

Class Struggle

The Workers' Republic Women's Liberation International Socialism

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Irish
Workers
Group

MRCI

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No 3

Step up the Fight!



Strike to Reverse Education Cuts!

The brutal capitalist alliance of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats is still firmly in control and as determined as ever to push through their savage austerity measures at the expense of the mass of working people and their children. Dukes' and O'Malley's "opposition" to circular 20/87 dumping more children into fewer classes, and their motion to save the Social Services Board were only a diplomatic camouflage for their equal responsibility with Haughey for the cuts.

Tragically, the Labour and Workers' Parties while prepared to support the withdrawal of the Circular will not use the Dáil as a platform from which to call out and lead the kind of massive demonstrations and strikes that are necessary to stop the cuts, to restore the full budgetary needs of Education, Health, local services and Social Welfare.

To the shame of every trade unionist, the ICTU and the bureaucratic leaders of the trade union movement continue to weigh in on the side of

the cuts. They are effectively the fourth partner in the austerity coalition that has wiped out decades of gains in the health services. This coalition of capitalist parties is now determined to drive the schools back to the standards of the 1930s for the mass of ordinary people.

And for what? To cut public spending and pay off outrageous interest rates to foreign and Irish speculators on loans used by successive capitalist governments to subsidise their own supporters and create the most profitable conditions in Europe for multinational industries. And what did these capitalist policies achieve for us? Mass unemployment and emigration, and now the clawing back of every gain in services and standards of living that were conceded grudgingly to us during the boom years.

Union Mis-leaders

The trade union leaders sabotaged the struggle against the health cuts and negotiated the most rotten national deal ever with Haughey; the plan for so-called National Recov-

ery contains nothing but restrictions on workers' right to defend their conditions combined with lies about future economic expansion. The narrow vote of the ICTU conference in favour of Haughey's National Recovery Plan indicated clearly the extent of real opposition throughout the trade union movement. The bureaucrats and the ICTU had made absolutely certain that open debate and discussion of the plan and its effects would be minimal. They railroaded through a majority, having sabotaged the struggle against the health cuts.

They have decided that ordinary workers must bear the cost of bailing the capitalist class out of the economic recession created by their own system which organises all our lives for the sake of their private profit. The union leaders know they could best preserve their own privileges and position by agreeing to help the bosses to impose their cuts on workers and their children. They knew that if they did not do this the ruling class would outlaw many of the freedoms of the trade union movement to strike, to picket and to cam-

aign. Above all they decided that it was better for them to keep the capitalist system intact than to have the resistance of the mass of ordinary people build up to a point where the whole existence of Irish capitalism would be threatened.

One of the key betrayals by these trade-union lieutenants of the capitalists was to agree to 10,000 redundancies in the public sector. It is precisely this agreement, over the heads of their members, which enables Haughey now to drive through the programmes for getting rid of teachers, health workers and local authority workers.

Attack on Teachers

The teachers, members of the unions most directly affected, are angry and crying out for leadership for a real fight. But their leaders include some of the same uncontrollable bureaucrats who have been to the fore in organising the sell-out national deal with Haughey.

The secondary teachers' leaders are keen to buy off a section of their members with the redundancy deal, rather

than fight it, without the slightest concern for defending and improving standards in their schools in which the grossest inequalities operate against the children of the working class.

The primary teachers' leaders are under far greater pressure from their ranks who have been faced with the crudest cut since the hospital services were slashed. That is, the deliberate plan to pack more children into fewer classes in the free public school system upon which working class and small-farmer families depend absolutely for their basic education. But even here, the teachers' leaders have been attempting relegating the fight to the spontaneous parents' mobilisations.

Circular 20/87

Mass meetings and country-wide demonstrations of whole communities since mid-November forced the Dáil and the Minister for Education to back off their frontal attack on the pupil-teacher ratio. But just as they previously backed off raising the school entry age, only to attack again at a new angle, so they will do again.

Circular 20/87, which would cut nearly 10% of all Primary teachers jobs has not been withdrawn. Minister O'Rourke said on Dec 2nd that her decision did not constitute a withdrawal or suspension of it, but only recognised the reality that no teacher is likely to take up early retirement until after the summer holidays. Deferral of the Circular till June means the teachers will be dispersed and resistance weakened.

The TUI (vocational) and INTO (primary) teachers face a similar attack on pupil teacher ratios. Their leaders are calling merely for lobbying and marches while militants are arguing for rolling one-day strikes. But we saw in the prolonged teacher's pay dispute of 1985 that these did no more than vent the anger of teachers without applying collective simultaneous industrial muscle to win their demands. What is needed is indefinite all-out strike action until the circular 20/87 is withdrawn and the whole education budget fully restored to its level before the Fianna Fáil and Coalition cuts.

What the Haughey-Dukes-O'Malley brigade is desperate to ensure is that the protests should be kept as sectional, as isolated and as localised as possible, and above all that they should not be linked up with mass strike action by organised workers.

The conservative 'National Parent's Council' is determined to place itself at the

head of community protests, in order to control and restrain them. For the big Dublin demo of December 9th they attempted to warn off the college students' against linking up their march against the cuts on the same day. One of their spokespeople rejected a student call for coordinated action with the disgusting argument that they would not defend higher education against cuts because that would weaken their case for preserving the primary education budget.

Such divisions and sectionalism must be addressed and overcome. At the same time, the spontaneous anger that has welled up against the cuts must not be allowed dissipate into mere token protest action in the form of marches after which no further action is organised. Nor can the two-faced official trade union leaders be allowed to control the campaigns against the cuts without being made directly accountable to rank and file workers organised for real resistance to the cuts.

- Teachers, local authority workers, health workers and all those sections threatened with cuts in jobs and services must link up their workplaces. Organise democratic conferences of delegates mandated to hammer out an action programme of real resistance to the cuts. Refuse any cover for unfilled vacancies. Organise all-out indefinite strike action until the cuts are fully restored! This must be done under rank and file control and the official union leaders must be made to give all such action full union backing.

- Local community protest campaigns must elect democratically controllable action committees and link them to rank and file committees of workers organised in the trade unions against the cuts. Alongside all the particular demands on school or health cuts they must raise the demand for a united struggle to Reverse All Cuts Now!

- Students must fight to win the majority to boycott classes and conduct mass democratic assemblies in occupation, sending delegates to trade union committees in colleges and outside, and linking up with community action groups around common demands for a national campaign. Force USI to mobilise the entire student body, drawing in second-level students also, with a view to a national student strike to reverse nationally all cuts in the Education budget!

Demo against 20/87 at Dáil
photo by Denis Spence
Report

EDITORIAL

Enniskillen

The Irish Workers' Group unequivocally condemns the IRA bombing at Enniskillen on November 8th. Our condemnation has nothing in common with the hypocritical representatives of the ruling classes in these islands and their apologists in the media and elsewhere.

Simultaneously, while condemning IRA violence, they reserve their right to systematically inflict their professionally trained terror upon the exploited and oppressed. For nearly eighteen years the British army, UDR, RUC and orange paramilitary squads have utilised every means of repression - Bloody Sunday massacre, mass internment, juryless courts, repressive legislation, arbitrary raids and arrests, torturing and framing - in order to destroy the revolt of the anti-unionist population against the sectarian prison-house of the Northern Ireland state. The current Thatcher administration differs from its predecessors only in the bloodthirsty openness and semi-racist exultation in which it seeks to secure a complete and merciless victory over the IRA and its base within the minority population.

The IWG does not condemn in principle the use of violence as a means of political struggle. Our standpoint, on the contrary, is the revolutionary international working class tradition of armed insurrection by the mass of the working class against capitalism and imperialism. Our aim is to establish the armed class power of workers' councils and an Irish workers' state.

From such a position, the tactical use of military action in defence of the anti-unionist masses must at all times flow from a clear conception of strategy for the final goal. That is, does it actively help to mobilise and extend the action of the working class and oppressed of these islands against the common class enemy and oppressor of the anti-unionist population? For no other social force is capable of ending that oppression and the economic and political conditions that produce it.

Consequences

The IWG do not believe that the IRA bomb was deliberately intended to kill civilians. No one can be more aware than the Republican movement of the consequences for their campaign if such were the case. We condemn it however as an act whose consequences cannot but lead, as it already has led, to the consolidation and strengthening of the British and Irish ruling classes. The whole apparatus of the bourgeois media and churches have been once again provided with another opportunity to engulf the working masses in a poison of "law and order", "defend democracy" rhetoric and humbug. All the forces of resistance of these islands to the economic and social policies of the Thatcher and Haughey governments, let alone those directly involved with the issues of repression and national oppression in Ireland, have been dealt a serious blow.

Our condemnation therefore is an act of solidarity with the working classes and all the forces of the oppressed whose struggles have been set back by this event. The Republican strategy of physical force nationalism flows from the political programme of Sinn Féin for the goal of a 32-county independent sovereign republic. It should now be clear (as our report on Sinn Féin's conference in this issue shows) that the socialist rhetoric espoused by the Adams leadership amounts to little more than a left cosmetic behind which the traditional physical force strategy of a few hundred guerillas remains the defining point for any republican victory.

