

# IRISH WORKERS' VOICE

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

We have no room for illusions in our struggle, least of all for illusions about freedom.—Connolly.

## BRAVO BELFAST, WORKERS SALUTE YOU!

### NEGOTIATIONS WITH BRITAIN FAIL

#### Forward To United Republic!

**A** SIDDEN and in the negotiations between the delegates of Southern Ireland and the British imperialist representatives took place on Saturday.

While no full statement has been issued as yet to press, the reported political correspondence on both sides of the Channel show clearly that when it was reported that the British State delegates were not prepared to accept the full demands of the British Government that it would be useless to prolong the discussion.

The Free State was confined strictly to the legal aspects of the land question, but the British representative made it quite clear that unless the validity of all previous agreements, secret and otherwise, was recognized they could not continue the discussion.

One thing was brought out clearly as a result of the failure of the discussions, and that was that no attempt was made to raise the central question of the unity and independence of Ireland and the scrapping of the Treaty of 1921.

This has been made quite clear by Mr. DeValera, the Southern Irish Commissioner, who strongly demanded that Mr. De Valera had raised the question. Mr. De Valera, he said, "authorizes me to deny the question fully. It is quite ridiculous."

The above clearly that from the Irish struggle with Britain is limited to securing concessions and maintaining that it is not holding the measure of Irish workers and working farmers and the national Republican forces who placed in office to secure concessions from British imperialism and keep the whole question within parliamentary channels.

The invitation of the struggle against British imperialism can only be in capitalization to imperialist pressure or by means of a general election gave the way for a return of the Congress Party.

It is not without significance that Mr. Connolly gave his blessing to the reopening of the negotiations, but was the wage reduction of Mr. DeValera at the Irish Labour Party Conference on Friday last something which he said that it might be necessary at some future date to put Connolly in attendance in office again.

In this situation, it may be clearly stated that freedom from imperialist oppression can only be secured by a revolutionary struggle and that the work, including policy of Fianna Fail and its willful failure to secure the limited demands of the abolition of the Oath and the non-payment of Land Annuities, but also evade the main issue—complete separation of Ireland from British imperialism.

Neither DeValera nor Empire and not as a party to British imperialism; no arbitration with British imperialism; non-payment of pensions to the ex-British imperialists; and the I.R.C.; the abolition of the Oath and the withdrawal of the C.I.D.—these are the demands of the toiling masses of Ireland.

### RELIEF STRIKERS' VICTORY OVER STATE AND GUARDIANS

#### Triumphant End To Struggle Of Northern Workless: Victory Of Revolutionary Leadership



**M**AGNIFICENT Belfast! The relief strikers and the working class generally of the Northern capital has won a splendid victory over the State forces of the Six-County henchmen of British imperialism. The following table shows the new scale of relief pay as compared with the old—

**NEW SCALE:**

Man and wife—2 days work or 20/- per week.  
 Man, wife, and 1 or 2 children—3 days or 25/- per week.  
 Man, wife, and 3 or 4 children—4 days or 28/- per week.  
 Man, wife, and over 4 children—5 days or 32/- per week.  
 Single men—Where in lodgings to be treated as heads of families.

**OLD SCALE:**

Man and wife—2/- per week.  
 Man, wife, and 1 child—18/- per week.  
 Man, wife, and 2 children—20/- per week.  
 Man, wife, and 3 or more children—21/- per week.  
 Single men—Nothing.

These terms were accepted at a mass meeting of relief workers last Saturday night.

Burning indignation arose among the workers at the death of two workers, Samuel Baxter and John Goshan, at the hands of Cragsmore's police officers.

The Belfast relief workers' struggle has resulted not only in a splendid immediate victory and the rolling back of one part of the class front of the Northern capitalists' offensive against the conditions of life of the toilers of the Six Counties, it has achieved a unity of the Belfast working class such as had been unknown. With the old artificial barriers swept away, Catholic and Protestant workers fought side by side against the police of their common enemy.

And the Labour Party's policy of inactivity has been shown as wrong. The Belfast unemployed have reached through it, and have demonstrated the power of mass action under rank-and-file leadership.

The strike has been won. The fight must now go on for the immediate release of all workers jailed in the struggle, and for the full right of public meeting and demonstration. Forward for these demands!

### MARCH ON DAIL BY DUBLIN WORKLESS

#### Rising Spirit Of Struggle

**D**UBLIN unemployed workers, as a result of the fine organizational work of the Irish Unemployed Workers' Movement, are massing their forces for the struggle for work or maintenance.

Last Friday a packed meeting for their next was held in the Zeveloff Hall. Amid great enthusiasm a march to the Dail for the opening session was decided upon. It was decided that the spirit of Dublin was travelling southwards.

