minority could not be argued at such moments as excluding the Republicans given that the Republicans were the only force at those moments actually mobilising workers (along with petty bourgeois sections). It was thus necessary to propose also in the South the united front of workers, socialists and republicans as the means of mobilising workers to enter into struggle alongside the Republicans while preserving the precious independence of their organisations. Failure to do so at a time when Republicanism was already mobilising workers under petty bourgeois leadership would be to turn away from the fight for the organisational and political independence of those important sections of the class. In the South, however, the working class nowhere sees the Provisionals as a defence force, as do the anti-Unionist ghettos, against armed attack, so that mobilised sections of workers more readily go beyond any limits set by Republicanism on their action.

Such developments, as a matter of principle, must be championed by revolutionary socialists, for it is a matter of PRINCIPLE that the action of workers organised independently around a proletarian programme can never be held back or subordinated to the fight for any form of anti-imperialist united front with non-working class forces. To say otherwise in the conditions of Ireland would be to turn away from the struggle - for the republicans consistently reject all proposals for genuine united fronts - or to criminally subordinate the red banner to the green flag of class-collaborationist fronts making NATIONALIST propaganda.

WHAT I.W.G. FOUGHT FOR

In issue after issue of *Class Struggle* the IWG spelt out the evidence of how the "unity" entailed in the alliances between socialists and Republicans in that period was an organisational unity in campaigns which made NATIONALIST propaganda and mobilised public protests. Thus the socialists within them never sought to mobilise the power of independent proletarian action nor won the democratic right to argue for the revolutionary working class programme before the masses within the campaigns. In all cases, too, the conspiratorial armed struggle by the Provisionals continued completely without relation to the various "mass campaigns". Not only was the armed struggle carried on independently but even its most counterproductive features - especially the bombing campaign since 1972 - were systematically excluded from discussion in all campaign conferences. So too was the question of those campaigns ever attempting to physically defend themselves.

The record of McAliskey at the 1978 Coalisland Political Status and of the PD lefts in helping to construct such nationalist fronts and specifically McAliskey in ruling out from the chair the right to make criticisms was documented in *Class Struggle*.

IWG, as against this, argued that United Fronts are agreements between different parties having different programmes but in which:

"Each organisation (i) retains intact its entire programme; (ii) retains its right to put it forward; (iii) retains the right to criticise other organisations in the United Front agreement, in general for their anti-working class perspectives, their incorrect tactics, their ideological backwardness or their failure to carry out properly the United Front Agreement.

"Therefore in the United Front each organisation guards its full independence while at the same time the widest possible unity can be achieved for carrying through actions objectively made necessary by the circumstances of the struggle. Through it the widest possible forces are organised and at the same time the masses are given the opportunity to debate, discuss and compare in action the worth, dependability of the ideas and methods of the various organisations and parties which strive for their allegiance. The United Front, therefore, is the means whereby revolutionary Marxists fight for access for their ideas and methods in the broad mass arena - thus it is a method for confronting politically and ideologically the anti- or non-working class tactics and strategy, ideas and methods still holding sway over the working class, on the principled basis that only a Marxist programme can represent correctly the historic interests of the working class against capitalism and imperialism, and for socialism, in Ireland and elsewhere." ...

"In the situation in the North traditional republicanism represents the most serious obstacle to the creation of a truly internationalist working class perspective and of the Party crystallised in the fight for workers' power in Ireland. It is for that reason above all that traditional republicanism will oppose tooth and nail the creation of genuine United Fronts because it, unlike the so-called Marxist left, recognises that such fronts would, if set up, be the basis for a real political challenge to the domination of traditional republicanism in the North, politically, ideologically and militarily."

While bitterly attacking the IWG's fight for the United Front of Republicans, workers and socialists, the Republican movement coined ever new phrases to latch into the keenly felt need for mass unity. "Broad Front" was the most used term, but in the last months of the H-Block campaign the Provisionals and McAliskey put forward the slogan for a "United Nationalist Front" - an accurate name for all the procession of fronts and attempted fronts in the past 6 years, for all were nothing more than nationalist in the programme and perspectives which defined them. How revolutionary socialists should have related to them cannot be answered without a correct understanding of united front tactics.

In practice, wherever those campaigns called genuine action IWG supported it. When they mobilised masses in protests the IWG argued with its leaflets for the kind of action we believed could build a proletarian anti-imperialist fight that could go on to real victories and to argue as the perspective for that struggle the fight for an all-Ireland Workers Republic.

Concretely, too, IWG fought for the independent building of the Trade Union Campaign against Repression, fully agreeing that TUCAR should join in principled unity of action with the RACs and Republicans. In the wake of the 1978 Coalisland Conference the issue of United Front alliances was sharply debated in TUCAR between PD, LWR, SWM and IWG and subsequently in articles published in the *Class Struggle* and the far left press.

Three years and a half later the record of the National H-Block Campaign and the role of the same Centrists in it have underlined both how little they have learned and how central is a correct understanding of united front tactics, not least in dealing with illusions in bourgeois nationalists such as the IIP, SDLP and Fianna Fail. It was precisely to preserve its umbilical cord to the bourgeois nationalists that the Republican dominated campaign rejected the fight for independent working class political strike action. Even while failing utterly to "win over" ANY substantial section of bourgeois nationalist forces it preferred to explicitly "reserve a seat" for these enemies within its leadership. Only the fight for the proletarian orientation and the democratic forms (without restriction on criticism) that are central to the United Front offered any means of challenging that class collaboration which destroyed the chance of saving the hunger strikers. How then could the centrists justify their attack on our fight for United Front principles in the battle for political status?

L.W.R. - ABSTRACTIONS

LEAD TO OPPORTUNISM

In "Workers Republic" no.68, March 1978 in its analysis of the Coalisland Conference on Political Status the LWR state (p. 16): "To start with, the tactic of the united front against imperialism as outlined by the Communist International does not apply to Ireland to-day for a number of reasons." Of course the Ireland of to-day is not the China of the twenties and thirties. Clearly it is a specific case which in all its concreteness inevitably raises new problems of application of the United Front slogan. However it is no use to simply compare Ireland to-day and the far East colonies of the Comintern's period and conclude that the tactical method of the AIUF slogan elaborated is not to be reapplied here.

How does the LWR go on to "explain" its abstract position? What are the "reasons"? WR No. 68: "Nationalism and nationalist organisations exist in Ireland to-day ONLY because of the treachery of the leadership of the labour movement which refused to lead the working class against imperialism. There is, as yet, no Marxist organisation with a mass following among the working class, a condition for the creation of the anti-imperialist united front."...

"...to-day it is possible to conceive of a large section of the working class breaking from its reformist leadership and fighting with the revolutionary republicans for a withdrawal of British troops and an all-Ireland Constituent Assembly, but such a movement does not yet exist." ...

"But the main condition for an anti-imperialist united front is the organisation of a politically independent, revolutionary movement in the working class. ... Yet not only the independence, but the relative weight, of the working class forces is decisive for the participation of revolutionaries in a united front, or even in a temporary, tactical bloc. As Trotsky wrote in relation to governmental blocs and the Chinese revolution, 'A bloc depends on the relationship of forces; if I am the stronger I can use it to my purposes; if I am the weaker I become a tool'. - (Leon Trotsky on China, p557)." -LWR in WR 68 p17.

In examining this position of the LWR (which opportunism led them to utterly contradict during the H Block Hunger Strikes) it is important in advance to note that the quotation from Trotsky on "blocs" is cynically misused to appear as a general warning about blocs in which revolutionaries might be the smaller force. Seen in context it is clear Trotsky was in no way implying that because revolutionaries might be weaker that they would thus be 'used' in any 'bloc' with more powerful forces. He was speaking about war-time alliances between states. To say or imply that the fight for the united front slogan should wait until the revolutionaries can place themselves at the head of a proletarian force with "relative weight" in the proposed alliance would be to contradict the whole revolutionary Marxist understanding of united front tactics and in many cases to discard the tactic permanently in advance.

But if there were already a "large section of the working class breaking with its reformist leadership" engaged in the anti-imperialist struggle as a "politically independent revolutionary movement", then the slogan for the AIUF would no longer be of much importance. Why? Precisely because such proletarian forces would already have been won away from the Republicans who have no other substantial class force behind them and whose continued domination of the struggle is so exactly explained by the LWR themselves, i.e.

"because of the treachery of the leadership of the labour movement which refused to lead the working class against imperialism".