The primacy of the guerilla war of the IRA reflects the strictly nationalist limits of Sinn Féin's programme. They believe that because a direct power struggle for socialism in Ireland is not yet on the agenda at this 'stage' therefore, the political and military presence of Britain and the existence of its colonial state are the only concerns of immediate political strategy. With no role then for mass mobilisations around class and social issues, the task of physically resisting and ultimately removing the British army can only fall to the elite guerilla campaign of the IRA.

It is obvious that the republican movement retains its base in a section of the most oppressed anti-unionist minority. But the very principles on which its struggle is conducted makes it incapable of concretely addressing even the questions of repression, the denial of democratic rights and discrimination, which hit most viciously against their very own base of support. Even less are their methods addressed to the social and economic experience of exploitation and oppression among the mass of catholic and protestant workers, women, youth, students. It is for these reasons that we say the Republican movement's programme is divorced from the needs of the masses; that its methods and particularly its bombing campaign whether in the north or in Britain, are a disastrous diversion. The real need is to build mass working-class based campaigns not only against repression but against the economic and social policy of the British and Irish capitalist governments.

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Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

As ruling Class Attacks Grow ...

SF Ducks the Issues

The 1987 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis met against a background of major attacks on the republican movement in the form of extradition and plans to introduce an "anti-violence" pledge as a means of barring Sinn Féin from elections in the North. And on the economic front the working class throughout Ireland was at the same moment facing the sharpest ever attacks on its conditions.

Sinn Féin itself said that the Ard Fheis would be one of building and consolidation, that it was to be "a milestone in the development of Sinn Féin as a progressive revolutionary party". Its task was to implement the new turn to mass politics which it claimed to have embarked on when it ended abstention from the Dáil a year ago.

THE CUTS

The largest section on the clár (agenda) was concerned with employment, education, youth, the cuts in social services and social welfare. The issues covered a whole range of the attacks being pursued by the governments on both sides of the border. It reflected strongly the concerns and pressures of the working class, but did not address them with any perspective of class struggle.

SF opposed the Haughey-ICTU 'National Plan' but without a clear opposition to the trade union bureaucracy who engineered it and are determined to police it. One of the very few proposals for real action was a motion from Letterkenny calling for a rank and file movement of trade unionists and unemployed "committed to united action and co-ordination of all forms of resistance to the plight faced by workers at the present time". The conference decisively rejected this motion, as also the proposal to co-opt a representative of the party's trade union committee to the leadership.

JOB DISCRIMINATION

The conference gave uncritical support to the MacBride Principles, advocating 11 proposals, several of which call for government legal measures and another for a new form of equal opportunity certificate to be based on government vetting as the condition for receiving government grants.

The sole mention of trade union involvement occurs in its call for employer regula-

tion of workers:

"Employers must be obliged to keep the workplace free of all political/religious emblems, flags, graffiti, rallies, marches etc which might be offensive or intimidatory to other groups of workers. ... Employers in consultation with the relevant trade unions, must adopt effective disciplinary procedures for dealing with transgressors."

With regard to economic development, proposal 10 says: "The British Government must provide the necessary incentives and infrastructure to attract proposed new enterprises and actively encourage co-operative enterprises in the most disadvantaged areas". This plea for more private capitalist development by the British State in anti-unionist areas contrasts

feared, leaving Sinn Féin, then, aligned with the churches opposed to the campaign which is fighting to extend the 1967 Abortion Act to the 6-counties.

STRIP SEARCHING

Despite an admission from the head of the Prisoners' Department that letters to the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and Fianna Fáil TDs about prisoners' conditions were ignored, the Ard Fheis decided "that the Anti-Strip Searching campaign be re-structured to become a campaign centred on political lobbying and publicity". This is a formula for a more passive campaign than the current one. It is also a recipe for defeat.

1987 SF Ard Fheis
(D. Speirs/Report)



sharply with the consistent opposition of Sinn Féin to the call for nationalisation under workers control of factories threatening closure because this would involve the British state!

DEFENDING THE CLINICS?

The Ard Fheis condemned the Hamilton judgement against abortion information as a major attack on civil liberties and declared that "non-directive pregnancy counselling embodying all choices should be freely available", but on the recommendation of the leadership they rejected motions to participate fully in the Defend The Clinics Campaign! The party's ruling Ard Comhairle argued that individual members were free to work in the campaign - a classic cop-out - but the party would not support it as it had other, "mainstream", priorities as against supposedly "marginal" or "sectional" issues.

Motions from Derry which recognised a woman's right to choose abortion were de-

SOLIDARNOSC

A determined lobby, to end the party's previous support for the Polish Solidarnosc, was backed by the leadership. The more explicit motion condemning Solidarnosc for "its pro-western bias", for "waving American flags" and for "its continued support from the Vatican" was withdrawn in favour of a more diplomatic formulation - to delete Sinn Féin's explicit support for Solidarnosc and replace it with support for "the struggle of the Polish people to defend national independence and socialism against the attacks of internal anti-socialist and external counter-revolutionary elements". Even though the IWG criticises the ideology and the political programme of the Solidarnosc leadership, we argue that socialists internationally must unconditionally support active working class opposition, organised through such a trade union, against the Polish bureaucracy, while fighting for political revolution and workers' democracy to re-open the road to socialism.

INDEPENDENCE AND UNITY

Sinn Féin sees "national self-determination as the absolute prerequisite for national reconciliation and for future economic and social development" (AC motion no. 141). Only after independence and unity have been achieved is socialism on the agenda. This 'stageism' is explicit in the "Scenario for Peace" policy document on which Adams' speech to the Ard Fheis was based. It is a strategy that in practice chooses political adaptation to the Irish national-

ist bourgeoisie in preference to class struggle against it, and has been openly attacked by a number of leftward-moving Republican prisoners for this reason.

Despite the heroism of the prisoners and fighters who were remembered at the Ard Fheis, SF continues to squander their sacrifices by reaffirming its traditional nationalism in all its essentials at the expense of fighting for a real action programme for the Irish working masses, women, youth, and other oppressed sections of town and country.

Gerry Adams declared at that conference the inevitability of the "republican struggle" and left little doubt that by this he meant the continued physical-force "strategy" of a guerilla war. Despite the movement's claim to have made a turn to mass politics, this conference left no doubt that electoral opportunism would continue to be the order of the day in Sinn Féin's turn to mass politics.

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New Challenge for Women

On Nov. 26th the Clinics Defence Campaign launched a new Women's Information Network to offer pregnancy counselling and abortion information, effectively to replace the clinics closed down by the Hamilton judgement a year ago.

A public meeting to launch the new service was well attended despite the self-censorship of the media on this issue. Unfortunately, however, the meeting did not address itself to the defence of this new and vital service, let alone address the need to begin a fight to repeal the legal basis of the ban on abortion information.

Although SPUC have made it plain to all that they intend to act against any such services, no discussion took place concerning what will happen in the event of the service being enjoined. What will the Campaign do then? - rename the service? - change the telephone numbers? - a cat and mouse game that can only leave hundreds of women stranded in the meantime.

Defiance Necessary

Whatever tactics the Campaign may use for defending the new service, they were being kept secret from its supporters. Indeed, statements to the media after the meeting conveyed that the organisers of the new service are eager not to be seen as defying the law. Spokesperson Ann Conway claimed that the service would not break the law. Convoluted explanations suggesting that the service might be legal not only fly in the face of reality but inexcusably avoid preparing any real defence for it when it is attacked. The very notion, openly peddled at the meeting, that the legal obstacles will crumble in the face of a functioning information service is a utopian one in the present political situation.

The campaign has turned its back against even beginning the political fight to reverse the basis for the Hamilton ruling. Yet without a change in the law Irish women will be

consigned at best to making do with an illegal and haphazard counselling service. Inevitably, many women will be unaware of the service, while others will be frightened off by its semi-clandestine nature.

Meanwhile the Alton Bill going through the British Parliament will, if implemented, further restrict the options available to women. This Bill proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion from 28 weeks to 18. Because of the delays caused by censorship, anti-abortion hysteria and the lack of counselling services, Irish women going to England would be particularly hard hit.