Last Monday a similar meeting was held at the Foresters' Hall. There was the same spirit, and the married workers also decided themselves to march.

But Laidy, organizer of the

### KILKENNY MINERS OUT

**C**astlemore, Monday.—Four hundred miners struck work here today for an increase in their wages and a reduction of the employers' share of profit.

The strikers' appeal for solidarity led

Movement, brought the meeting to a great pitch of enthusiasm with a fighting appeal on the issues of Dail and the necessary for mass struggle.

Interviewed before the march on the Dail on Wednesday, Willie Watson, chairman of the I.U.W.M., stated that the unemployed workers of Dublin had decided that they had sufficient in silence long enough.

"We won't call a halt now," he said, "until our demands are granted. The unemployed are very indignant over the way the Government has treated us. On five occasions, through Mr. Sean T. O'Kelly, they have been asked for an interview, and each time they have put us off. It remains to be seen how they will set new in the people who put them in office.

"We are determined to see this to a finish."

### LONGFORD WORKLESS RALLY

**D**emonstration of 1,000 Deicides On Action

(From Our Worker Correspondent.)

LONGFORD, Monday.—Something like 1,000 workers demonstrated at a mass meeting here yesterday, under the auspices of the Irish Unemployed Workers' Movement, and addressed by Dan Laidy, Organizer of Dublin, and Jim Griffin, of Leitrim.

After Dan Laidy had outlined the necessity for mass action by the unemployed, the local Unemployed Committee decided to strengthen the Movement and to draw up a list of demands to put before the Council.

### CUMANN AND C.I.D.

A meeting last week of the Eoghan (Tipperary) Fianna Fail Cumann called on the Southern Government to divide among the people unproductive ranches; withdraw the agricultural policy of the Government and called for the disbanding of the C.I.D.

### ACTION IN DROGHEDA

Several hundred unemployed marched to Drogheda Corporation on Tuesday night to demand work.

### 100,000 LINE STREETS AT WORKERS' FUNERAL

(From Our Special Correspondent.)

**B**ELFAST, Monday.

**T**OMMY GERRAN came to his feet. The cheering swelled to a roar; the stamping feet sounded like thunder. At last it died down. "Comrade," began Tommy. "I want to say at the outset that we have won a glorious victory." His voice was drowned in the exultant shouts. On every face you could see stamped the consciousness of having won a great class triumph.

This was the mass meeting of relief strikers in St. Mary's Hall here on Saturday night. Tommy Goshan, leader of the great struggle, was in the chair, and on the platform were the Dundee Relief Workers' Committee, militant Trade Unionists, and representatives of the Revolutionary Workers' Group.

"We have achieved a glorious victory," said Comrade Goshan. "It is a direct contradiction to all who said that the workers could not be united and would not fight."

"We have achieved a glorious victory as few of the most glorious in the history of the working class in Belfast. First of all, the new Protestant and Catholic workers marching together, and on Tuesday they saw them fighting together.

Three weeks ago when a married man and his wife went to the Guardians he was treated with contempt and offered 1/-, but today the

### Val. Contrats

**S**AMUEL BAXTER and JOHN GOSHAN.

They will not here, they have no one to blame. They were shot from the air. Their work was done on the side of the law. But let the next meeting be the one that will see the end of the law. They will not see the end of the law. They will not see the end of the law.

—WILLIAM MORRISON.

Government had been forced to have this increased to 15/-.

Continuity of benefit was also secured, the Chairman added, and there would be no more breaking off after six months. The big thing was that for the first time in Belfast there would be a uniform rate. In conclusion, he moved that they accept the terms now offered.

Courage Henry Finlay, a Shankill workers' orator, and the motion was passed with another burst of cheering.

Comrade Arthur Griffin said that "success in the blood-soaked history of Belfast had been there such brutality" in the treatment of the unemployed as we had Tuesday.

Comrade William Craig said they should now tell the authorities that

gone were the days of sectarian hatreds and the boys show the workers were led by flag waving in the back streets.

Straw revolutionaries were passed demanding the release of all imprisoned workers and protesting against the deportation of Tom Mann, the pallid British Communist veteran, who had brought a message of solidarity to Belfast.

They every man in the hall rose in silent testimony to the two workers shot down by police rifles, and a message of sympathy with their relatives was adopted.

Yesterday Arthur Griffin, of the Revolutionary Workers' Group, one of the most trusted of the leaders of the unemployed was arrested for his speech at St. Mary's Hall.

Last Friday over 100,000 workers lined the streets of the city to pay a last tribute to the two shot workers, Samuel Baxter and John Goshan. Thousands of unemployed workers followed the cortege, despite the biting wind that pierced through thin and frayed coats. And the police were everywhere to see their handiwork—men in dark, padded jackets and armoured cars in the side streets. Cragsmore had not the decency even to keep away his creatures from this.