Lacking the fighting weapon of a conscious united front tactic the LWR was stranded with its own abstract perspectives which portrayed the traitorous Goliath of the labour bureaucracy reeling under the well slung pebbles of the LWR's David, i.e. its "International Campaign against Repression". Once exposed for their collaboration with imperialism the bureaucracy would no longer throttle the rank and file workers who would then display their inherent readiness to battle against Partition, undeterred by the years of bourgeois ideological offensive which

had exploited every propaganda advantage of the Provisionals' counterproductively elitist use of military tactics over 10 years.

In the undialectical 'schema' of the LWR the revolutionaries withhold the AIUF slogan until the 'process' of history has created a ready made self-consciously proletarian component for such a front. When it 'emerges' they then place themselves at the head of it within the AIUF as the appropriate conscious leadership as if by magic in an abstract schema of events.

Thus, three years after laying down their scholastic preconditions for raising the AIUF slogan, the LWR pirouetted and effectively proclaimed that they were already building it! For, in the interval between the hunger strikes LWR's Healy was reported as follows by the paper of his fraternal group in Britain at their London meeting of 28 Feb 1980:

"Healy said the LWR's intervention in the Hunger strike manifestations was conducted "as a disciplined section of the ... FI(IC) and was based on the political gains made in preparing the World Conference". .. (Dec. '80 - IWG.) He laid great stress on the method of the FI(IC)'s Theses, an application of which was the "fight for the anti-imperialist united front shoulder to shoulder with the revolutionary nationalists of the Republican movement".

"Comrade Healy described how the LWR 'organised with the revolutionary Republicans, what the Pablotites said could not be done. We were able to get strike action and to organise against all wings of the trade union bureaucracy, stalinist and social democratic'. The LWR opposed those who made appeals to the liberal wing of the national bourgeoisie." (Socialist Newsletter, No. 14, 21/3/81)

The reality of LWR's part in the H-Block Campaign was recorded in detail in CS 8/9 where we showed that they played an important role in stifling the potential for the independent action of organised workers, containing it within the humanitarian popular frontist limits of the National Committee, joining with all the 'liberal' nationalist and clerical forces in the silencing and censorship of the IWG's criticisms and our fight for a genuine United Front centred on independent worker-led Action Councils and for the General Strike.

Thus while the LWR refused to argue in front of the founding conferences of the H-Block campaign the criticisms which they published in their theoretical journal and a year later became a loyal and uncritical prop of the class collaborationist National Committee as soon as a number of trade union 'sub'-committees had emerged, the IWG from the very start publicly hammered at the microphones for a coherent alternative based on genuine united front principles putting organised workers action at the centre of its perspectives.

When trade union committees were first formed IWG fought to have them remain outside of the humanitarian bloc (a fight sabotaged by PD) and when disillusion with the National Committee's rule rose among the t.u. committees after 9 deaths of hunger strikers it was the IWG which fought for convening them independently of the Republican dominated Campaign but LWR successfully pleaded the "unity" of that bloc as a higher principle.

CONCLUSION

Such Centrists, to call them by their name, precisely because their abstractions disarm them end in opportunist tailing of the struggle and fictionalise reality to fit in with their schemas. 'Revolutionaries' who fetishise the tenets of their programme into signposts with which they will plant themselves at the junctions of history waiting for the 'revolutionary process' to bring the masses to them, deny the very essence of revolutionary communist propaganda. That is, to constantly argue before the most conscious workers for all the major slogans of the programme, warning them and preparing them in advance for leadership by arming them with a perspective which shows how the tactical slogans and immediate demands arising to-day open up a road of struggle for working class dictatorship and the ending of capitalism and imperialism.

P.D. - COALITION WITH THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE

Peoples Democracy (section of the USFI) is distinguished by its belief that Permanent Revolution in Ireland is effected by alliances at all points with petty bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists. Through such alliances the 'Irish People', they claim, will be mobilised. For them any orientation to the working class must therefore be relegated in so far as working class mobilisation would threaten alliance with non-working class forces.

Their perspectives pamphlet for the H-Block struggle "Prisoners of Partition" is thus deliberate in its omission of any reference to the working class. On this basis there is no question, for PD, of making it a condition of any action-alliance with Republicans that they preserve full freedom to argue the independent proletarian programme. Instead a "united front" with Republicans must be a common propaganda bloc on the agreed objectives. For Trotskyists that is liquidation of the revolutionary Marxist programme which understands and explains all aspects of the fight against imperialism not from a petty bourgeois traditional nationalist perspective but from the viewpoint of the international and independent proletarian struggle for a workers Socialist Republic.

PD uses the language of "Permanent Revolution", not to mean a conscious proletarian strategy but, to mean an objective "process" that will lead of its own momentum through a struggle led by the nationalists to the mobilisation of the workers whose needs will impose on that leadership a proletarian programme. They refuse to see the Provisionals as a different class force by its politics, which must be opposed by socialists if they are to be replaced by a conscious revolutionary workers leadership.

McAliskey in the IMG's "International" journal (Sept '81, p 12) expresses how the need for proletarian leadership is liquidated in such a perspective:

"- but in every crisis the biggest lack, the biggest vacuum that we feel is the non-existence of a vanguard workers party. And I think that the whole experience and process is towards building such a party." ...

"And I personally believe that the revolutionary party is forged in the struggle, not formulated in the pub or the room above the pub, the emergence of the revolutionary party I believe will come out of that axis of the relationship between PD, the Republican movement and the mass movement".

Unlike the LWR who initially rejected the conscious tactical method embodied in the Comintern's use of the AIUF slogan because the Irish social

formation did not correspond with that of the Eastern colonies, the PD glibly use the slogan of the AIUF and re-interpret Irish society to liken it to those colonies. Thus Fianna Fail, the SDLP and the IIP become bourgeois leaderships of movements with an "anti-imperialist" content, justifying alliances with them as distinct from forcing demands on them in struggle. In this however PD do not observe the strictures of the early Comintern. Even while they manifestly fail to force the bourgeois nationalists into struggle they still reserve a place for them organisationally and politically by rejecting the fight for independent working class mobilisation which would frighten away the bourgeois forces.

That was the whole meaning of the H-Block Conference decisions supported by PD at the peak of mass anger after Bobby Sands' murder (analysed in CS 8/9). Trotsky in "India Faced with Imperialist War" (Writings 1939-40) sums up the disaster of such popular-frontism:

"The Indian bourgeoisie, as has already been stated, wants a peaceful horse trade and not a struggle. Coalition with the bourgeoisie leads to the proletariat's abnegating the revolutionary struggle against imperialism. The policy of coalition implies marking time on one spot, temporizing, cherishing false hopes, engaging in hollow manoeuvres and intrigues. As a result of this policy disillusionment inevitably set in among the working masses, while the peasants turn their backs on the proletariat and fall into apathy. The German revolution, the Austrian revolution, the Chinese revolution and the Spanish revolution have all perished as a result of the policy of coalition. The same danger also menaces the Indian revolution where the Stalinists, under the guise of "People's Front" are putting across a policy of subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie."

In 1978 in CS No. 3, IWG pointed out how such hollow manoeuvring in the method of the then MSR/PD group; analysing the position put by PD's M. Farrell to the Coalisland Political Status Conference:

"Farrell revealed the 'method' behind much of the left's practice. According to Farrell, "reformist organisations" (meaning the SDLP and IIP) should not be frightened by the prospects of co-operating with revolutionary and other groups - they could all gain by uniting on limited demands, because they might achieve those demands. Here Farrell has completely destroyed the whole principle of the United Front as a political method ... the United Front must CHALLENGE openly and directly the grip of all anti- and non-working class forces. ... To say as he does that reformists have "nothing to fear" is either stupidity or trickery. The latter is more likely, for the MSR/PD group operates with a notion of the United Front that it is a TRICK to outsmart the reformists and the Provisionals. In reality, such a method is the result of the left's purely organisational concept of the United Front - because they lack understanding of its political function they are forced to try to manoeuvre the reformists and the Provisionals into unity with all kinds of blandishments about "common interests" and "you have nothing to fear", "we will all benefit". Inevitably, such methods trap the trappers, not the other way round".

The outcome of PD's and McAliskey's attempt to build the party with these methods is that they are indistinguishable from the republican nationalism of Sinn Fein and the IRSP.

S.W.M.- NO NEED FOR PROGRAMME!

The politics of SWM derive from the British SWP which consciously rejected the whole legacy of Trotskyism, the early Comintern and Lenin, namely the need for a scientific programme and strategy as the basis for intervention in all areas of the class struggle. Such wholesale rejection has led to a rudderless adaptation to all existing struggle.