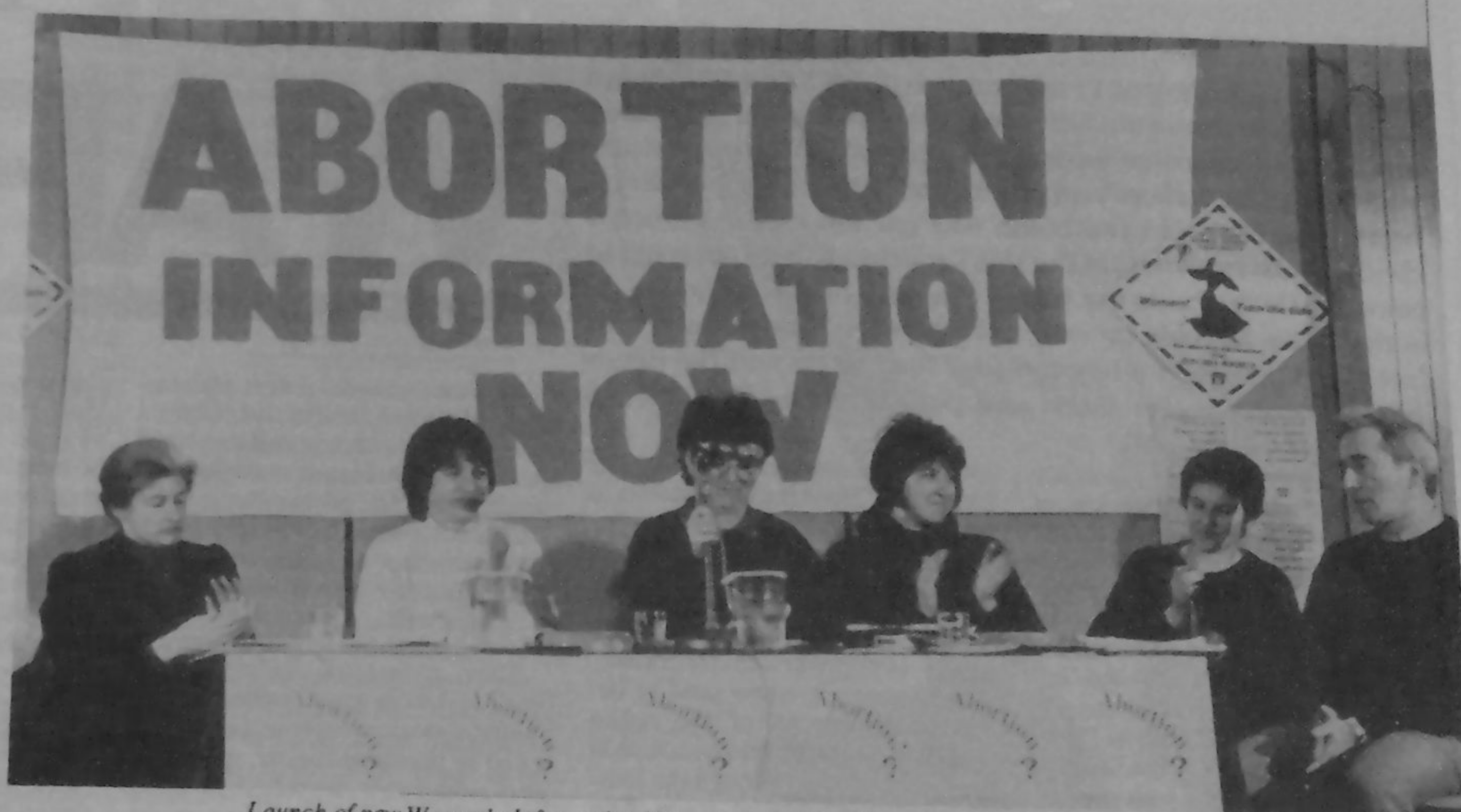
The Alton Bill seeks to claw back the gains made by the 1967 Abortion Act which is blocked in Northern Ireland by the weight of Catholic and Protestant reaction. A N.I. campaign demanding the extension of the 1967 Act, NIALRA, is now caught between the British Alton reaction on the one hand and clerical reaction within the Six Counties.

Tragically, the Republican Movement, the bitterest enemy of the Northern state, has placed itself in the camp of reaction against NIALRA. As reported on page 2, the SF conference rejected the Derry motion for a women's right to choose abortion. Simultaneously it refused official party support to the Clinics Defence Campaign in the south.

Secular Republicans?

Despite its pretensions to secular republicanism, SF gives way to catholic reaction on this important issue. The strength of that reaction, and the absence of any republican campaign on abortion rights, led recently to a major setback in the student movement - the Queen's University of Belfast student assembly on Dec. 3rd. voted massively against a call to extend the 1967 Act to Northern Ireland.

Attacks on women's rights, particularly in a period of growing austerity, will continue to grow. It is urgent that both the Clinics Campaign and the NIALRA be turned



Launch of new Women's Information Network in Dublin, Nov. 26th. Photo - Derek Speirs / Report

into real fighting struggles that can begin to mobilise thousands of women, especially working class women.

Women's Movement

Our perspective must be the creation of a 32-county fighting working class women's movement addressing all aspects of women's oppression - denial of contraception, divorce, abortion, as well as legal and economic equality.

The immediate need of the Clinics Defence Campaign, if 'defence' is to mean anything, must be the organising of an open democratic conference to rally new supporters and build a fighting campaign. The IWG argues that such a conference should aim to build around the clear goals of

- maintaining the counselling service despite injunctions
- organising defence by trade union and political or-

ganisations of the working class, women's and student organisations

- beginning the fight now for repeal of the 8th Amendment and the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act which make the ban on abortion information possible.

While the IWG argues for abortion on demand as the only adequate form of abortion rights, we believe nevertheless that the best activists

willing to fight the ban on abortion information can and must also be won to fight openly for decriminalisation of abortion as a first step to seriously addressing the most basic need of women faced with unwanted pregnancies.

FOR ABORTION INFORMATION
 Dublin 794700 (W.I.N.)
 680043 (Open Line)
 Cork 502848 (Mon. evngs.)
 Galway 24682 (Helpline)

The Bureaucrats and the Ballot Box How the National Plan Was Passed

The ICTU Conference decision to ratify Haughey's "Programme for National Recovery" was the outcome of a blatantly undemocratic campaign by trade union officials.

The two biggest unions spent large sums and used union journals to argue in favour, allowing no space to critics of the Plan. Only a minority of workplaces held meetings to discuss the pros and cons and even then the full-time officials were on hand to domi-

nate discussion and hammer home their defence of their employers', Carroll and Attley. Thus most workers were faced with putting a ballot paper into a box, effectively as isolated individuals, with no other presentation of the issues other than what they got from the state and capitalist media.

One FWUI section meeting of members expressed its anger. It agreed that the official union propaganda for the deal contained blatantly false statements, and that as the union journal had been used exclusively for one point of view the union official present was forbidden to issue ballots to members who had not turned up to the discussion to hear both sides.

HEAD OFFICE

Even then, after voting, individual workplaces had no accounting for how they themselves had balloted as a group. Ballots were counted at head offices under the control of officials whose whole collective mission was to get the deal accepted. It is reported that the ITGWU ballot was so close to defeating the plan that Head Office delayed an announcement until more ballot papers

could be got in, resulting in the slimmest margin of support for the plan.

The FWUI vote was announced by Attley as "one and a half to one" in favour. Yet, to cap the whole anti-democratic charade, the FWUI cast all its ICTU votes against the deal instead of representing the proportions of yes and no votes of their members. So too the largest block, 48 votes, were all cast in favour, despite the doubtful and at best marginal victory of the yes votes.

LARGE OPPOSITION

Despite all these manipulations the Deal was opposed by 114 of the 295 delegates at the ICTU special delegate conference. In fact, a majority of the 56 unions attending voted against. Taking into account the close call in the major block-voting unions, it is clear that a determined, even if small, campaign could have helped to turn the vote around.

Tragically the centrist political groups which dominated the campaign of "Trade Unionists Against the Plan" were completely defeatist in their attitude to what could be

achieved. The IWG devoted resources out of proportion to our size to the campaign and committed it to a demonstration and lobby of the ICTU conference. But the largest group, the Socialist Workers' Movement, after publicly agreeing to organise for it, did no work for it and simply decided not to turn up. Only IWG maintained a presence with our placards and paper. The Militant Tendency, which had completely ignored the campaign in true sectarian tradition, turned up to sell their paper and distribute Labour Youth leaflets on a separate initiative at the start of the conference.

Obviously the mood of the working class is far in advance of the prophets of downturn and defeat in the Socialist Workers' Movement. A united left campaign must be rebuilt to give a coherent political lead in the battles that lie ahead.

The task facing socialists is to build in the trade unions a rank and file movement against the capitalist offensive on an action programme that connects with the goal of struggling for workers' power and the overthrow of capitalism.

ICTU Voting for the National Plan

Photo by Derek Speirs/Report



MARXIST CRITIQUE

GUERRILLA WARFARE

The tragic killing of 11 innocent civilians by an IRA bomb at Enniskillen could not but produce genuine anger, revulsion and incomprehension among the mass of ordinary working class people in Ireland and elsewhere. Whether the explanation of the IRA that the bomb was not meant for innocent civilians - an explanation the IWG accept - will be enough to convince them, we do not know. What we do know, however, is that they haven't or won't, be given the opportunity to freely and dispassionately consider the matter and the issues it raises about the methods and politics of the Republican movement.

For the incident has been cynically exploited by the governments of Thatcher and Haughey and the servile jackals of pulpit, press and media who do their bidding. Endless sermons and pious lectures have poured forth in torrents about the 'mindless terrorism', the 'evils of violence', the 'inhuman monsters of Republicanism'. The ratifying of the European Convention on Terrorism and the blanket swoop by 7,000 gardai with the arrests of scores of Republicans in the Republic, have been justified in the name of 'protecting' Irish society from the 'mad bombers' and 'psychopathic killers' of the IRA.