In addition to Tom Mann, Jim Kaler, Betty Binclair and Lily Magill were held prisoners at Comrade Baxter's funeral.

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COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND IN HISTORY

# Introduction

It is now fashionable to re-write Irish history. Ruling class politicians, North and South, aided by subsidised academics, seek to gut it of the struggles for national content and social awareness. They do so to provide a background climate for the harmonising of their interests with the present designs of British Imperialism toward Ireland.

Thus 1916 becomes a "folly or at best a tragedy", Daniel O'Connell is restored as "the Liberator" while Thomas Davis is smeared as "a racist" and the injection of Orange Ascendancy into Northern society becomes proof of the existence of two separate nations in Ireland. But history, as the written and oral tradition of the accumulated experience of our subject nation and the moulding of the consciousness of the most exploited classes within that nation is difficult to bury, distort or revise.

The following pages, which are an outline history of the continuity of Marxist organisation in Ireland, are proof of this and stand as a testimony to the vitality of ideas and courage of the men and women who upheld them. Contemporary opponents will no doubt give recognition to their motivation and sense of dedication, but will attempt to explain away the immense power of attraction of their philosophy. Yet it is precisely the very nature of Irish society, with its relationship which has led generations of Irish people into seeking answers and understanding. The search for the clues as to why although the vast majority of people produce the wealth yet in so doing they are still dispossessed can only be satisfied with scientific explanations.

Its roots are in Connolly, as he so aptly put it :

"This proposition, or key to history, as set forth by Karl Marx, the greatest of modern thinkers and first of scientific socialists, is as follows :

"That in every historic epoch the prevailing method of production and exchange, and the social organisation necessarily following from it, forms the basis upon which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch."



**JAMES CONNOLLY**

**Founder of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (1896-1903) and of the first working-class paper in Ireland, "The Workers' Republic" (1898-1903).**

Thus having understood the complexity of social development, arising from property relationship, the working class were faced with another conclusion. Their freedom, Connolly urged,

"must be incomplete and insecure until they wrest from the governing classes the possession of the land and instruments of wealth production".

To achieve such a revolution required another condition which the experiences of Connolly and Larkin showed—namely, an independent workers' organisation of socialist thought and direction.

For the first time in the history of mankind the modern working class instead of offering a primitive resistance to ruling class violence or a succumbing to despair had the theories of scientific socialism—which directed them to state power. In Ireland its roots had been nurtured from the plebian content of the national struggle, rich in the traditions of peasant defence societies, like the Ribbonmen, the Spartan bands among the United Irishmen of 1798, the Mitchel and Lalor outlook of 1848, the Tenants' Rights and the Land League, the Parnellite democrats and the pioneering trade union organisations. Its social base was drawn from the agricultural labourers and small farmers, the industrial workers and the artisans, plus those of the middle classes whose vision outstripped the blinkers of their class. Within this "snaithin dearg" were understood the class conflicts between landlord and tenant, rancher and small farmer, employer and worker, and also the national conflict of replacing the British domination by Irish democracy. Because of this conception and the necessary secular nature of its radical philosophy, the advanced men down through these generations were opposed and persecuted not alone by the British colonial administration but by those who feared the extension of education and discussion of controversial ideas among the masses of people.

The other component of this outlook, again born from bitter experience in struggle, was its internationalism. A kinship for subject people elsewhere and a close co-operation against mutual



**W. H. McCULLOUGH**  
Secretary of Belfast Branch, 1934; was General Secretary C.P.N.I., 1942-46; died in December 1967.

**SEAN MURRAY**  
General Secretary, C.P.I., 1933-1940; National Organiser C.P.N.I., 1950-61; he died in May 1961.

enemies is ingrained in the pages of Irish history. Revolutionary France inspired and gave help to the United Irishmen, and a test of any Irish movement since has been its attitude of accepting and expanding solidarity with the forces of democracy outside our shores. Marxism in giving the working class movement the knowledge of transforming society has lifted the conception of solidarity with workers of other lands to a precise duty.

## The Legacy of Connolly

Connolly was Ireland's greatest Marxist and he, as his biographer, C. Desmond Greaves, says of him, "engraved socialism indelibly on the national life of Ireland". Connolly's greatest contributions were twofold; in the field of ideas he advanced the scientific socialist concept that the national revolution was a prerequisite of the socialist revolution and, secondly, he founded the first Marxist organisation in Ireland—the Irish Socialist Republican Party. He was a representative of the general trend in the world Labour movement for revolutionary theory and practice as opposed to all types of reformism.