Disarmed programmatically in that way and faced with growing repression in the South the SWM not only entered into but initiated alliances of far left, Republican and independent activists such as the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression - but on a minimal democratic programme, opposing the call for strike action, refusing even the call for a Trade Union Inquiry into repression in favour of a bourgeois state "Public Inquiry". Continuing to blindly follow the hand-rail of opportunist adaptation SWM was happy to have TUCAR uncritically join the Republican-dominated platforms of the Relative Action Committee movement. As analysed in CS No. 3

"TUCAR has simply opted for alliance with the RACs on conditions that do not permit TUCAR members to argue, debate and criticise the counterproductive military tactics of the bombing campaign or the non-working class politics of the Provos. In effect TUCAR is tailing the petitbourgeois nationalists and their perspectives. ... To get around this opportunism SWM argued ... that TUCAR was a "non-political" organisation with very limited demands and perspectives for trade unionists and therefore, joint action and unity with anyone was a good thing for the struggle".

SWM supported the founding resolution of the H-Block Committee in 1979 and had a member in its national leadership. After the defeat of the Campaign SWM's K.Allen attacked the dishonesty of the humanitarian stance of that Campaign and its failure to orient to the working class (Bulletin 1). There is no explanation why SWM opposed the IWG's fight for the elements of a clear working class programme as an alternative to the solely nationalist basis on which Allen now tells us it was built: "...the campaign cannot be re-built on a solely nationalist basis. It must make a direct appeal to the class interests of workers. ...the struggle is against 'the extreme end of a system that oppresses us all'."

The same bulletin in another article concludes on "what is needed": "We would say as revolutionaries that the objective for socialists and anti-imperialists in the North should be the organisation of the largest number of people in the nationalist areas into structures which would advance the cause of defeating the Orange State and its imperialist upholder, Britain. Those structures would of course be drawn up by the oppressed themselves. We, as socialists, would hope that the struggle would go from here and that organisation on class issues would take place linking up with workers in the South on issues like the troops and the police, Diplock courts etc."

This empty and vague schema expresses well the purely organisational idea of the united front which, combined with faith in the spontaneity of class struggle, is pressed into service in the absence of any conscious programme.

A SECTARIAN STANDPOINT

The IWG's record is therefore one of principled independent class politics. However, by isolating out particular slogans from our overall fight and clearly misunderstanding the general tactical method of the AIUF from an ultra-left position and its specific application in the present war in Ireland, certain 'trotskyists' see fit to label the IWG in much the same way as do pro-imperialist 'socialists' thus:

"Despite some correct criticisms of the nationalists and H Block movement, the IWG fails to carry out the Leninist policy of working class independence and instead serves as the very critical left wing of the nationalist movement". ('Socialist Voice', New York, organ of the League for a Revolutionary Party no. 14 p.6).

The LRP claims that "the IWG attempts to pressure the H Block campaign to orient towards the working class", and that "the IWG lends itself as advisors to the nationalists on the need to incorporate the working class". As evidence the LRP plucks a sentence from an IWG leaflet claiming that the British Campaign as a matter of urgency sets about the task of giving a clear and bold leadership to the struggle to bring out in action the overwhelming mass of Irish workers in support of Political Status". But that argument by IWG was made as part of a criticism of the Campaign leadership to the thousands of mobilised workers who were "incorporated" already by their illusions in a National Campaign which suppressed the call for 'workers' action - in such circumstances the raising among workers of demands on the republican Front for an all-Ireland indefinite General Strike call is a tactic that threatens not to aid them to incorporate the workers but one which if taken up would have shattered the collaborationist alliance with the petty representatives of capital. Crudely isolated as a single sentence, the formulation quoted by LRP from IWG's leaflet appears one-sidedly to suggest the need for new methods of struggle without smashing the existing class collaborator leadership. Nothing could be further from the actual and openly argued perspectives of the IWG.

The LRP's line would lead however to a sectarian boycott of the whole campaign for fear of appearing to compromise with petty bourgeois revolutionary nationalism in the fight to win workers away from its treacherous illusions. Inevitably nationalism is the servant of imperialism, and imperialism can only be ended through destroying capitalism only under the lead of a proletarian revolutionary party. But to imply as does the LRP that only "military blocs" with nationalists are permissible is an ultraleft formalism that denies in advance the possible need for agreements with revolutionary nationalist organisations on concrete political actions short of a military united front. It reduces the tactic of the united front to one specific form, the military united front. A Trotskyist fighting propaganda group cannot substitute itself for the workers and pretend to form a "military bloc" nor can it discard the united front slogan and stand aloof as a sect from the existing struggle in which large masses daily confront the capitalist war machine of the world's oldest imperialism.

another rotten bloc falls apart

LWR's Fourth International
(International Committee)

The present period of crisis of imperialist capitalism and Stalinism poses for revolutionary Marxists the need to re-elaborate the communist (Trotskyist) programme to address the concrete tasks of the international working class and simultaneously on that basis to fight for principled unity to build a revolutionary communist International. The lack of precisely this perspective among the major international currents calling themselves Trotskyist has meant that time and again they have fallen foul of the political upheavals and crises that have put their programmes and methods to the severest test and proved them bankrupt.

Thus the wrong characterisation of the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979 and the resulting liquidation of the fight there for a Trotskyist Party resulted in a world split in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. By the end of 1980 a new world bloc had been thrown together in opposition to the USFI but on an unprincipled basis. It styled itself the "Fourth International (International Committee)" or FIIC. Already its leaders have reaped the inevitable harvest of opportunist alliances carried through at the expense of the pressing historic need for genuine revolutionary regroupment.

In November and December 1981, the FIIC definitively split. It lived for less than one year. The FIIC was a bloc between Nahuel Moreno's "Bolshevik Faction" (based in Latin America) and Pierre Lambert's "Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International" (OCRFI, based on the French OCI group). Having barely a year before proclaimed itself to be the "largest international grouping of Trotskyists" it has now disintegrated into its component parts, an outcome not difficult to foresee.

In Class Struggle No. 7 (June '80) the IWG pointed to the record of opportunism and adaptation to social democracy by Moreno and the OCI respectively and argued that the Parity Commission (later styling itself the FIIC) had "no common programme that can be tactically applied in a revolutionary situation". We warned that their method was "to concentrate on the areas of agreement between the tendencies rather than resolving the differences" and that the new alliance would be "one more stumbling block on the road to rebuilding a revolutionary international. The method of forming the FIIC had more in common with the cynical "political musical chairs" of post-war degenerate "Trotskyism" than with laying principled foundations for an international. The FIIC's "Forty Theses" simply contained the Menshevik centrism of the OCRFI in diplomatic disguise.

Moreno's record was one of adaptation to the forces of petty bourgeois nationalism and to the Bonapartist figures of Latin America hoisted in to the saddle of power by them. The OCRFI leaders were perfectly well aware of this. In December 1976 Lambert's theoretical journal *La Verite* wrote of Moreno's "adaptation to Peronism": "To criticise the policy of N. Moreno is an indispensable task. It has pushed to great lengths a series of profound deviations from Trotskyism." Lambert on the other hand, has systematically adapted to Social-Democracy for many years. The election of a Social Democrat as President of France and the installation of a social-democrat dominated government of a coalition with bourgeois representatives has not brought about any change in the policy of Lambert's Organisation Communiste Internationaliste.

In the summer of 1981 Moreno suddenly "discovered" that on the question of the Mitterand Government "We have differences of 180 degrees. (Corr. Int. No. 14 p.10) Moreno has claimed that he wrote to Lambert on July 13th describing the French section's orientation toward the Mitterand Government as one of "critical support" for a Popular Front: "The leadership of the OCI(u) does not dare to put a name to its policy, but it accords uncritical and almost total support to a popular front government" (p.11).

A reading of the OCI(u)'s paper "Informations Ouvrieres" from May to September 1981 reveals that this is a justified criticism. But nothing in the OCI's past record could lead one to expect any other response. Since serious programmatic differences had not been discussed openly before the FIIC was founded it was unlikely that Lambert would do so after

INFORMATIONS OUVRIERES 1004
TRIBUNNE LIBRE DE LA LUTTE DES CLASSES

14 JUIN: NOUVELLE DEFAITE DE TOUS LES PARTIS BOURGEOIS
21 JUIN: MAJORITE PS/PCF A L'ASSEMBLEE
POUR DONNER A MITTERRAND LES MOYENS DE GOUVERNER CONTRE LES CAPITALISTES ET LES BANQUIERS

RESULTATS NATIONAUX
A 18.40, le 15 juin, le...

[Text reads: 14th June: New Defeat for all the bourgeois parties. 21 JUNE: PS/PCF Majority in the Assembly to give Mitterand the means to govern against the capitalists and bankers.]