But the defenders and apologists for what passes as 'civilisation' in Britain and Ireland are highly selective in their condemnations of violence, and what they regard as 'terror'. We do not see sombre faced news readers describe the indiscriminate aerial bombing by US backed forces in EL Salvador as terror. Nor the disappearance, torture and systematic extermination of political dissidents as practised by US-backed death squads in Guatemala and Paraguay: nor the US funded murder machine called the Contras. The US and British governments are at one with the Israeli mass murder inflicted

upon the Palestinian people on the West Bank. No righteous protests of 'mad-dog' murders 'here'.

For Bourgeois governments in general collude in the monstrous lie that only those who commit violence against oppression are 'terrorists'. Such language is never used to describe the violence of the ruling classes anywhere, a violence which in the case of Ireland, through the judicial, legal and phisical force state machinery, the ruling classes of both states have been responsible for a degree of terror and oppression far outweighing anything the IRA has mounted in the last 18 years. But for revolutionary marxists in Ireland it is not enough to point out the obvious moral hypocrisy of those who rule our society. Nor is it enough to expose the reality behind it, namely that a war situation exists between the British state and government and a section of the anti-unionist population of the North, on whom the Republican movement depends for its ability to wage its struggle. It is this situation that produces different attitudes to violence in Ireland of the oppressor and the oppressed and which can only be explained *politically*. It has nothing to do with the nature of violence committed and everything

to do with the *social forces* committing political violence. The world's ruling classes are clear that they need to safeguard their system and private property, and the profits that go with it against anyone threatening to either overthrow it or as in the case of the Republican movement, to destabilise their rule here.

Their means of defending the profit system is to use professionally trained systematic *terror* against the actual or potential enemy, with bodies or armed men, the police, the army and all the coercive machinery of the state which is at the disposal of those who rule.

Revolution and Violence

This objective factor is at the *starting point* of a Marxist approach to the question of all violence. It is because the bourgeoisie everywhere have fought and will continue to fight like a trapped animal to retain its rule, that leads us as revolutionary socialists to state unequivocally that we regard violence as *inevitable* and *necessary*. Violence is necessary to defend the working class and oppressed, and to overthrow the whole historically obsolete system of imperial capitalism.

It is this understanding of the nature and roots of ruling-class violence that determines the revolutionary response of Marxists. We recognise that it is not the ill-will of particular members of the bourgeoisie that leads them to be responsible for the commission of the barbarous acts of their armies and police forces. Their violence is an integral feature of their social economic system. The strategic task facing revolutionary socialists is *not*, therefore, the elimination of individual members of the ruling class, no matter how repugnant these people may be. Our goal is not personal revenge. It is to organise the *masses* of exploited and oppressed to further the class struggle to its final resolution - the armed overthrow of the capitalist system in Ireland and worldwide. Force, 'terror', is used by workers for the defence of their immediate interests on the picket line against scabs or the physical attacks by police. Equally it is used for decisive action against the capitalist states, as in Russia in October 1917..

But under all conditions, for Marxists, it is terror conducted on a *mass*

scale, related *directly* to the actual level and tempo of the wider class-struggle of the masses for social and economic goals. Lenin made this position clear in his pamphlet "Where To Begin". Polemicising against a revolutionary current in Russia whose acts of terror against the autocracy bore no relation to mass struggle, he did not reject violence but argued:

"In principle we have never rejected, and cannot reject terror. Terror is one of the forms of military action that may be perfectly suitable and even essential at a definite juncture in the battle (i.e. in the Class Struggle), given a definite state of the troops and the existence of definite conditions. But the important point is that terror at this present time is by no means suggested as an operation for the "army" in the "field", but as an independent, occasional act unrelated to any "army".



For Marxists, then, the violence of the exploited and oppressed, ranging from the determined attempts by pickets, right through to the armed struggle of the masses for their own state power is explicable and justifiable. Underlying our defence of terror as used in the class struggle, is the different approach to *tactics* that Marxism has from all other tendencies.

"Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle. It recognises the most varied forms of struggle and does not "concoct" them; but only generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the moment. Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle" (Collected Works Vol.11 P.213 Lenin)

Lenin and Guerrilla Warfare

Lenin's point can be illustrated clearly with regard to the question of guerrilla warfare i.e. the action of small, mobile units of revolutionary fighters under the conditions of modern warfare in industrial society. The developments of military technique available to the modern capitalist

state make obsolete, as a general rule, the use of the *barricade* - the traditional 19th century forms of defense in the revolts of the oppressed.

"The third great lesson taught by Moscow concerns the tactics and organisation of the forces for an uprising. Military tactics depend upon the level of military techniques. This plain truth Engels demonstrated and brought home to Marxists....Kausky was right when he wrote that it is high time now, after Moscow, to review Engels' conclusions, and that Moscow had inaugurated "new barricade tactics". These tactics are the tactics of guerrilla warfare." Lenin. Lessons of the Moscow uprising 1905 p54.

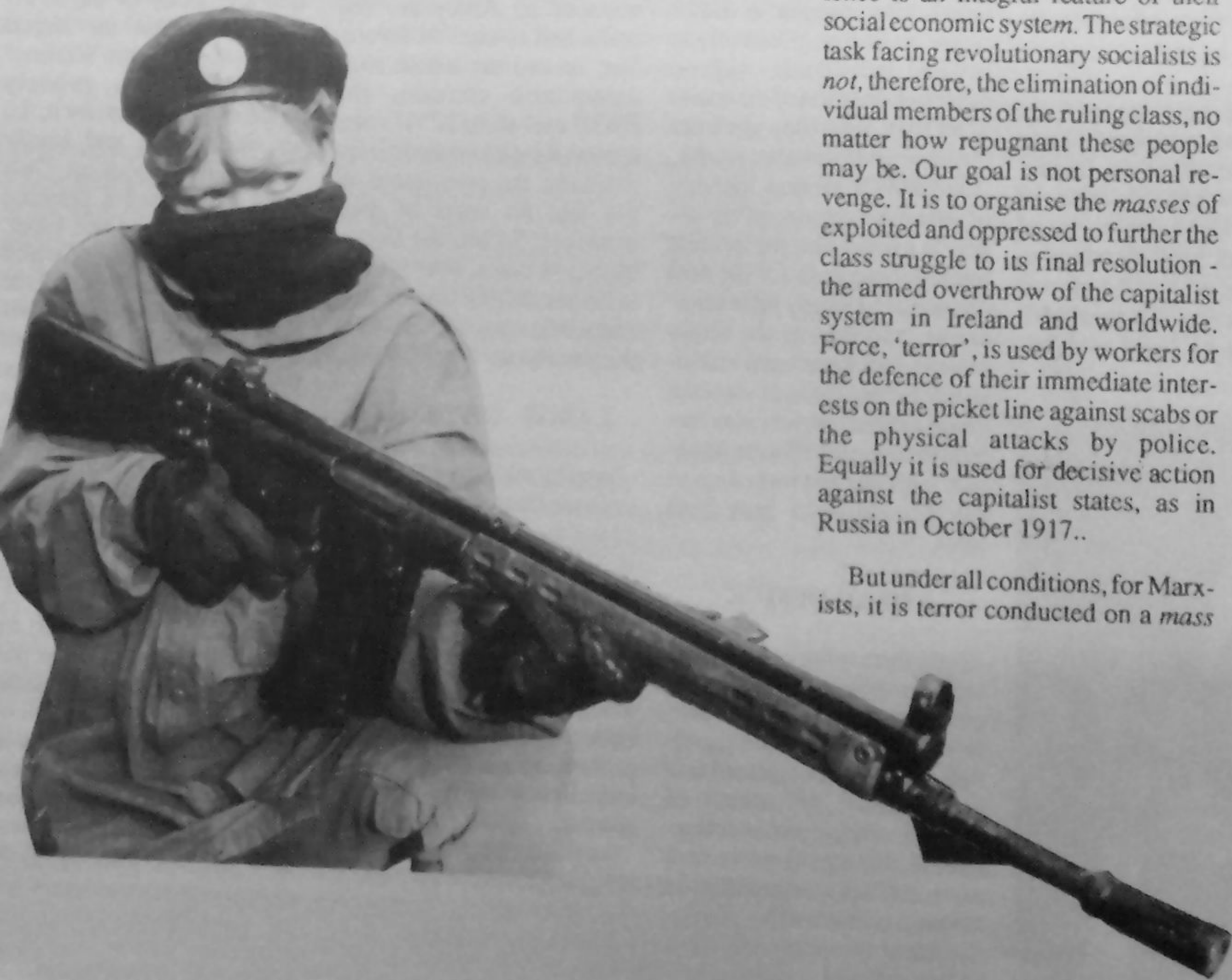
Lenin's espousal of the need for guerrilla warfare refers to the specific conditions in Russia during the mass insurrection of the 1905 revolution, a period that gave rise to enormous spontaneous waves of both mass violence and guerrilla activity against the old regime. Lenin, bemoaning the failure of his own movement to understand its significance, argued:

"And the guerrilla warfare and mass terror that have been taking place throughout Russia....will undoubtedly help the masses to learn the correct tactics of an uprising. Social Democracy (Marxism) must recognise this mass terror and incorporate it into its tactics, controlling it, subordinating it to the interests and conditions of the working class movement and the general revolutionary struggle, while eliminating and ruthlessly lopping off the hooligan perversion of this guerrilla warfare." (p55)

The "perversion" of guerrilla warfare castigated by Lenin consisted of acts of violence perpetrated by small groups of self-proclaimed leaders of the working class and other oppressed classes. Their acts were totally divorced from the "general movement of the class struggles of the masses". did not arouse them into mass action and revolt. As a result it allowed the ruling class and its state machine to launch savage attacks, physically and legally upon the organisations and liberties of the masses.