Following from this he identified British Imperialism's most successful and most harmful transplant into Irish society—the cancer of sectarian and inter-community strife. His alternative was the fraternity of working class interests.

The Communist Party of Ireland of 1921 was a natural continuity of the remnants of the socialist organisations associated with Connolly and who adhered to his teachings. In the interim years between the murder of Connolly and the founding of the Party in 1921, the Left remained scattered and suffered from the general undermining of the working class movement by its enforced subordination to the middle class nationalists of Sinn Féin in the period of the first Dáil. The Left was further weakened by the sectarian divisions within the workers' movement in Belfast and at no time during the War of Independence did the leaders of Sinn Féin seek to accommodate the class interests of the Protestant section of the working class with the objective of the Republic.

Understanding the class and economic background of the Treaty the young C.P.I. classified it as a "shameful betrayal" and during the civil war proposed a programme of demands designed to identify the Republic with the social demands of the workers and small farmers.

Its members took part in the street fighting and organised the unemployed in direct action.

The difficulties of building a Marxist organisation in a partitioned state, with what Connolly foresaw as "a carnival of reaction" in both parts, and with a working class split by fostered religious differences, were formidable. Britain had succeeded in pushing the Republic into a 26-county strait-jacket with a neo-colonial relationship as profitable as ever for her. Ireland was divided into two antagonistic states, on the surface ruled by Irishmen, each operating repressive legislation against sizeable minorities and both wracked by continual severe economic crises.

## Republicans Defeated

Throughout the 1920's there were depressed social conditions for the majority of people as both parts of the country were forced to lean separately on Britain. Apart from certain successful measures of state industry in the South, the refusal of both ruling classes to challenge the domination of the economies resulted in the loss of one million of our people through emigration since the Treaty. The effect of every international economic crisis was felt more severely in Ireland's state of underdevelopment and these years were plagued with vast unemployment, dreadful poverty in the slums of the cities and general deprivation for all working people. The fight for survival was the first priority.

The Republican movement, defeated but not broken in armed struggle, reverted to their disdain for politics and stayed in the

wilderness. De Valera led the first of many breakaways to enter the Dáil as a political opposition. For the physical force men the legitimacy of the First Dáil was sacrosanct and while they clung to the symbols it took another ten years before the substance of Republican aims were related to the social issues of the people in the form of the Republican Congress.

For the Labour movement the aftermath of the Treaty and the birth pangs of the Free State was given over to containing trade union organisation among a depressed working population and politically by trying to win favour of the Free State Government as a price for accepting the Treaty. Had Connolly been able to leave behind him a party of Scientific Socialism the outcome of the struggle for independence between 1918 and 1922 could have been different, or at least it could have infused the Labour Movement with a perspective of rallying working class interests on an all-Ireland basis to counter the disruption of the Treaty. The tendencies the small C.P.I. had to fight was the exclusiveness of bread and butter issues and the concentration on "gas and water" socialism. In Belfast, the Orange pogroms, backed by British guns, had driven not alone the Catholic workers from the shipyards but the militant shop stewards organisation. The result was a Labour movement infused with social democratic reformism which preached the exclusiveness of economic struggles and divorced itself from national issues.

## Years of Strife

In these pages are related the return of Larkin to Ireland and the attempts to build the Marxist Party around him. There were echoes of 1913 again as the forces of reaction in all its forms sought to crush a Dublin working class which would never return to its subservience. Marred by fratricidal strikes between unions, the Left movement had sectarian and immature weaknesses which sought to replace the main working class organisations rather than win them over by the strength of their own ideas and actions. Their mistakes do not detract from the tremendous work of the Communists and the Left in those difficult years which were highlighted by the election of Larkin, as the candidate of the "Irish Worker" League, to the Dáil and the affiliation of the Workers' Union of Ireland and the Kilkenny Miners' Union to the Moscow-based Red International of Labour Unions. The "Irish Worker" League, in which the Communists worked, was affiliated to the Communist International and Larkin was a candidate member of its executive.

Although Marxism was a minority trend within Irish society the ideas and policies stemming from it, while cursed in their day, were later to become acceptable not only in the programmes of the Labour and Republican movement but in the social welfare policies of the state itself. If life is immeasurably better today than the sordid existence of those years, it can be said that in the main such changes are the results of the efforts of the working class to compel these changes.

Everywhere, in the varied struggles of the people the Communists played a part out of proportion to their strength. The pages trace the efforts to rebuild the trade unions' influence, the activities of the small farmers, the continual fight for civil rights in the North, the successes of Republican-Left unity reflected in the Republican Congress, the persistent unemployed movement with its demand, still so relevant, of the right to work, for peace and solidarity with other oppressed people. To its ranks came the veterans of the Black-and-Tan war, remnants of the Citizen Army, the unemployed and the active trade unionist, the poet and the suffragette, and at all times, uniting in its ranks the men of advanced views from the Shankill and the Falls.