OCI weekly paper covers up the presence of the bourgeois radicals in Mitterand's electoral pact: suggests that Mitterand plus a majority equals an anti-capitalist workers government

"fusion" had been achieved. Doubtless Moreno, a seasoned factionalist, knew this very well. When on September 22nd 1981 he submitted a long article attacking the OCI's position on Mitterrand for publication in "Correspondance Internationale" it was a declaration of war. Events thereafter took on a familiar ring to those who have experienced or studied the splits and fusions of the "Fourth International" since 1953.

The OCI stalled on the question of the publication of Moreno's article. On October 14th, using the pretext of a letter from Moreno to the Central Committee of the Spanish section of the FIIC, OCI leader Stephane Just claimed there had been a breach of democratic centralism and that no discussion was possible so long as Moreno characterised the OCI as "revisionist". Despite Moreno's declarations of personal admiration for Lambert, "the most talented Trotskyist leader I have met throughout my political existence" and of loyalty to the FIIC, "the greatest acquisition of the Trotskyist movement since 1938", Just and Lambert had no intention of tolerating any discussion of the OCI's policies in France.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND TROTSKYISM

On October 24th at a National Conference of Cadres of the OCI(u) Lambert pointed to a "provocation" against the French organisation mounted by the fascists, the French Stalinists and the LCR (French section of the USFI of Ernest Mandel). Moreover he "revealed" the involvement of ex-Morenoite members of the OCI(u) in it. On the basis of this crude amalgam Lambert expelled the leading Morenoite supporters from his organisation in France. On 29th October at a meeting of the International Executive Committee Lambert refused to recognise the voting rights of a representative of Moreno's PST. He announced a ban on public sales of Correspondance Internationale No. 13 - the issue which contained Moreno's article and a further article in which Romero (a Morenoite) criticised as wrong and as schematism the OCI's interpretation of the FIIC theses on the "anti-imperialist united front" - the theses on which LWR in Ireland claimed to base its H-Block intervention.

Moreno's request for 1,000 copies of it to sell and for the right to open in France an office of his party (Argentine OST), ostensibly to work with Argentinian exiles, was summarily refused. At the same time Napuri, leader of the Lambertist POMR in Peru, who had condemned the expulsion of the ex-BF members of the OCI(u) was ousted from his organisation, supposedly on a question, raised at this point after three years in which it might have been raised, of turning over his parliamentary salary. It is claimed also that he was accused by the Lambertists of being a CIA agent.

Lambert and the OCI summoned a General Council of the FIIC for Nov. 21st. Moreno's supporters demanded as a precondition of their attendance the reintegration of the ex-BF members of the OCI and the reconstitution of the International Executive Committee, the publication of Moreno's articles and the organisation of a democratic debate.

It therefore only remained for the OCI to declare that Moreno had "organised a split" (Inf. Ouv. 1028, 28 Nov.) and to call a World Congress for June 6-13th 1982 at which amongst other items to be discussed was to be "The Popular Front" and the politics of the OCI(u) and "the anti-imperialist united front". In this Alice in wonderland "Trotskyism", first we have the split and then we have the "discussions".

The results of this whole operation can hardly have satisfied Lambert and Just. Having miserably failed to "Build the Party of 10,000" in the previous year - indeed having lowered their sights to the "Party of 8,000", the split in the FIIC has obviously decided them to go for broke. Whilst their membership (official and inflated) figures show a drop from 5,300 to 4,600 in the last year they have (30th Dec) "proclaimed the Party". The OCI(u) will henceforth assume the "historic" (late 1940s) name Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI). The FIIC has also had a facelift. At a meeting on 21-23rd Dec. the ex-OCRFI rump declared itself the "Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction)".

Thus Lambert has gained nothing except two new and inflated 'names'. Moreno has probably strengthened his Venezuelan section and now has a small group (some 70 members) in France.

All this has occurred at a time when the USFI is facing deep internal disorder. Their U.S. Socialist Workers Party is moving ever closer to Castroism - even discussing a "new international" to include the FSLN of Nicaragua, the New Jewel Movement of Grenada and Castro himself! The Healyite "International Committee" has become a spokesperson for Gadaffi and Khomeini. The tiny International Spartacist Tendency has come out as propagandists for the Kremlin on Afghanistan and Poland. The effects of this debacle among an Irish "trotskyist" Left (PD, LWR, SWM) that already refuses serious polemic and debate towards revolutionary regroupment will be a deepening cynicism and sectarian hostility to addressing the lessons of failure and opportunism and a tendency to put the emphasis on "practical activity" on the local national terrain as a cover-up.

The errors of these groupings lie precisely in their lack of an adequate international programme and democratic centralist International. The opportunism of the leaders of the international currents, Lambert, Moreno, Mandel, Healey, and Robertson is rooted in their own national soils. Their "international" programmes and organisations are simply their national prejudices writ large. Thus the only unity they can maintain is either that of a non-aggression pact which rules out discussion, criticism and a new programme; or subordination of an Asteroid Belt of small sects around one large group.

Politically all these groups combine centrist adaptation to alien class forces - to Social Democracy, Stalinism, petty bourgeois nationalism - with gross sectarian antics in the realm of organisation.

The split in the FIIC yet again proves that there is no "Fourth International" extant which expresses the method or the developed and extended programme of Lenin's Third or Trotsky's Fourth International. Lambert and Moreno can only drag this historic name in the mud.

The IWG, in collaboration with Workers Power in Britain and in serious discussion with revolutionaries in other countries, sets itself the task of re-elaborating a transitional programme for the new period of imperialist crisis, of establishing on this basis a democratic-centralist international tendency as the foundation of a reborn revolutionary communist international.

EL SALVADOR ~

The fact that the Catholic Church dominates the only solidarity with El Salvador in Ireland speaks volumes about the abject state of the left here. If anything the same Catholic Church is among the chief world defenders of the whole system that is attempting to crush the Salvadorean masses - capitalist imperialism. The blood-soaked president Duarte, puppet of the USA, is himself from the Christian Democratic movement which everywhere, from Fine Gael to the Italian Christian Democrats, leans heavily on the Church as an ideological support in attacking and repressing all opponents of imperialist capitalism. The reactionary Pope has even backed the sham "elections" of Duarte and Reagan.

Despite the good intentions of individual members of the Salvador Support Committee its pacifism is only an obstacle to the political task of clarifying to Irish workers and youth the real source of the terrible repression in El Salvador - 30,000 murders by the state forces in two years - that is, the need of imperialistic capitalism and its native collaborators in El Salvador to defend their system of private property, exploitation and profits.

The civil war at present raging in El Salvador is part of a growing and general insurgency against imperialism and its puppet regimes in Central America as a whole. This mass insurgency has already led to the toppling of US imperialism's most trusted puppet in the region, General Somoza of Nicaragua, an event that is fundamental in understanding why the US is determined to crush the Salvadorean rebellion and go on to isolate, weaken and snatch back the gains of Nicaragua's workers and peasants.

LESSONS OF NICARAGUA

Although the working class played the chief role in the mass armed insurrection against Somoza, the Nicaraguan workers and peasants had no revolutionary socialist party which could fight to lead the insurrection onto the road of Permanent Revolution to not only topple Somoza but also to abolish Nicaraguan capitalism. In the absence of such a Trotskyist party, power in Nicaragua fell to the petty bourgeois revolutionary nationalist forces of the Sandinista Liberation Front, FSLN. The FSLN promptly entrusted the power to the bourgeois popular front Government of National Reconstruction. Nevertheless the Nicaraguan revolution has shaken the US ruling class and world imperialism. The FSLN victory highlighted the danger of a bourgeois backed revolution against a hated American puppet regime getting out of control, and by its inspiring example posed the threat of a generalised mass upheaval throughout Central America.

The fact that the Nicaraguan working class rose in armed insurrection and forced the revolution forward to the extent of smashing up Somoza's bodies of armed men, the Army and National Guard, leaves Nicaraguan private property, native and foreign, in a very precarious position. With 60% of the Nicaraguan economy still in private ownership that private property now depends for its ultimate defence on FSLN arms to protect it from the demands of Nicaragua's workers and peasants; but the FSLN is finding it impossible to peacefully balance between the class needs of the masses on the one hand and the demands of the bourgeoisie and imperialism on the other. It faces the choice of being forced to expropriate all capitalist property or of retreating before imperialism. The FSLN's class ties to the bourgeoisie are evident in its recent attacks on workers' right to strike and in severe jail sentences meted out to large numbers of its critics on the left and with only token action against its bourgeois opponents and most importantly in its refusal at the behest of world imperialism to give arms to the Salvadorean insurgents or send forces.

EL SALVADOR'S NEIGHBOURS

Nevertheless the heroic fight of the Nicaraguan workers, peasants and guerilla forces and its success in toppling Somoza has boosted the oppressed masses in the other neighbouring Central American states that surround El Salvador. In Guatemala and Honduras the class struggle has so intensified that its right-wing military government is forced to vie with that of El Salvador in repression, assassination and brutal torture.