The Republican Movement

The guerrilla warfare carried on by the IRA, though not the "hooligan perversion" castigated by Lenin, has many of the features criticised by him. Clearly it *does* differ in that it is a movement which has a genuine base among a section of the nationalised working class in the North. In this crucial respect it differs from other violent organisations, among them the semi-criminal INLA factions in Ireland, the Italian Red Brigades, the Red Army Faction in Germany whose actions can rightly be condemned as



"individual terrorist". Compared with these organisations, the IRA (or the Palestinian fighters of the PLO) are genuine if irregular armies at war with vastly superior armies of the British and Israeli states. For that reason neither the IRA nor the PLO can be described, scientifically, as "individual terrorist", nor in the language of the bourgeoisie as "terrorists".

What the IRA shares with individual terrorist organisations, however, is that its strategy and tactics and methods of military warfare flows from a political programme which ignores of necessity, the real class basis of both the British Imperialist and Irish capitalist states. Such a reality means concretely that the physical force campaign of revolutionary nationalism is divorced from the social, economic and political conditions, needs and struggles of the mass of anti-unionist, southern (and protestant) workers and other oppressed groups. It means concretely, that taken as a whole, its strategy cannot offer a way forward. Since 1972 it has been responsible for driving the once active hundreds of thousands North and South - on whose backs its one spectacular political victory of bringing down the Stormont Parliament was achieved - into passivity or the arms of the SDLP. The bombing campaign which, in the fantasy of an ever-receding 'year of victory', reduced the towns and villages of Ulster to rubble, causing many deaths and injuries to innocent civilians, handed the state forces North and South the perfect excuse to straightjacket British and Irish society with the most repressive anti-democratic legislation in Europe.

Of course repression would have been the inevitable response of imperialism to all the struggles of the oppressed against the Northern state, whatever their strategy. What still distinguishes, the IRA campaign is that its elitist methods of guerrilla action provokes repression while rendering the anti-unionist masses passive in the face of state terror.

For example the IRA has defended the bombing campaign as 'tying down' the security forces at enormous expense to the British state. The truth is, however, that both London and Dublin have massively expanded and financed the anti-republican security apparatus continuously for 20 years.

By the same token the IRA believes that the RUC and military bases can be made inoperative by threats to kill employers and workers in companies servicing the barracks. The truth is that, whatever short-term logistical hiccup they undoubtedly cause, there is no long-term weakening of the capacity of the British state to maintain its capacity for repression. More importantly, it strikes a deadly blow at the very idea of workers' self organisation as a class force against repression and the Northern state. Likewise across the whole spectrum of political and social struggles of women, workers, students and youth, a blanket of defencelessness and passivity has further isolated and demoralised militants and socialists as the poison of anti IRA 'law and order' hysteria floods from the media. Even those within the anti-unionist communities from whence the IRA derive most of its

immediate support are defenceless before the state forces in such an atmosphere. What else can explain how, despite the mobilisation of hundreds of thousands around the hunger strikes, hundreds of republicans and supporters could be arraigned before show-trials without any serious campaign for mass resistance to them - mass resistance which, alone, can lay the basis for an answer on how to adequately defend the communities from the British army, the RUC and UDR thugs.

Condemnation - Why?

The IWG condemnation of the IRA bomb at Enniskillen flows from the analysis of the politics of the Republican movement and their inherent methods. As revolutionary marxists we solidarize with their movement against the forces of British imperialism. We stand politically with the working class against the republican movement because of the basis of its general non working class nationalist politics but more specifically with regard to particular actions such as Enniskillen. Such actions merely give life and strength to the class enemy striking a deadly blow at the class struggle in these islands. A movement that continues to assert that the class enemy in these islands can be defeated by such methods is profoundly wrong. For it ignores the very economic and social foundations of the system from which the enemy draws and renews its strength afresh and is an obstacle, not an answer in the struggle for socialism.



INTERNATIONAL

THE DANGERS of the Central American 'Arias Peace Plan' agreed in August are becoming increasingly obvious. Last month the Sandinista leadership agreed a number of major concessions to the demands of the US imperialists and their supporters inside Nicaragua

SANDINISTAS IN RETREAT

The Government in Nicaragua has agreed to open negotiations with the Contras. here the situation is described in the light of the 'Arias Peace Plan'

Reagan' and as being in the pay of the CIA! Another of Reagan's mouth-pieces, the bourgeois paper *La Prensa*, was also allowed to start republishing. Within a fortnight it was announcing that the US Senate had voted \$250,000 'to ensure the survival of democratic institutions in Nicaragua including *La Prensa* and democratic political parties of the opposition!

This sudden about face on the part of the government was decided in the usual 'democratic' manner. Debate and discussion was limited to the 'Nine Commandantes' of the revolution who announced the new measures to the 'mass organisations'. So dramatic was the turn about that even the *Economist* commented on the 'baffled silence' that greeted Ortega's announcements at a rally in Managua on 5 November. Active opposition to these concessions appears to be limited to the 'mothers of heroes and martyrs' who have demonstrated against the amnesty and clashed with pro-Contra organisations like the '22 January mothers' movement.

There is no doubt that the agree-

Six Hundred people demonstrated in Dublin on Nov 7th, led by Labour left-wingers, demanding the implementation of the Arias peace plan, protesting at US attempts to undermine it. The IWG did not support that demonstration, because, as explained in this article, its central demand was profoundly mistaken, whatever the good intentions of the marchers eager to defend Nicaragua. Our unconditional support for Nicaragua against US imperialism does not for one moment oblige us to hide our opposition to the petty-bourgeois nationalist politics of the Sandinistas.

ment to the August accords and the latest concessions that flow from it are the result of the desperate economic situation facing the regime. The US economic blockade combined with the US funded Contra war (the fighting of which now takes up almost all the Nicaraguan government's budget) have led the Sandinistas to desperately seek a deal with the US government. The US administration is busy claiming that the Contra attacks combined with dwindling soviet support is forcing the Sandinistas to compromise. There is no doubt that Gorbachev's search for detente has led to clear signals that the FSLN must make its peace with Washington for the best price it can get.

All of these factors have led the Sandinistas to place their hopes more and more in a diplomatic, rather than a military solution to the war with the Contras. It has meant placing the fate of the Nicaraguan revolution, the gains of the workers and peasants, in the hands of the Catholic church and the US Democrats. Ortega's trip to Washington ended with negotiations taking place between himself, Obando and Jim Wright, Speaker of the House of Representatives, at the Vatican Embassy!

While the Reagan administration has been forced to promise 'a meeting' with the FSLN government if 'serious' talks with the Contras get

under way, it is clear they still want a lot more compromises from the Sandinistas. Despite the supposed running out of aid to the Contras, US reporters have all pointed out that arms shipments have been massively increased recently. Now deliveries of Redeye missiles have allowed a serious offensive to be launched in the provinces of Chontales and Celaya Central. The Sandinistas estimate that the CIA makes three flights a day from Honduras to supply Contras inside Nicaragua. (Honduras is one of the signatories to the 'Peace Accord'! In the week the National Assembly approved an amnesty for prisoners, Contras killed six children in a creche in San Juan de Sur, in a dawn raid. Against the Counter Revolution

The real defence of the workers' and peasants' interest in Nicaragua lies not in the good offices of the church or the Democrats, but in an intransigent struggle against the counter-revolution and its agents inside Nicaragua—the capitalists, big farmers and church hierarchy. It means not relying on diplomacy but fighting to spread the revolution throughout Central America; not relying on the Democrats but attempting to rally the US labour movement against the murderous wars being pursued against Nicaragua by the US government.

- Down with the Arias 'Peace Plan'!
- For a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government in Nicaragua!
- For a socialist federation of Central America!

Obando and *La Prensa*

Obando has long been one of the Sandinista's most virulent critics, using his position as head of the Nicaraguan Catholic Church to organise against the government. He was the Contra's first choice as intermediary and only last July Ortega described him as 'an accomplice to the whims of

The Real Limits of Glasnost?

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV'S plans for a bureaucratic restructuring (perestroika) of the Soviet economy and of Soviet politics have suffered a serious setback. He has been forced to sacrifice Boris Yeltsin—Moscow Party chief and long time Gorbachev ally—to the conservative sections of the bureaucracy who were clamouring for his blood.

Gorbachev is in a tight political squeeze. On the one hand there are countless millions of state managers and ministerial functionaries who are resisting any challenge to their featherbedded and privileged existence. To the marrow of their bones they loath any prospect of greater democracy and the need for change. On the other hand the mass of Soviet workers are growing daily more impatient with a regime that talks so much of change while all around them things stay the same. They grow more cynical about a regime where the material goods shortage grows greater, where food supplies diminish, but where the leadership sing the praises of change, progress and improvement.