A large amount of this outline history is taken up with the memoirs of the participants and to complete the authenticity, the files of the C.P.I.'s newspapers are frequently quoted. The words of those days were blunt and sharp because they reflected a more direct and open class and ideological confrontation. The role of

the Churches, the violence of the State, the hysterical press campaign may surprise younger readers who today accept freely the idea that the General Secretary of the C.P.I., Michael O'Riordan, can be invited to speak in Maynooth. But in times of crisis the notions like the niceties of neutrality, liberalism and "social partnership", "impartiality," "above class" are soon ditched. So it was that for most of the history of the C.P.I., the machinery of the State, the wrath of the Catholic Church and the influence of the gombeen and racketeer elements were directed against the advocacy of Connolly's ideas. "There is so little in Marxism alien to the Irish tradition that reactionary ruling classes, actual or prospective, have always sought special means from insulating the people from its presence."

Private property was sacred; the Church defended the slum landlord and grabbing employer while those who questioned the justice of starvation wages were not only wreckers of the social fabric of society but heretical and immoral. The attitude of the custodians of law, order and morals seemed horrified that workers should not alone question their wretchedness but believe in an alternative system of society. Thus, during the struggles of the Castlecomer miners in the 'thirties against starvation from the planter family mineowners, the local priest led a hysterical witch-hunt against the men and their union. When pulpit sermons of "Russian gold", "incitement to looting and rioting" and threats of excommunication failed, violence, including bombing, was used against the union. The priest, Fr. Kavanagh, in answer to a militant miner, Jimmy Walshe, who protested that he was entitled to his own views, told him, "You are too ignorant to have any opinions. . . ." It is reminiscent of the Versailles colonel who, before he murdered Lévêque, a leader of the Paris Commune of 1871, exclaimed, "Who are you.—a bricklayer! A bricklayer thought he could govern France." The only present analogy to the commonplace Fr. Kavanagh is the Rev. Ian Paisley. Such was the contempt of our "masters and betters" and clerical reactionaries abusing the sincerity of their congregation and if there was a danger that the blinded mob could not chase social unrest away then the Blueshirts had a definite mission to play. The outward anti-Communist crusade fueled by the Church was to last right up to the 'sixties, blacklisting, intimidating, seeking to isolate the Socialists and Communists. There is no doubt that it had a harmful effect particularly in the post-war years when with more subtle means than the Animal Gang, the Jesuits ran the Catholic Workers' College in Dublin. The isolation of the Communists was harmful enough but its overall damage was to instil timidity and subservience into the Trade Union and Labour movement. Not all clerics joined in the chorus, the outstanding being Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, who opened the first Dáil and until his death in 1941 championed every cause of the men of no property, as well as being a defender of Republican Spain and the Soviet Union.

## The Achievements Bear Fruit

This form of anti-Communism was only to abate in the 'sixties when the achievements of the World Socialist system had become too obvious to conceal. While the sputniks floated overhead, inside Ireland advances had been made by a stronger and more forward-looking Labour movement. Reforms in education, social welfare and housing were won from an economy more buoyant with injections of foreign capital. Emigration slowed down and a new generation took a more questioning view of society. Although the forms of class oppression were not now so obtrusive yet they knew that 5% of the people owned 70% of the wealth. Connolly and his importance emerged from the 50th commemoration of 1916 and deepened the awareness of the Republican movement, the students, the Connolly Youth Movement and gave confidence to the working class in general. In the North, the weakened British

Imperialism and the need to change its strategies met and confronted an internal mood of discontent with the dead-weight of Unionism.

The lack of democracy in the North was the weakest link in the chain of British Imperialist domination of all Ireland and the Left in Ireland and the Connolly Association in Britain saw this significance. The issue of democracy contained both the social and national demands and has the dynamic element to fuse the divided Northern working class, if handled scientifically. In 1965 the Belfast Trades Council, on the initiative of Betty Sinclair and Billy McCullough, held a conference to discuss discrimination and democratic rights, which paved the way for the launching of the broadly based Civil Rights movement. Both of them, as Communists, had been sentenced to jail under the Special Powers Act 20 years earlier.