Miners at May Day celebrations, Managua 1981. Strikes now under attack from FSLN.



Photo: Network



Castro - keeping his head down.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE SALVADOREAN CIVIL WAR

El Salvador is a country one quarter the size of Ireland with the same population. It is a predominantly agricultural country and is doomed to remain so unless its workers, supported by its peasantry seize power, expropriate the bourgeoisie and extend their revolution internationally. The reason this is so is because the Salvadorean bourgeoisie - like the colonial and semi colonial bourgeoisie the world over in the epoch of imperialism - is unable to lead an independent and genuine industrialisation of the nation.

In the post war period increasing investment in industry - largely foreign investment led by the US - has brought a growth of weakly implanted industries similar to the pattern in Ireland. And as in "our" economy massive inducements had to be offered to get the foreign metropolitan capitalists to do the "industrialising" which the native bourgeoisie was incapable of. Through this development the manufacturing sector came to represent 20% of GNP in the mid seventies. However the number of workers in manufacturing only grew by a tiny 2,500 between 1961 and 1971. The number of wage earners in the sectors of mining, manufacture, construction, transport, storage and communication reached a total of 152,000 in 1975. In that year the total number of wage earners - excluding the agricultural proletariat, was 361,000. This means that the industrial proletariat comprises 42% of all urban wage earners, leaving the development of El Salvador's industrial proletariat relatively more advanced than most semi colonial countries.

THE RURAL PROLETARIAT

The biggest section of El Salvador's working class is its agricultural proletariat. Economic development post World War 2 enormously increased the proportion of seasonal workers in this sector. Those permanently employed in agriculture are now miniscule by comparison. The agricultural proletariat has been declining - from 310,000 in 1961 to 267,000 in 1975. At present it stands at a quarter million.

In El Salvador, 7.5% of farmers, big and middle capitalist farmers who exploit a predominantly seasonal agricultural proletariat, own 73% of the land. Half of these have over 500 hectares or more and farm 34% of the land. 52% of all farmers

have less than 2 hectares each and farm a total of 3.7% of the land! Coffee, Cotton and Sugar are the main products of Salvadorean agriculture and the overwhelming majority of the best land for such production is owned by the "fourteen families" - an enormously rich and powerful oligarchy.

In addition the rural banking sector is controlled by the agrarian capitalists. This means that the small farmers are starved of vital credit. Between 1961 and 1975 export oriented capitalist farms got 90% of all credit; whereas the entire sector of small farms of one hectare or less got 1%. This means that a chronic cycle of unending debt is superimposed on chronic land hunger for the majority of Salvadorean small farmers.

Such conditions lead inevitably to mounting unrest on the part of El Salvador's small holders, rural and landless poor and agricultural proletariat, an unrest boosted by Nicaraguan events, and to which the ruling class reacted by removing the president General Romero in October 1979. The US-supported 'liberal' military regime which replaced Romero promised reforms in two phases. The first was supposed to hit at "the 14 families" by nationalising and distributing their estates - though with generous compensation. Phase 2 would have hit at the 5,000 medium sized coffee farmers. Without these reforms 60% of El Salvador's rural poor would remain landless. The reforming elements in the Junta which ousted General Romero were soon eliminated and the victors within the Junta opted for civil war - encouraged by Reagan's coming to power in the US.

That the focus of resistance to the Junta was captured by petty bourgeois guerilla forces reflects the absence of any elements of a proletarian revolutionary leadership with a programme capable of addressing the burning needs of the masses. But by reason of its position in production the Salvadorean working class, objectively, has the power to become the leading force in the Civil War and revolution. Their recent history in mass occupations of coffee mills in 1978, agrarian workers' occupations of coffee plantations in 1979 and industrial workers' role in political strikes in 1980 and '81 attest to the ability of this working class to play that leading role. But the condition for success in such an outcome is the forging of a revolutionary proletarian leadership politically defined above all else by the conscious strategy of Permanent Revolution. That is, the tasks of bourgeois democratic revolution in El Salvador (real national independence, agrarian revolution, full freedom of speech, assembly and strike, separation of Church and State etc.) can be solved only on condition that the Salvadorean proletariat give a decisive lead to all the city and village poor, seize political power and solve the bourgeois democratic tasks in the act of creating its own class dictatorship. Equally, as is fundamental to Trotskyism, Permanent Revolution means that such a victorious proletariat must extend its struggle internationally under the fighting slogan for the Socialist Federation of Central America.

THE FORCES PITTED AGAINST SALVADOREAN INSURGENCY

The size of the forces which the Duarte Junta and US imperialism has pitted against the Liberation Front and the masses shows the deadly seriousness with which they view El Salvador and the whole Central American upsurge. During 1980, notwithstanding Carter's human rights hypocrisy, the

THE SALVADOREAN LIBERATION FRONT - A BOURGEOIS POPULAR FRONT

US supplied the Junta with massive military hardware including six helicopter gunships. They dispatched 200 marines to advise on counter insurgency techniques and to "stiffen the backbone" of El Salvador's army. In addition there was the

continuous flow of US aid and loans absorbed as intended in trying to put down the insurgent masses. Carter's real, if implicit, policy was to pour in as much military and financial aid as was necessary to defend capitalism in El Salvador. Reagan, who shamelessly admits that defeating "terrorism" comes before human rights, has merely made this policy explicit to win the civil war.

While doing this the US wants to avoid such methods as its direct intervention in the Dominican Republic (in 1965). The US ruling class knows that the world in 1981 is significantly different. It knows that imperialism is racked by the return of the boom-slump cycle and that the US as policeman of world imperialism has been dealt a chain of serious blows in Vietnam, Iran and Nicaragua. It is this which explains why the US has set up an Israeli trained force of shock troops based on the Honduran and Guatemalan armies, Cuban counter revolutionaries and the thousands of Somoza's National Guard whom the FSLN allowed to escape from Nicaragua to keep sweet with world bourgeois opinion. In addition the Guatemalan and Honduran armies have been carrying out joint manoeuvres on the Salvadorean borders aimed at harassing and killing guerillas and refugees and have started a process of ordering sections of their troops to fight alongside Duarte's army which is likely to intensify as the civil war grows fiercer. This is not to say that Reagan will not intervene directly if necessary. It is precisely because the US ruling class feels - in the aftermath of its defeat in Iran - that it cannot rely completely on other counter-revolutionary forces either in Central America or in the Middle East that it has positioned sections of its new Rapid Deployment Force in both theatres.

The rebellion against Duarte is lead and organised by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and its political wing, the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) which were formed in Spring 1980. The FMLN is an armed guerillaist popular front. The FDR is a civilian popular front with aspirations to being the whole or part of a future provisional Government replacing the Duarte Junta.

The forces under the FMLN are estimated at between 5,000 and 20,000 armed guerillas. These are backed up by a lightly armed civilian militia for which the FMLN claim a figure as large as 200,000. It is against the plans of imperialism and the Junta outlined above that the FMLN's strategy must be weighed.

The organisations brought together in these fronts include the big majority of El Salvador's Trade Unions and peasant associations and the main Social Democratic and Stalinist parties as well as student associations. Crucially they also include the small shopkeeper organisations, the National Federation of Small and Middle Businessmen and the Democratic Military Youth, the latter being a heterogeneous group of young 'reforming' officers ranged-around Junta defector Adolfo Majano. Thus while few if any major bourgeois figures are part of the front, bourgeois interests concretely dominate the perspectives of the movement through the agency of these latter petty-bourgeois forces.

The FMLN/FDR Front is not a form of United Front as understood by revolutionary communists, but a variant of the treacherous class collaborationist Popular Front used historically to deceive and defeat the working class movement. It is an all-class nationalist patriotic front in which the independent class interests of El Salvador's workers and peasants are suppressed to retain the support of all those sections of the petty bourgeoisie whose material interests are rooted in the maintenance of the capitalist system.

(As a class alliance the FMLN/FDR is politically akin to the recent National Smash H-Block Committee in Ireland which was also a popular frontist campaign that failed strategically in its more limited task when the petty bourgeois nationalist forces dominating it blocked the fight for independent working class action so as to keep up the illusory hope of thus attracting bourgeois nationalist support from the SDLP, Fianna Fail and even Fine Gael.)