Boris Yeltsin gave voice to this mounting contradiction. In a decaying capital city policed by some of the most corrupt mafias of the Brezhnev era he promised a crack-down on privilege and graft. To a citizenry grown weary of queues and shortages he promised action and results. No wonder he fell foul of the conservative cabals of the Moscow and Soviet bureaucracy. He broke the rules of the game by promising improvement and by challenging entrenched bureaucratic conservatism.

Yeltsin unleashed more than he could control. True he harangued conservatism and purged the old guard in the Moscow committee. But for the mass of workers reconstruction brought no tangible gain. While the masses remained cynical, the most conservative bureaucrats were sharpening their knives for Boris Yeltsin's throat.

Squeezed between the two Yeltsin let loose his attack on conservatives obstructing the process of change. And fearful of what this would signal to the masses the inner ranks of the Soviet bureaucracy meshed together to hurl Yeltsin into the political wilderness.

This was a victory for the most conservative and immediately repressive wing of the bureaucracy. They have dealt an important blow to Gorbachev. Yet it will have a profoundly educative effect on those Soviet workers who have looked to Gorbachev to ease the burden of material shortages and bureaucratic caprice that they are daily subject to. The mass of workers were already deeply sceptical about the reformist bureaucracy's ability to deliver the goods. Gorbachev has proved their point by ditching the most vocal scourge of the old guard conservatives.

Countless bureaucrats have been keeping their heads low while repeating ritual phrases about the need for democratisation and openness. They will feel that much bolder now that Gorbachev has ditched Yeltsin. Their hand has been strengthened against the destabilising changes that Gorbachev remains committed to.

To those who were taken in by the Soviet bureaucracy's recent conversion to openness and democratisation this episode must be a revelation of

how little has really changed. In the new dawn of *glasnost* Yeltsin's Central Committee speech, for which he has been pilloried, has never been published. In the fresh air of 'democratisation' Yeltsin has been attacked with a venom reminiscent of the Stalin days. Yeltsin has been denounced as an ultra-left. And for why? Because he attacked the city's network of special shops for functionaries and sacked scores of party officials. Many workers will doubtless conclude that they too are 'ultra-left' like Yeltsin. In words reserved normally for Leon Trotsky, Yeltsin was attacked for 'excessive conceit and desire to be always on the front stage' at the staged meeting where the Politburo were prosecutor, judge and jury.

There is evidence that the Yeltsin affair has angered many supporters of reform. At Moscow University an unofficial student meeting demanded that Yeltsin's speech be published so that they could judge who was right and wrong. In the face of increased police harassment independent political clubs have tried to hold protest meetings in factories. There are reports of a two day protest general strike in Sverdlovsk—the town where Yeltsin was previously Party Secretary. All of this will be marked down by the most conservative wing of the bureaucracy as the noxious effects of tampering with change and bureaucratic self-criticism.

Gorbachev comes out of this affair with his own base severely weakened. The forces against reconstruction, that Gorbachev himself has warned about, will step up their campaign against those aspects of the *perestroika* they most object to. They will feel encouraged to step up police harassment of independent political activity, to clampdown on criticisms of privilege and graft and to slow down the tempo of turnover amongst the party and state functionaries. They will call the shots to Gorbachev.

With the economy growing less rapidly than last year Gorbachev has little to show for his years in power and his reforming talk. The immediate period ahead, with enterprises having to become self-financing or go bust and with large price increases looming, will put his author-

ity to the sharpest of tests.

In his search for allies to boost his authority within the bureaucracy Gorbachev is looking to enlist the key political figures in the imperialist camp to his support. Summit politics with them can not only ease the arms burden on the Soviet economy. It can help stabilise Gorbachev's leadership within the USSR by seeming to provide definite fruits in foreign policy even if his domestic policies are in a mess.

That is why Gorbachev will milk the December summit for all its worth. Photo sessions with Thatcher, fire-side talks with Reagan and initialing ceremonies on arms reduction are meant to buttress Gorbachev against those who oppose him. And, at present, Reagan and Thatcher are prepared to lend him a helping hand. The will do so as long as his 'reconstruction' in the USSR is coupled with Soviet concessions to imperialism globally—most importantly in Afghanistan and Nicaragua.

From its inception the *perestroika* had within it the potential of stimulating political life in the Soviet working class once again after years of repression, apathy and cynicism. To the extent it did so and to the extent it destabilised political rule it was bound to meet a massive bureaucratic rear-guard action.

How that the conservatives have struck back Soviet workers must heed the warnings, they must organise their forces to defend and extend any opening for independent political action. But most vitally they must organise to overthrow the entire monstrous bureaucratic caste that is strangling Soviet society and squandering the fruits of its labour.

The planned economy of the USSR can only be overhauled to meet human needs, and the Soviet workers can only have their own democracy when they have destroyed the power of the bureaucracy and taken political power directly into their own hands.



For 200 years capitalist industry in north-east Ulster has benefited continuously from a huge surplus of cheap labour, a reserve army of the unemployed. And ever since the defeat of the United Irishmen in 1798 the Unionists, backed by Britain, used that competition among workers for jobs as the means of dividing the working class along religious lines in order to build a popular bloc of bosses and Protestant workers under the banner of Orangeism, against the Irish national movement.

The sectarian allocation of jobs was carried out at times by open intimidation and pogroms, but for the most part it was systematically implemented by Orange lodges, ghetto associations, and sectarianised workplace organisations, penetrating even the trade unions.

Prior to 1914 the trade union movement in Ireland raised up powerful campaigners, such as James Connolly and Jim Larkin, against sectarian discrimination, but after 1920 it permanently collaborated with the Northern Ireland state which effectively legitimised job discrimination. The all-Ireland trade union bureaucracy ensured there would be no accountability for these policies despite the nationalist majority in the working class.

The northern state proved itself irreformable when demands for political equality in 1968 were met by brute force and, after the fall of the Stormont Parliament, by military repression and empty British promises of anti discrimination reforms.

REFUSING TO FIGHT DISCRIMINATION

In 1987 northern unemployment was two and a half times as high among Catholics as among Protestants. Shorts, the biggest manufacturer in the province with 5000 workers employs 95% Protestants, despite its effective control by the British state.

The constitutional nationalist

SDLP refused to fight for real reform despite their anxiety to undermine Sinn Féin's prestige among anti-unionist workers. At the same time the Republicans' elitist armed struggle left anti-unionist workers passive and relegated all mass struggle on concrete issues of repression or reforms.

The success, however, of Irish-American solidarity groups in imposing the MacBride Principles as conditions on some US investments in the Six Counties, put job discrimination in the limelight again. So much so that Britain sent a full-time career diplomat campaigning against them in the US and John Hume and even some Irish trade union leaders have gone there to argue against the MacBride principles as a "threat to new investment". U.S. capital in the North amounts to \$1.2 billion, employing 11% of manufacturing workers in 25 firms.

NO WAY FORWARD

Despite Thatcher's anger at the notice that the MacBride Principles have received among US investors, this anti-discrimination charter offers no way forward to anti-imperialist workers.

Uncritical support for this "charter" can become a serious diversion and source of confusion. A conference of the British "Labour Committee on Ireland" on Nov. 28th put the MacBride Principles to the fore as the supposed key to workers' solidar-

ers as unavoidable, to be endured until sentences were completed or independence achieved.

Campaigns against repression have always been confined to appeals for humanitarian sympathy for those facing torture, juryless courts and prison regimes. Republicanism has never seen the political fight to mobilise mass action against repression as a crucial part of the struggle against Imperialism. The period of the hunger strikes might seem to contradict this but reading these two very different books, Beresford's *Ten Men Dead*, and Clarke's *Broadening the Battlefield*, graphically exposes these weaknesses of Republicanism on this question.

Sands and the prisoners felt strongly the need to fight the policy of criminalisation, which was one of the propaganda pillars of the British counter-offensive after the mid-seventies truce. Over the four years before the Hunger Strike they endured increasingly harsh conditions to maintain the principle and to provide an example to inspire a campaign. Their hopes were repeatedly dashed as the movement's leadership proved unable and indeed unwilling to take the issue up.

Adams and the leadership were sensitive to the threat to the military campaign posed by the escalation of the blanket and dirty protests into a wider struggle which might prove fruitless in the end. Such an outcome

New Light on H-Block Struggle?

There is a long tradition of republican prisoners bravely resisting British prison regimes. Bobby Sands followed in this tradition when he defiantly declared

"I am now in the H-Blocks where I refuse to suit the people who oppress me".

Prison discipline is used by the state to break the spirit of imprisoned anti-imperialist fighters. Resistance by those imprisoned is an important first step in fighting back against this branch of the state's oppressive machinery. But it can only be a first step in any struggle to defend those prisoners and to smash state repression. The burden of that struggle must remain with those outside the prison.

Traditionally Republicanism has tended to look to the prisoners to defeat the system by self-sacrifice and the maintenance of military discipline or else has viewed the ferocious repression meted out to prison-

Job Discrimination in Northern Ireland

ity with the oppressed nationalist working class, but at the cost of pushing further into the background the fight for solidarity with those daily confronting imperialist repression. Turning their back on this key task in the wake of Enniskillen, the LCI evaded the open call, among British workers, for British Troops Out and Irish self-determination.

of the national oppression of the anti-unionist minority.