## 1970 : Communists Unite !

1970 saw the emergence of a united Communist Party for all Ireland. The road had led from as far back as the revolutionaries of 1848 searching for the link between the national and the social question, had come via William Thompson and Connolly and the advanced thinkers of every generation and had produced a trend in the Irish Labour movement, known as Marxism. It had been helped in its development by its study of and assistance from the International revolutionary movement. It was a product of the Irish working class; it suffered when they were at a low ebb, it had its heights when there was mass movement but it also never failed to instil in them a confidence of their own strength and in all the varied struggles to present the idea of a socialist future. Its organisational form had received setbacks, mistakes had been made and when the going got tough many had deserted. The skill, training and education offered by the C.P.I. for advancing the working class was and is an easy asset to divert into serving the ruling class, giving, of course, a certain amount of time to allow for the elasticity of the troubled conscience.

Objectively, the capitalist system still robs the working class of the wealth they produce, but in doing so they cannot prevent the awareness that this position can and will be reversed. Thus the individuals may go but the working class struggle remains. Similarly, when Larkin failed to understand the changes since 1913, and, without Connolly's theoretical clarity, he allowed the "Irish Worker" League to flounder in the late 'twenties, the Communists filled the vacuum with the Revolutionary Workers' Groups and their weekly newspaper. Dotted in many towns in Ireland they merged in the reformed Communist Party of Ireland in June 1933. Again, in 1941, when the Dublin section of the Party found it almost impossible to operate under war-time conditions as a Party, it had to adopt a more educational and discussion role.

The new forces on the scene immediately after the war reproduced the Marxist Party as the Irish Workers' League. Maintaining close and mutual ties through an all-Ireland joint council, the Communist Party in the North and the Irish Workers' Party (the "Party" was substituted for League in 1962) drew up programmes for an Irish path to Socialism.

At all stages, the C.P.I. and its forerunners has played a part in the International Communist movement as an equal partner. Just as "only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the struggle for freedom in Ireland", on an international level these forces in all countries must be united and guided in close cohesion.

## Marxism a Living Force

It was not an easy job to sustain an organised revolutionary party for these fifty years. The influence of Connolly had almost been smothered and the 'twenties saw a radical working class in Dublin with plenty of industrial militancy but little theoretical clarity. Apart from the activities of the Left there were objective

factors in Ireland which hindered the spread of Marxism. Outside of Belfast and Dublin, there was never a large concentration of industrial workers and it is only within the last decade that the number of workers in manufacturing have outpassed the rural labour force. Emigration drained the country of the vital force of the youth and while it provided the Labour movements in America and Britain with exceptionally capable people, their loss was most sorely felt at home. At all stages it would be true to say that there were more Irish Communists in countries outside Ireland. The Irish Labour movement has always existed in an underdeveloped economy which is not conducive to its adopting alert and aggressive policies but rather favours job protection, craft divisions and an economist outlook. The Irish Trade Union movement is one of the least political in Western Europe, despite its high density organisation. The conservatism in social life was a result of clerical efforts, North and South, to weld religion to Right wing politics. It not alone prevented a free flow of Socialist ideas but, as is widely recognised today, hindered progressive social legislation and placed obstacles in the way of national unity.

The division of the country by partition successfully prevented the mutual interchange of experience and common interests between North and South, and, within the North, the ideology of Orange-Unionism was never consistently challenged by social democracy. To this day there is not a political organisation of the working class in Belfast which has roots in both sections of the community, except the Communist Party.

Socialist theory and experience in our country has suffered the geographical handicap of being isolated from the mainstream of European socialism. In Connolly's early days this was not so severely felt as he had to contend with those who sought to impose British "socialist" standards onto Ireland's specific historical and natural feature. He also had the added advantage of examining a varied experience of revolutionary tactics and experience in the cosmopolitan Labour movement in the U.S.A. Aware of the two trends in the European movement, the one revolutionary and the other reformist, Connolly sided with the former when the crunch came in opposing the Imperialist war in 1914. Of the other deeper problems demanding solutions within this movement,

Connolly neither had the time nor opportunity to discuss or ponder them more fully. One of these was the character of a workers' party. From the far end of Europe, Tsarist Russia, Lenin showed by his writings and examples that such a party must be "a party of a new type", performing a vanguard role. This organisation must be the sum-total of a number of factors, its social composition, the class character of its policies, the ideological level of its members and its links with the people. The criterion of its aims is how successfully it performs the role of leading the working class, how correctly it is able to assess their interests and act accordingly.

While on the European level, the bitter defeats, setbacks and occasional victories forced the conclusion on each working-class movement to create a party of a new type, the full conception of it for Ireland was not grasped until 1930 when the Workers' Revolutionary Groups set themselves such a task.