The essence of the Popular Frontist policy of the FMLN/FDR is given in the following statement from the "Programmatic Platform of the Revolutionary Democratic Government" published 27/2/80 by the CRM (Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses) and supported in all essentials by the broader FMLN/FDR as the core of its own founding platform:

"The Revolutionary Democratic Government will be based on a broad social and political foundation formed in the first place by the working class, the peasants and advanced middle classes. Intimately united with them will be the social classes prepared to carry forward this platform, managers of small and medium sized industries, artisans and agricultural businessmen, small and medium coffee growers and other branches of agriculture and cattle raising. It will also include honest professionals, the progressive clergy, democratic



Salvadorean soldier at work. Photo: Network.

In El Salvador itself, apart from a standing army of 12,000 troops, there are perhaps as many as 100,000 'irregular' troops organised in the rural fascist ORDEN and in the private scab armies of El Salvador's agrarian capitalists. ORDEN, "Organisation Democratica Nacionalista", appears to have its material appeal in the concessions of land made to its leaders and supporters by agrarian capitalists prepared to defend their interests by recourse to ORDEN's barbarism.

parties such as the MNR (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement), the advanced sectors of the Christian Democracy, worthy and honest army officers, who are willing to serve the interests of the people, persons or segments who are in favour of broad democracy for the popular masses, independent development and popular freedom" (Translation from 'Latin America' No. 2).

COMMUNIST PARTY COLLABORATORS

The counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism internationally finds expression within the FMLN/FDR itself in the Salvadorean "Communist Party" which joined the guerilla war under pressure. Its whole perspective of restoring bourgeois "democracy" has already made it in part responsible for the very existence of the Duarte regime. In 1972 the CP supported the present dictator, Christian Democrat, Duarte for President. In 1977 they supported Col. Ernesto Claramount and CO-er Antonio Morales Erlich, now a member of the Junta. On 21st Oct 1979, 6 days after the US-inspired coup against Gen. Romero, CP leader declared "we support the Junta because we believe it is going to comply with its promises and open the possibility of democratizing the country". That leader, Castellanos, was murdered by the Junta in March '80. Still maintaining their illusions in the "patriotic progressive current of young army officers" who had backed the Junta initially, the CP was forced by mass pressure to join the CRM on 11 Jan 1980. At the heart of the liberation movement such a party can only be an instrument of treachery to the Salvadorean toiling masses.

REVOLUTION BY "STAGES"

And only a month before the January 1981 call for a general strike and insurrection the FMLN visiting delegate to the Cuban Communist Party's Second Congress, Cayetano Carpio, underlined the classical popular frontist nature of the FMLN in both its composition and political objectives:

"We are striving to achieve a democratic and revolutionary Government which will provide broad freedoms, progress, peace and justice for all. It will be founded on the masses and on all patriotic and democratic forces of the population organised into the broad Democratic Revolutionary Front." (Intercontinental Press - IP 2/2/81)

Thus, the Government with which the FMLN/FDR wish to replace the Duarte Junta is not a revolutionary Workers and Peasants' Government based on and accountable to the mass organs of workers and peasants in struggle. That is, too, it will not fight to arm workers and peasants for the overthrow of capitalism but to act as a bourgeois democratic government envisaged as resting on an army formed by fusing the FMLN and those elements of Duarte's army who show themselves to be patriotic and in favour of bourgeois democracy. The key role of such an army would be to defend bourgeois property against Salvadorean workers and peasants. One of the key class aims of such a front is to drive back the independent class action of workers by isolating them politically, especially from the peasantry whom it ties to the apron strings of the 'democratic' or 'patriotic' sections of the native bourgeoisie. By consigning workers' fight against capitalism to a future period after the restoration of 'democracy' its aim is to protect private property from attack by a mobilised proletariat. This is the treacherous perspective of "revolution by stages" which Trotsky attacks, for example, in the Popular Front in Spain in 1937:

"According to the Socialists and Stalinists, i.e. the Mensheviks of the first and second instances, the Spanish revolution was called upon to solve only its 'democratic' tasks, for which a united front with the 'democratic' bourgeoisie was indispensable. From this point of view any and all attempts of the proletariat to go beyond the limits of bourgeois democracy are not only premature but fatal. ...

"The Bolshevik point of view, clearly expressed only by the young section of the Fourth International, takes the theory of permanent revolution as its starting point, namely, that even purely democratic problems, like the liquidation of semi-feudal land ownership, cannot be solved without the conquest of power by the proletariat; but this in turn places the socialist revolution on the agenda. ... The demand not to transgress the bounds of bourgeois democracy signifies in practice not a defence of democratic revolution but a repudiation of it. Only through an overturn in agrarian relations could the peasantry, the great mass of the population, have been transformed into a powerful bulwark against fascism. But the landowners are intimately bound up with the commercial, industrial and banking bourgeoisie, and the bourgeois intelligentsia that depends on them. The party of the proletariat was thus faced with a choice of going with the peasant masses or with the liberal bourgeoisie. There could only be one reason to include the peasantry and the liberal bourgeoisie in the same coalition at the same time: to help the bourgeoisie deceive the peasantry and thus isolate the workers. The agrarian revolution could have been accomplished only AGAINST the bourgeoisie, and therefore only through measures of the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no third, intermediate regime". ('Lessons of Spain' in Pathfinder edition of 'The Spanish Revolution' by Trotsky, p.307)

Salvadorean guerillas



HOW THE FMLN POPULAR FRONT SUBORDINATES THE WORKING CLASS

Nothing better illustrates the way in which the FMLN/FDR's strategy and its guerilla methods cut against the organisation of workers' independent leadership and action than the role the front played in the two General Strikes of 1980 and the insurrectionary call of January 1981. In each of these cases the FMLN/FDR merely used or tried to

use the workers as a big stick to be brandished and set aside at will according to the dictates of its class collaborationist strategy and its guerillaism.

In response to the October '79 coup the CRM stepped up its guerilla war and in April 1980 this was extended under the auspices of the newly formed FMLN. In that context of guerilla war waged over the heads of the masses the FMLN called out General Strikes with no perspective of preparing the masses organisationally and militarily for the insurrectionary task posed by General Strikes in those conditions of civil war as the only alternative to defeat of the strike action.

Here is how the USFI's Intercontinental Press describes the action of June 1980:

"A two day General Strike shut down more than 90% of industry, commerce, transportation and Government offices in El Salvador, June 24/25. Less than 12 hours after this resounding repudiation of the US backed military-civilian Junta, Salvadorean armed forces responded with a bloody attack on a working class neighbourhood and the national university campus in El Salvador ... The regime mobilised thousands of troops and put tanks and armoured vehicles in the streets during the strike. Truckloads of armed men in civilian clothes from the right wing paramilitary group ORDEN were highly visible. There were few armed clashes however, since the CRM convincingly showed its discipline and organisation by keeping its supporters off the main thoroughfares and thus preventing unequal confrontations".

(IP 7/7/80)

So we see that the Popular Front guerilla methods result in having to keep off the streets the scores of thousands who had struck against the Junta and thus disperse their collective class power in the very instant that they had played with mobilising it.

What was posed by the massive response to the General Strike call was the need to extend it indefinitely, to build the broadest workers and peasants strike committees and to arm them, to thus turn the general strike onto the road of mass armed insurrection centred on workers. Given the leadership of the FMLN/FDR no such fight occurred. And in the absence of such a fight the Junta leaders were able to hit back with impunity the day after the strike ended by launching helicopter and ground assaults on the densely populated workers districts of San Salvador. It hammered home the point in the days following by rounding up, detaining and in some cases murdering the best worker militants, sending in the Army to occupy seaports, airports, waterworks and power plants. The end result of the June '80 strike was that the FMLN had gained some new worker recruits for their guerilla army; whereas the working class was left more defenceless than ever in face of the Junta policy of militarising workplaces.

THE AUGUST GENERAL STRIKE CALL

The August 13/14 1980 General Strike was again called by a guerilla high command divorced from any organised struggle of the proletariat. In essence it trampled on the need of the masses for self organisation as a class in the civil war. This 'high command' attitude comes through in an interview with Farid Handal, an FDR leader, published in Intercontinental Press 10/11/80. Handal characterised the aim of the FMLN/FDR as calling a "pre-in-

surrectional rehearsal, not a strike". The purpose of the strike call according to Handal was "to guarantee that in the big working class residential areas the workers would be present on August 13, 14 and 15th." The FMLN guerillas would "try to take advantage of this to give training in first aid, the fabrication of arms, in the cleaning and handling of weapons and in protecting the aged from aerial attack."