How then should we pose the issue of struggle against discrimination in jobs?

CLASS STRUGGLE METHODS

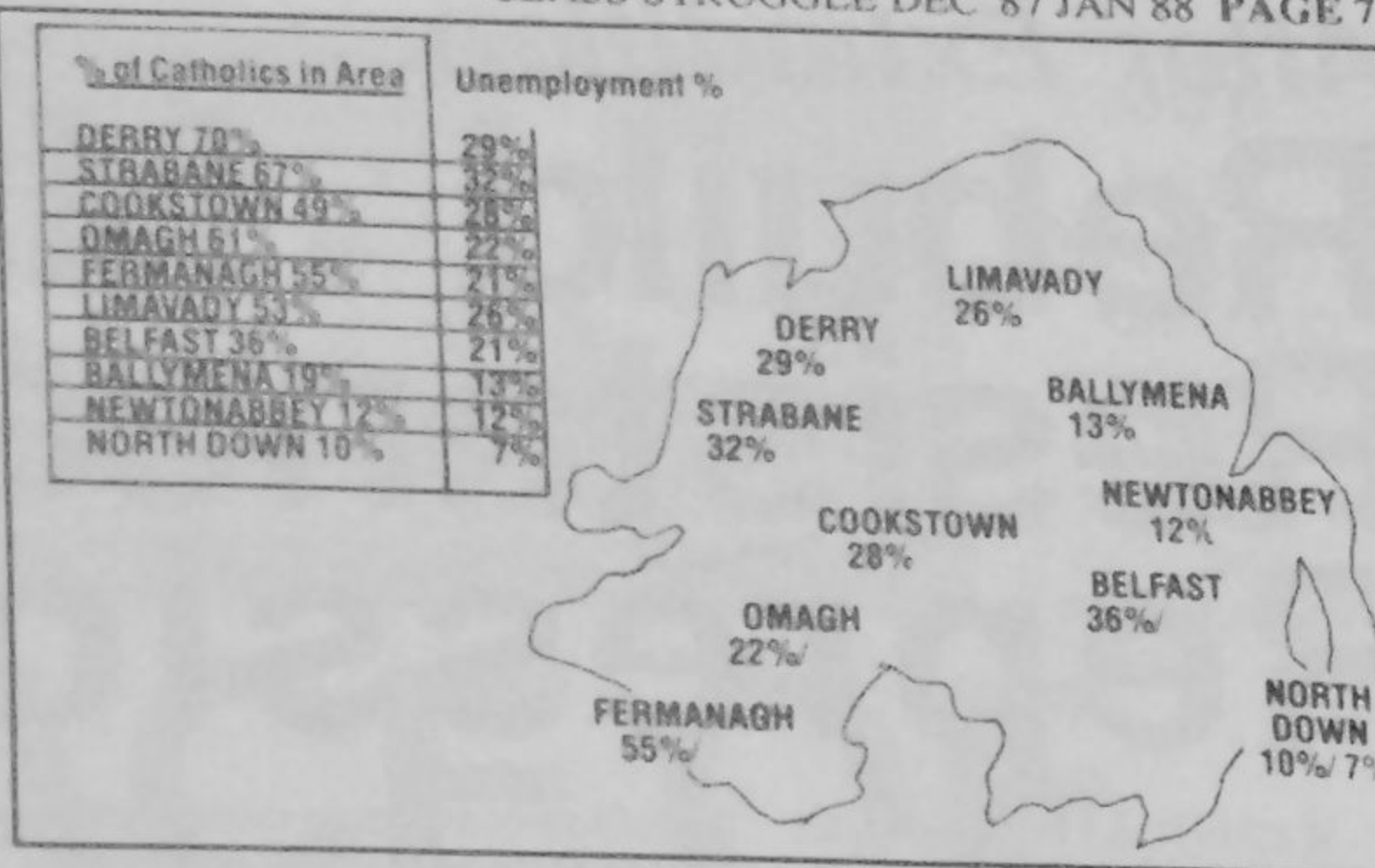
The issue of job discrimination shows just how necessary it is to wage the anti-Partition struggle on the basis of an explicitly working class programme. The starting point for such a programme must be the recognition that Protestant and Catholic workers and their families and communities both suffer unemployment, emigration, cuts and declining standards of living. For both

which puts this goal of full employment to the fore can hope to appeal to Catholic and Protestant workers to implement anti-sectarian measures in the allocation of new jobs.

The struggle for equality in new job allocations, training and apprenticeships must never be posed as a struggle of organised catholic workers against organised protestant workers for scarce jobs. Within the organised workers' movement unity must be fought for to implement equality measures under workers' control.

RELYING ON THE BOSSES

The MacBride principles are as much concerned with getting catholics into management as getting workers into jobs. They envisage the bosses will enforce anti-discrimination measures, the bosses will ensure "security" for catholic workers, and the bosses will decide what posters, leaflets or emblems workers may have in the workplace - with the collaboration of the trade union bureaucracy where possible, of course. In 11 years since the Equal Opportunities declaration was trumpeted as a step forward in the north, 17 out of 26 councils and 185 out of 415 engineering firms refused to sign it. And some of those who did blatantly continue to discriminate against catholics! So much for relying on the bosses or the public authorities of the capitalist state to deliver equality! Whatever advantages particular bosses may see for themselves in playing this role, we can be certain it



is not the interests of the workers they have in mind.

Sinn Féin's document "Tackling Discrimination" adopted at the 1987 Ard-Fheis gives unqualified support to the MacBride "ethical investment campaign", saying "Investors have a responsibility for the provision of equality in employment. They should be obliged to uphold that responsibility". This is the language of liberal capitalists, not of socialists.

The working class in Ireland, and workers' solidarity movements abroad cannot afford to share these illusions in the methods of the MacBride principles. We neither demand nor rely upon "ethical investment" policies from the capitalist class nor, of course, do we oppose such action by investors where they occur.

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

Yes, we demand legal obligations on employers to employ catholic workers in proportion to their numbers, but we place no faith in the willingness of the bosses state to implement such laws. Workers themselves must fight to impose their demands on the employers and on the union bureaucracy; the workers themselves must openly monitor

employment practices!

We fight for action by workers throughout the trade unions in solidarity with every concrete struggle by Six-County workers against employment discrimination. We fight to mobilise the widest possible trade union campaigns of education and inquiry nationally, and across the British unions organising in the North, to win over organised sections of protestant workers to recognise and reject sectarian discrimination.

But the basis for success in such struggles within the Northern state is weak because of the nature of the sectarian state itself and of the hardened divisions in the working class upon which that state survives. Only struggle can decide what can be gained, and every such gain by the working class movement in the north can weaken the class alliance of Unionism upon which the survival of the sectarian state depends.

But the fight against discrimination can only become a real step forward when it is linked by a working class movement and revolutionary party to the complete dismantling of Partition and the Northern state, as one key task in a revolution against Imperialism and Irish capitalism as a whole.



one for socialists, republicans and solidarity movements to take up. But it would be utopian to believe that any struggle for reforms within industry, no matter how determined, could ever dissolve the material basis

sections their primary need as a class in response to joblessness is to fight for massive schemes of useful public works financed by the state at trade union rates and under workers' control. Only a party and movement

REVIEW

National H-Block Campaign - A Turning Point

By 1979, however, as the blanket protest grew, Sinn Fein were forced to make a turn towards the need for a more systematic mass campaign. The key decision was clearly that of the Republican leadership in advance of the October 1979 Green Briar conference.



ference. Faced with the growing threat of a hunger strike, they sought to cut their losses by agreeing to reduce the issue from political status to the five demands. This was designed to confine the campaign to a humanitarian appeal to Fianna Fail, the Church and the SDLP, backed only by street demonstrations. Bobby Sands in particular appears to have been critical of this approach. He wrote in his diary: "the issue at stake is not 'humanitarian', nor about better or improved living conditions. It is purely political

cal and only a political solution will solve it." (Clarke P.154)

But Sands' criticisms remained strictly limited. As a republican his politics left him unable to formulate an alternative approach which put the fight for mass industrial action at the centre of the campaign. Significantly, no call came from the prisons to turn the campaign towards the organised working class. The IWG were virtually alone in systematically arguing at the Green Briar conference and throughout the campaign that political status must remain the central demand and that the organised class action of workers was the only adequate basis.

Hunger Strike

Clarke's book is more explicitly concerned with political issues than Beresford's. Clarke sees the Hunger Strike as a watershed in the history of the Provisionals. But he proves himself quite unable to understand what has occurred. He does not start from recognising that the provisionals represent the resistance of Ulster catholic working class communities to the ferocious assaults of loyalism and Imperialism. It seems that for Clarke the provisionals are no more than a sectarian paramilitary organisation. They are even wrongly referred to at one point as having "fascist tendencies" (P.131).

He is interested in analysing the hunger strike because he needs to explain how such a purely military

organisation has got so involved in 'politics'. He sees a contradiction between military and political action deeply embedded in the Republican movement today. He believes that the hunger strike caused that and confidently predicts that the contradictions will soon come to the surface. But because Clarke does not recognise the roots of the Provisionals in the anti-imperialist struggle, he is unable to explore the contradictions in their politics and military campaign in any depth.