Marxism remains the most vital and compulsive force of our times. Though belittled, buried, reviled and revised, it retains the ability to bring to the Communist movement the most inquiring minds. It was such then that hoisted the red flag when the unemployed took the Rotunda in Dublin in 1921, that met and organised in the coal mines of Castlecomer, while their comrades led the unemployed on the barricades in the Catholic and Protestant ghettos of Belfast, October 1932; they merged again in the olive groves of Republican Spain and in every people's movement since they have played a part.

It is with this confidence that the C.P.I., from its Unity Conference in Belfast 1970, can call on the people of Ireland. Unity, independence and socialism offer a future which imperialism has denied them for centuries—free education for all, full employment, the opportunity to reach the highest level of which human beings are capable, participation by all in public life and affairs, a rich and virile national culture based on our proud heritage.

Socialism will be the crown of achievement on Ireland's age-old struggle. We call on the people of Ireland to join with us in the struggle for such a society as worthy of the noblest aspirations of man. We call upon the Irish people, North and South, Protestant and Catholic, old and young, to join with us on the road to an Ireland, Free, United and Socialist.

## Early Beginnings of the Irish Socialist Movement

**S**OCIALIST influence and organisations under various names existed in Dublin, Belfast and in Cork for almost as long as they have in Britain. In his book, "The Life and Times of James Connolly" (p. 58) Desmond Greaves writes:

"Socialist organisation in Dublin was continuous from the 1840s, but suffered repeated set-backs partly through the difficulty of evolving correct tactics for a movement within an oppressed nation, but also from the prevalence of unemployment and the case of victimisation. It was strongest in the days of the International Workingmen's Association when Marx's support for the Fenians indicated the primacy of the democratic struggle."

Branches of the First International were formed in Dublin, Cork and Belfast. Although the International came into existence in 1864, it was not until six years later that the Irish sections were formed. Apart from the Cork Branch and the publicity it got from the public attacks on it, from the pulpit and other sources, no information, it would seem, survives about the Belfast Branch and not very much about the Dublin Branch.

Irish exiles in Britain were involved with the International and they adopted the principles outlined in the First International's statement of aims.

An important contribution of the First International to the Irish cause was the focussing of attention on the plight of the Fenian prisoners. The Amnesty movement in Dublin fully acknow-

ledged the help of the First International's effort and the prisoners on their release expressed their great thanks.

The outstanding political contribution of the First International for Ireland was the raising within it the question of Ireland's claim to independence and the whole problem of British-Irish relations.

In the years after the branches of the First International had ceased to function, Socialist groupings existed under various titles, attracting few to membership, their activities confined mostly to the holding of discussions.

The first efforts to develop a political Labour movement were taken in Belfast, which had more than a head-start in the development of industry and a working class, compared to Dublin, Cork or any other area of the country. In 1893 a branch of the British-based Independent Labour Party was established. Its activities and propaganda were of the kind that would be identified with branches of the I.L.P. in Birmingham or London. There was no evidence of understanding that it was operating in another country, with its separate national, political, social and cultural problems.

British imperialist domination of all Ireland in those early times and the Partition policies of later years have succeeded, through the Orange Order, in consolidating misunderstanding and antagonism between a majority of workers of the North and the workers of the rest of the country.

This has been among the lasting achievements of British policies in the whole of Ireland. Religion has been successfully used to sharply divide the workers. With the working class so divided, British imperialism has so far had much success with its policies in the two areas of Ireland.

Of the early efforts to build a Socialist movement, it was Connolly's Irish Socialist Republican Party, with its aims and political work that has left the deepest impact on the working class.

The Irish Socialist Republican Party was started in May 1896 at a meeting in a public house in Dublin's Thomas Street. In later years Connolly wrote: "It was founded by a few workingmen whom the writer had succeeded in interesting in his proposition that the two currents of revolutionary thought in Ireland, the socialist and nationalist, were not antagonistic but complementary, and that the Irish Socialist was in reality the best patriot."

The Irish Socialist Republican Party did not win a big membership; its activities consisted of outdoor public meetings at Dublin's Custom House, Foster Place and James's Street Fountain. At times the meetings were attacked and broken up.

The trade unions were largely confined to the skilled workers and were under the influence of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party. From early on, Connolly recognised that that position had to be changed if working-class political ideas and organisation were to succeed.

### **"Workers Republic" Launched**

In 1898, on August 13, "The Workers' Republic" was launched as the paper of the Irish Socialist Republican Party with Connolly as editor. Keir Hardie, the first British worker to be elected to the House of Commons on the Labour ticket, gave £50 to start the paper. Between 1898 and May 1903, 85 issues of the paper were published. It was the first-ever effort to publish an Irish workers' paper and in its pages Connolly and the other contributors gave battle to the capitalists and their agents of the time; its pages carried valuable material showing the development of Connolly's ideas as a Socialist in relation to the two currents in Ireland, the national and social struggle.