These days were a recruitment drive by the FMLN among the working class in preparation for an insurrection the FMLN would call in its own good time and in a similar high handed manner. The workers' strategic needs were to be subordinated to the FMLN's tactical military perspectives. If a mass armed insurrection were to be seriously prepared among El Salvadorean workers, the General Strike would have to be built by a proletarian leadership and developed into mass struggle with Duarte's troops aimed at provoking them into mutiny, to hand over arms, to set up soldiers' committees and open the arsenals to the workers. Instead the conductors of the "pre insurrectional rehearsal" of August 13/14 criminally squandered the two mightiest weapons of the proletariat, the General Strike and Armed Insurrection for the sake of the guerilla tactics of the FMLN.

This leadership was using the Salvadorean proletariat as a big stick to be brandished and set aside in the hope that while the bourgeois forces in the FMLN/FDR would not be frightened off by such merely token strike action, imperialism might be alarmed enough to have real negotiations started with the FDR. The call for general strikes by high commands not accountable to the working class and the timing of 'insurrections' to act as bargaining counters with imperialism can only break the back of El Salvador's revolution.

THE JAN. 1981 CALL TO INSURRECTION

After such experiences of the FMLN's methods it is not surprising that the big mass of El Salvador's workers distrusted its insurrection call of Jan. 10th 1981. Notwithstanding important events on the day, such as the revolt of Capt. Sandoval with 200 troops in Santa Ana and the defection of Col.

Bruno Navarrete and an entire unit of the National Guard to the FMLN, events which show the potential of a properly led indefinite general strike to break up Duarte's army, the FDR representative at the Salvadorean solidarity conference held in Managua at the end of January had to describe the response to the call as partial and uneven. The general insurrection simply did not occur. The following excerpt from IP 23/3/81 shows its USFI authors' tail-ending of revolutionary nationalism which the centrists of the USFI repeatedly substitute for the fight for permanent revolution:

"The offensive highlighted both the strengths and the weaknesses of the guerilla forces. It showed that the FMLN's military capability is considerable, that it can carry out large scale offensive and defensive troop movements, as well as traditional small unit guerilla operations.

"There were several reasons why the call for a general strike did not get a massive response. There were problems in coordination and an underestimation of the strength of the enemy's repressive apparatus. In addition the planning of the offensive was not carried out in close collaboration with the mass organisations. But these problems are now being corrected during this period of preparation for the next offensive".

Here we find the USFI answering in the crudest organisational terms their own important questions of why the call for a general strike did not get a massive response - "problems in coordination", combined with the lame apology of underestimation of the enemy. We are told that the planning of the offensive "was not carried out in close collaboration with the mass organisations" - all problems that Intercontinental Press regards as easily "corrected" oversights or mistakes by an inexperienced but basically healthy leadership. Such events are rather the inevitable outcome of a popular frontist strategy which subordinates workers' class interests to the dictates of guerilla military tactics. Far from leading to closer "collaboration with the mass organisations" the January debacle has swivelled the FMLN even more to focus on guerilla action in the countryside.

PEOPLES DEMOCRACY/USFI ON EL SALVADOR

The "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USFI) to which the Peoples Democracy affiliated in Nov. 1981 after years of disagreement, has failed during two years of civil war in El Salvador to put forward a Trotskyist strategy of permanent revolution for that struggle. This is not to be wondered at. Such a programme is after all a strategy to arm Trotskyists in the fight to win the best workers and peasants to the building of a Revolutionary Trotskyist Party as the only instrument adequate to lead them through the civil war to what is the only class victory for the toilers - a Salvadorean socialist revolution. The USFI have turned their back on that task in El Salvador just as they repudiated it in Nicaragua, in Vietnam, in Algeria and in Yugoslavia. They have done so because for them, as for the centrist Lominadze attacked by Trotsky in his writings on China:

"The permanent character of the revolution becomes a law placing itself above history, independent of the policy of the leadership and of the material development of revolutionary events" (New Park, 1959, p.125)

Dominated by that 'fatalistic optimism' which Trotsky attributed to the centrist POIJM in the Spanish Revolution, the USFI hope that the FMLN will be pushed by the irresistible force of the permanent revolution as objective process to unconsciously become its agents. Rejection of the task of building a Revolutionary Trotskyist Party follows from this premise, as day follows night.

That is why also in none of the declarations from the USFI's Intercontinental Press for 1980 or '81 do they politically characterise the FMLN/FDR. The formal statements of the USFI of Dec. 5th 1980 and January 13 1981 equally refuse to characterise the FMLN/FDR, resorting to meaningless evasions such as:

"Today the revolutionary organisations have more support than ever and despite repeated difficulties have succeeded in unifying at a much higher level against a Junta which is increasingly discredited" (10/12/80).

No inkling here that this 'much higher level' of unity is the death-trap unity of a popular front!

Failure to warn openly against class collaboration denies the revolutionary communist principle, when giving unconditional support (in this case to the FMLN) to fighters against imperialism, of NO POLITICAL SUPPORT to their popular front programme.

Peoples Democracy faithfully reflect the same centrist muddle. In their main article on El Salvador (Socialist Republic Vol 4, No. 3) C. McNamee makes no mention of permanent revolution, fails to attempt any political characterisation of the FMLN/FDR and, ignoring that the January General Strike was a failed call to insurrection, simply notes of it:

"The general strike called for in the January 10th general offensive was answered best among public service employees, in spite of the level of violence meted out against them".

McNamee agrees with Bishop Casey, head of the Irish Catholic 'third world' charity machine, in the moralistic appeal that US support for the Junta should be "reason enough for the Irish Government to break off diplomatic relations with the US". And if this was not enough confusion to fit into half a page the article ends by peddling illusions in bourgeois condemnations of US support for the Junta: "The Fianna Fail Government could make up for this by condemning US support for the Junta".

But action such as a break in diplomatic relations which the bishop (briefly) called for, could only be the result of forcing the Irish bourgeoisie to direct mass solidarity action by workers and youth. And the reason is not hard to find in a ruling class that is prostrate before US capital to entice it on whatever terms to 'industrialise' the country, a task the native bourgeoisie itself cannot carry out in the epoch of imperialism. This fact escapes the centrists of the PD in their tailing of Fianna Fail with respect to El Salvador no less than in relation to the recent H-Block campaign. In an agreed motion from Fine Gael lining up with the France-Mexico call for negotiations in El Salvador and an end to "outside interference" the Southern Parliament on 9th Dec. released the "pressure" of Bishop Casey's steam with the same kind of empty rhetoric that allowed them ride out the H-Block hunger strikes. So much for PD's illusions!

EL SALVADOR AND THE LWR - IRISH SECTION OF FI-IC

The League for a Workers Republic, section of the "Fourth International - International Committee" carried an article on El Salvador in Workers Republic No. 83 (spring '81).

Missing from LWR's article, is any discussion of what programme of action can turn the civil war into a class victory for Salvadorean workers. The only bow in this direction is to tell us: "Only the Trotskyists raise the demand for a Government of Workers and Peasants" (p. 27). Nor does it specify what kind of workers and peasants Government the Trotskyists advocated.

LWR correctly argue that "the FMLN is not a proletarian revolutionary leadership" and that its elements are committed to a programme for "collaborating with 'democratic elements of the bourgeoisie' and with 'progressive officers' against the ultra-right" (p.27). The main brunt of its accusations of popular frontism, however, are reserved for the FDR. The LWR separates off the FDR from the FMLN much as they relate to the IRA as if it were politically separate from the petty bourgeois nationalism of Sinn Fein. Perhaps the LWR feel that the FMLN guerillas can be independently transformed into Trotskyists by the education, advice and example of the Trotskyists?

The LWR thus evade the problems of how revolutionaries do battle politically with a popular front conducting a civil war against military dictatorship and imperialism, saying of their fraternal section the PST in El Salvador that it...

"works very closely with the MILITARY leadership of the coalition of guerilla groups, which in the last few months were intensely active both militarily and politically" (IWG emphasis).

How is this to mean anything more than acting as the far-left cover and apologist of the FMLN/FDR, as indeed the LWR itself has played that role for the revolutionary nationalists in the H-Block Campaign in Ireland?

LWR gives what appears on the surface to be a correct formulation of the military relations that should obtain between revolutionary Trotskyists in the Salvadorean civil war and the petty bourgeois FMLN thus:

"The Trotskyist organisation in El Salvador, the PST, fights alongside the military front of the FMLN, but does not for a moment accept the 'cross-class democratic government' position of the FDR" (p.28).

Such a formulation, while offering no assurance of open political battle against the FDR's position, still separates off the FMLN from the FDR in a way that disguises the fact that the FMLN is the political duplicate of the FDR, the one in the military sphere, the other in the field of diplomacy. Just as in Ireland, they are two inseparable sides of the coin of revolutionary nationalism which subordinates the class interests of the proletariat to the solution of the national bourgeois democratic question and thus to a "labour must wait" perspective which subordinates the key tasks of the proletariat to a "stages" idea of first "national" freedom and only afterwards social and economic emancipation for the toilers. As Iran, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe have shown (despite the claims of centrists and reformists) have shown such a "stages" strategy is an escape route for petty-bourgeois forces to reach a deal with world imperialist capitalism, as is made clear by the attacks on workers' rights and the jailing of strikers and communists in those countries. Such is the reality of "labour must wait". Failure to understand this can only lead again to liquidating the fight for the strategy of permanent revolution.