As Trotskyists we are not opposed in principle to hunger strikes. One of the largest and, for a time, most successful hunger strikes ever was organised by Trotskyists in Stalin's camps in October 1936. Over a thousand went on indefinite hunger strike causing chaos for Stalin's police and seriously destabilising the ferocious discipline of the Siberian camps. They won all their demands. It was a great victory. It was also short-lived. Stalin restored order in the camps by the expedient of mass execution of the Trotskyists whom he recognised as the only organised leaders of resistance.

The Trotskyists themselves were not surprised at this outcome. Their leader, Gevorgian, had been clear that the hunger strike was a last desperate tactic in the face of the imminent threat of the smashing of their organisation within the camps. They were, he recognised, physically isolated from the organisations of the working class outside the camps to

which they might have appealed for support. The Left Opposition in the Soviet Union had itself been completely destroyed.

The conditions for the blanketmen were quite different. The isolation they faced which forced them onto a hunger strike was not the product of the smashing of the struggle against Imperialism but was the product of their own politics. This is the most important lesson of the Hunger Strike. When no bait offered, and no brutality imposed, by the British State could get these prisoners to abandon their demand for political status, the course of action dictated by their own republican politics forced them into a humanitarian cross class alliance, based on action limited to publicity and protest, making a plea for humanitarian treatment - when what was needed was a working class mobilisation with strike action as a key method, for the political status demand. The politics of Republican Nationalism threaten the whole fight against Imperialism with the same paradoxical fate of courageous defeat.

Ten Men Dead by David Beresford, Grafton Books £4.54.

Broadening The Battlefield. The H-Blocks and the Rise of Sinn Fein by Liam Clarke, Gill & Macmillan £6.95.

in demoralising the anti-unionist community, could undermine the IRA's new 'Long War' perspective in which the active support of the community was a key factor.

The Long War Strategy

Part of the 'Long War' strategy was indeed to build up Sinn Fein's party activity in the anti-imperialist areas. But this move into 'community politics' was envisaged as developing slowly and under close I.R.A. supervision. Its purpose was to prevent the isolation of the I.R.A. from the population of the areas from which they had to operate. It was not to be based on any organisation or mobilisation of those working class areas against imperialism. Less still did it aim at the defence of their economic interests, but was to consist merely in a greater republican involvement in existing 'community' activity. It was this scenario which was threatened either by a defeat of the struggle or by a perspective which made that struggle into the very basis of a mass campaign against Britain.

Both these books offer narratives of what actually happened. Beresford's Ten Men Dead is very much the better of the two as a narrative of events. His account is clear, to the point and deeply moving. He attempts to treat the hunger strike as a human tragedy, but this involves avoiding political questions, an impossible task.

After Extradition...

Rebuild Mass Resistance to Repression

Irish Workers Group

Class Struggle

THE RATIFICATION by the Haughey government of the Extradition Act totally confirms the view that Fianna Fail is a party wedded to the defence of imperialist capitalism in Ireland.

For months Republican News and the national anti-extradition campaign, dominated by Sinn Fein, have been carrying glowing reports of the growing number of Fianna Fail TDs, councillors, regional officers, and rank and file members who, allegedly, were opposed "tooth and nail" to Haughey's intentions to implement the act. It was upon these "soldiers of destiny" they argued that a real movement could be built to stop the government in its tracks in handing over republicans to the British army and the RUC in the North.

Alas for pipe dreams! The whole Fianna Fail party voted without exception against all the amendments by the Opposition and ratified the new extradition arrangements directed against republican fighters.

The cosmetic amendments by Haughey to the 1965 Extradition Act - whereby the Attorney General will scrutinise all extradition demands by the British government was enough to convince the Fianna Fail "dissidents" to fall quietly into line behind their leadership. Their "republican principles" melted like snow before the sun when Haughey raised the possibility of a general election if the government was defeated. This, plus the massively orchestrated wave of anti-republican propaganda following Enniskillen, cruelly exposed the worthlessness of the Fianna Fail opposition and the illusions of Sinn Fein.

Republican News of November 3rd carried not a word of explanation for the abject collapse of those on whom it rested its main hopes of resisting the Act. Seán Mac Manus, party chairman of Sinn Fein, is reported as saying "It was to stifle such opposition that the amendments to the 1965 act were introduced." No explanation

of how come the so-called intransigence of the Fianna Fáil opposition had so completely disappeared when Haughey's amendments, which Sinn Fein correctly describe as mere shadow boxing, were introduced.

And yet there had been clear evidence of real opposition to extradition among large numbers of the working class in the South, many of whom undoubtedly vote Fianna Fail, if they vote at all. The real question was around what perspective for concrete action and struggle could such opposition North and South be organised to build an effective campaign?

Certainly not, as events have, once more tragically revealed by peddling illusions "the rank and file" of Fianna Fail could be turned against their leadership to any serious effect. Such a view willfully and blindly ignores every lesson of history since the foundation of Fianna Fáil in 1926. It is the major party of capitalist stability in Ireland, cynically using republican rhetoric all the better to ruthlessly stamp out any threat to the "good order" of imperialist capitalist rule here.

Photo - Derek Speirs/Report



Austrian Students Shatter Social Peace

A MASSIVE student strike in Austria has shattered decades of social peace. This report from Arbeiter Standpunkt, the Austrian section of the MRCI, looks at the development of the strike.

SINCE THE formation one year ago of the coalition government between the Austrian Socialist Party (SPO) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) the attacks on the working class have increased. The nationalised industries are being prepared for privatisation by mass redundancies. Social services are being cut.

LACINA BILL

The coalition recently launched its latest attack in the form of the 'Lacina Bill'. This programme of cuts included measures which would mean that students could have to pay up to £5,000 for their courses. This is, quite obviously an attack on working class students

whose parents cannot possibly pay such fees. The government also wants to ensure greater political control over courses. They want to introduce business sponsorship so that private capital can have the final say in what is taught.

On 19 October students at a departmental meeting of the University of Vienna discussed these proposals after hearing of the government's new plans. They decided—against the opposition of the student organisation of the Austrian CP (the KSV)—to call for an immediate occupation of the University. Within two days an all out strike of students had paralysed all institutions of higher education in Austria.

The part of Vienna University which was occupied became the organising centre of the

strike. A committee was formed on the basis of two delegates per striking faculty. These delegates were responsible to, and recallable by, their daily faculty meetings. The official representation of the students, the Austrian High School Students (ÖH) is an institutionalised body, not a union. But even it could not openly oppose the strike. Instead it proposed suspending the strike during negotiations with the government.

This was successfully opposed by the student movement which turned against the whole Lacina Bill and against privatisation. This was a very good start for the movement and a promising basis for political development. Unfortunately, the left was not strong enough to develop this into a clear class approach. A lot of effort was

wasted in trying to win over the right wing students and the ÖH to fully supporting the action when it was more important to fight for an orientation to, and support from, the threatened workers in the nationalised industries. As a bulletin issued by Arbeiter Standpunkt pointed out, the most important lesson of the French students' victory against Chirac was the link between the students and the French workers.

MASS DEMONSTRATION

The activism of the first week of the strike, however, did result in the massive national demonstration of 24 October. With some 50,000 workers, students and school students this was the biggest demo on social issues for decades in Austria. Over the

same weekend a national coordinating committee was established and this called for a continuation of the strike. Nonetheless, there were signs that the movement had reached the limit of spontaneous mobilisation.

Some faculties had already called off the strike, others decided on 'alternative' actions during the week. Even in Vienna, the centre of the movement, the strike committee was losing direction and dynamism as it struggled for unanimous agreement on everything in its daily 10-15 hour sessions.

LINKS TO WORKERS

The stagnation might have led to the end of the strike but for a new lease of life offered by a two day strike by lower grade lecturers. This helped the strike to survive the second week. It

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It is precisely from such a perspective that flow all of Sinn Féin's illusions in Fianna Fail. It explains why Fianna Fail leaders, from the foundation of the party to today have successfully outwitted the republican

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FOR MASS RESISTANCE

Urgent steps must be taken to rally all republican, working class and socialist militants to lay the basis for a new campaign that can halt the retreat.

This can best begin by convening urgently a national open democratic conference for all activists opposed to Extradition. The Derry Anti-Extradition Committee has already offered to host such a conference.

But such a new campaign must have done with all illusions in Fianna Fáil and turn to the forces of the working class in its communities and workplaces, and to the methods of the class struggle, especially the fight for industrial action against the sharpest attacks.

- Repeal the Extradition Act!
- Smash special courts and abolish all repressive legislation.
- For a national conference now!
- For a united front in action of workers socialists and republicans.

was during that week that links made the week before at one of the threatened nationalised plants, were developed and students leafleted the plant twice. The result was a one hour 'warning strike'.

Without a major reorientation to such work the student strike lost direction and began to collapse in the third week. Nobody dared to pronounce it over, but it ended all the same.

In as much as the Lacina Bill was not stopped the movement was not victorious, even though some minor concessions were made. However, it must not be forgotten that student political consciousness took a real leap forward in those weeks. Out of the movement political 'workshops' have developed and it is in these that revolutionaries must now organise to draw out the lessons of the strike and, in particular, the need for an orientation towards the working class.

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