WHAT STRATEGY FOR A WORKERS & PEASANT VICTORY

The FMLN are reported to have killed significant numbers of Duarte's troops and caused demoralisation among them due to their failure to dislodge the guerillas from their mountain strongholds in Marazan, Chalatenango, Cabanas and Guazapa provinces where the guerilla positions are protected from infantry attack by claymore mines and they have shelter in caves from aerial and artillery bombardment. All this is welcome news; but by no means is it evidence of serious advance for the Salvadorean revolution. Against these one must weigh the growing passivity and military defencelessness of El Salvador's working class, the ever growing US military and financial aid and the gro-

wing international co-ordination of Central American counter-insurgency forces aimed at trapping the FMLN in a pincer closing in on its strongholds from Southern El Salvador and from Honduras, Guatemala and the Pacific Ocean. This could well face the FMLN with the prospect of being gradually starved of food and supplies of arms and ammunition to their one real stronghold. To starve them is the aim of the scorched earth policy, combined with forced mass evacuations of civilians now being attempted by Duarte and Reagan in the region.

It cannot be ruled out, of course, that an attritional policy of holding out in their mountain strongholds by the FMLN, especially if combined with growing international solidarity action to stop aid from the USA, might so prolong the civil war as to disintegrate Duarte's army and so disrupt economic life that Duarte's capitalist backers might force him to the negotiating table with the FDR. Such a rotten compromise would leave El Salvador's workers, peasants and poor subject to the same super-exploitation and oppression as before.

The alternative outcome would be the stabilisation of Duarte's regime of repression through the outright defeat of the FMLN/FDR

Both outcomes would mean a massive setback for the social revolution against imperialistic capitalism that is now ripe in Central America. Victory for the revolution, on the other hand, will necessitate a radically new strategy in the civil war and a proletarian leadership, created in the heat of struggle, to fight for it. None of the leading forces among the insurgent masses can offer a way forward. Even the most class conscious elements, as long as they look for leadership to the stalinist pro-Kremlin or social democratic parties and trade union bureaucrats within the popular front, cannot guarantee to prevent the betrayal of the revolution into the hands of the openly bourgeois forces who even if they achieved the overthrow of Duarte would as quickly re-instate the semi-colonial regime of super-exploitation that is necessitated by their economic subordination to imperialism.

The welding of the most class conscious workers into the nucleus of a revolutionary socialist party, in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, is thus the most essential task of revolutionaries. Beginning from the perspective of Permanent Revolution and making this the central strategy, Trotskyists must fight to group the best militants around a programme of demands, slogans and organisational forms which address immediately the tasks posed in the Civil War and which when taken up and fought for can lead step by step to the successful overthrow of Duarte and the establishment of the dictatorship of the workers and peasants over the Salvadorean bourgeoisie. The IWG believe that among the crucial elements of such a programme must be the following.

ARMED UNITED FRONT

1. Fight to mobilise workers and peasants committees to participate in the civil war against Duarte on the basis of their own independent class programme alongside the guerillas of the FMLN/FDR on strict conditions:- 'Participate in the civil war under your own elected officers but accept the battle orders of the FMLN/FDR as long as they hold the leadership. Fight for a genuine Armed United Front and prepare politically to replace the FMLN/FDR with a revolutionary socialist leadership.' A Workers and Peasants Militia must be built as an independent part of the military United Front.

Workers Councils

2. In order to unite the masses in carrying out all aspects of the struggle for the class interests of workers and peasants and in order to ensure the most democratic mass control of the struggle, revolutionaries must fight for the building of Workers and Peasants Councils (soviets). Fight to make such soviets the leading organs of struggle on a programme of United Front action against Duarte and Imperialism but not holding back in any way the fight to immediately and directly implement the social demands of the masses even where that means expropriating 'democratic' sections of the bourgeoisie.

IMPLEMENT SOCIALIST MEASURES

3. Fight to raise in the struggle and to make as its objectives all the social demands of the workers, urban and rural, the oppressed smallholders and the poor. Revolutionaries must fight for the armed front and the soviets to not merely proclaim but implement directly the more pressing measures of socialist revolution. Concretely this means, in the liberated areas, the expropriation of provisions, manufactured articles and stockpiles and their transfer to the poor; the expropriation (under workers' control directly or over the existing managers) of all plants and their conversion to meet the needs of the civil war; the redivision of shelter and housing in the interests of toilers and the families of fighters; the inventory and expropriation of big and middle farmers in the interests of smallholders and the landless poor.

Military tactics must be subordinated to the perspective of social revolution. Trotskyists must argue for the mobilisation of the urban working masses in strike and insurrection as a strategy to which rural guerilla war must be subordinated. And in the countryside, expropriation and distribution of land is crucial in propaganda directed at winning over Duarte's soldiers and in undermining the material hold of the rural fascist ORDEN.

NO TO JUNTA ELECTIONS!

4. In order to disarm Duarte and the US of any hope of playing on the masses' sincere illusions about bourgeois democracy by promising a "constituent assembly" in 1982 and a "free" general election, revolutionaries must explain to the masses the hypocritical and diversionary nature of the Junta's "elections". While explaining that a genuine Constituent Assembly would be a revolutionary organ elected through universal secret suffrage with full freedom of propaganda for all but fascist parties, and not the kind of cosmetic sham that the Junta would organise, revolutionaries must argue that there CANNOT BE a democratic Constituent Assembly so long as the armed forces of Duarte and Imperialism remain unbroken in El Salvador.

WORKERS & PEASANTS GOVERNMENT

5. Equally adept, however, at exploiting the masses' democratic aspirations will be the Popular Frontists of the FMLN/FDR who cannot be relied upon either to deliver a genuine Constituent Assembly any more than the FSLN in Nicaragua or Mugabe in

Zimbabwe. For, a victory can only be delivered against Duarte through the armed mobilisation and economic action of the toiling masses for whom a Constituent Assembly could be nothing less than a step to the solution of their social needs and thus the overthrow of the capitalist social order.

In the event of a military victory replacing Duarte with the Popular Frontists it is crucial that revolutionaries should have won the masses to force the FMLN/FDR into immediately supporting the convening by the mass organisations of universal free elections to a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly and to simultaneously spell out what must be made the essential concrete revolutionary tasks of that Assembly. It would be disastrous in the event of victory, as in Nicaragua, to allow the Popular Front to defer free elections, until after the militias had been incorporated under a Bonapartist regime protecting private property.

6. To break up the treacherous Popular Front which poses itself as the embryo of a future democratic government revolutionaries must win the masses to demand that all parties and organisations of workers and peasants break from the representatives of the bourgeoisie and enter on the road of struggle for a Workers and Peasants Government. Such a Government would be argued for as one excluding all bourgeois parties, committed to defending all the gains of the masses, arming independent militias of the workers and peasants and disarming and dismantling the bourgeoisie and their state apparatus. Such a Government would be transitional to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Revolutionaries do not see the actual realisation of the Assembly or Workers Government as necessary steps in the revolution. Such demands, however, give to the masses' aspirations for their own parliament and Government an unequivocal revolutionary content which can only be fought for by the strategy of general strike and insurrection led by independent militias of the workers and peasants; thus can the masses be broken from the bourgeoisie concretely in action.

7. In order to deny victory to imperialism in this struggle so crucial to the world's proletariat as a whole in its implications, revolutionary socialists everywhere must fight to build worldwide solidarity with the Salvadorean insurgents centred on the working class in every country, focussed on ending all aid to Duarte's regime through workers' demands and direct action; for unconditional financial and material aid to the FMLN/FDR's war against Duarte.

- END ALL AID TO DUARTE'S REGIME - WORKERS ACTION TO BLOCK SHIPMENTS!
- U.S. IMPERIALIST HANDS OFF CENTRAL AMERICA!
- FOR THE FMLN/FDR AGAINST DUARTE AND IMPERIALISM!
- FOR INDEPENDENT ARMED WORKERS AND PEASANTS COMMITTEES
- FOR A REVOLUTIONARY TROTSKYIST PARTY IN EL SALVADOR
- FOR AN ARMED UNITED FRONT OF WORKERS, SOCIALISTS, GUERRILLAS AND PEASANTS
- FOR THE SOCIALIST FEDERATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA

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