The I.S.R.P. had Branches in Belfast and Cork, as well as Dublin. Elsewhere it had individual members and readers of the paper.

"The Workers' Republic" and the Irish Socialist Republican Party did not survive following Connolly's decision to emigrate to America in 1903. In a preface to his first published pamphlet, "Erin's Hope," Connolly gave his evaluation of the work of the Irish Socialist Republican Party in the short seven years of its existence:

"It is no exaggeration to say that this organisation and its policy completely revolutionised advanced politics in Ireland. When it was first initiated the word 'republic' was looked upon as a word to be only whispered among intimates; the socialists boldly advised the driving from political life of all who would not openly accept it. The thought of revolution was the exclusive possession of a few remnants of the secret societies of a past generation, and was never mentioned by them except with heads close together and eyes glancing round. The Socialists broke through this ridiculous secrecy, and in hundreds of speeches in the most public places of the metropolis, as well as in scores of thousands of pieces of literature scattered through the country, announced their purpose to muster all the forces of labour for a revolutionary reconstruction of society.

### **Great Jubilee Protest**

"The Socialists of Dublin conceived of and organised the Great Jubilee Protest of 1897, which startled the world and shattered all the elaborate efforts of the British Government to represent Ireland as 'loyal'. They held the first meeting of protest against the Boer War, and at that meeting over 2,000 persons in College Green passed the first resolution calling upon the Irish in the Transvaal to take up arms against the armies of the British capi-

talist government; they conducted the first campaign against enlistment in the army; they were the first to contest elections upon a platform openly declaring for revolution; and they were the first to point out all the immense ameliorations of the conditions of life in Ireland which could be realised without waiting for Home Rule. In short, the Irish Socialist Republican Party has to itself the credit of having opened up practically all the new fields of thought and action, now being exploited by other and less revolutionary organisations."

After Connolly's departure for America there was a gap in the work of the Dublin Socialists, until in 1903, when there was a coming together of some of the former members of the Irish Socialist Republican Party and some new adherents to form the Socialist Party of Ireland. This group invited Connolly to return to Ireland. He wanted very much to return and an offer from the Socialist Party of Ireland that he could rely on a weekly wage of £2 clinched his decision to come home.

Back in Ireland, in 1910, Connolly found a different situation to what he had left. Larkin had formed the I.T.G.W.U. and it dominated the Labour scene. The unskilled workers were now an active force. The dockers, the carters, the unskilled generally were now a force to be reckoned with under Larkin's leadership.

The Socialist Party of Ireland did not emerge as a political force in the developing economic struggles of the workers. There remained the old concept of Socialist propaganda activity in isolation from active class struggle and the efforts of the workers to expand trade union organisation. The Socialist Party of Ireland did not extend its influence, membership and work. Further, it was unable to live up to the promise of providing Connolly with £2 a week.

An offer that he should become Organiser of the I.T.G.W.U. in Belfast was accepted by Connolly. In Belfast, Connolly's main work was developing membership for the I.T.G.W.U.; as well, he organised a branch of the Socialist Party of Ireland, drawing some support from members of the Independent Labour Party. The Independent Labour Party was the active Socialist organisation in Belfast and held propaganda meetings at the Custom House Steps and distributed literature. The I.L.P. drew most of its support from the Protestant section of workers.

### **Connolly in Belfast**

Connolly's Socialist Party of Ireland did not find an easy response from the Protestant workers; there was, as well, the added hurdle of the Irish Parliamentary Party, with Joe Devlin, M.P., as the focal representative who had much support among the Catholic workers; to add to the difficulties Devlin had the reputation of being sympathetic to workers' interests.

Connolly's S.P.I. did score, in drawing into membership some leading members of the I.L.P.—such as Tom Johnson, William McMullen, Davy Campbell and others. In later years these men were to become well-known in the Labour movement, but none of them were to carry forward and fight for the revolutionary socialist principles of Connolly and the goal of a Workers' Republic.

An outstanding political event of Connolly's period in Belfast was his controversy with William Walker, a prominent personality in the Belfast Labour movement; the controversy was on the question of the working-class position on the matter of Irish-British relations. Walker's position was for the British connection. Connolly posed for the Labour movement the need for a firm, consistent anti-imperialist, independence-for-Ireland position. To the present time, North and South, the essentials of Connolly's position have not been grasped or understood by the Labour and trade union leadership.

With Jim Larkin's departure in October 1914 for America, Connolly became Assistant General Secretary of the I.T.G.W.U. Back in Dublin, he was involved in re-organising the Irish Citizen Army as well as the re-shaping of the I.T.G.W.U. The Socialist Party of Ireland in this period did not function regularly and Connolly was involved with it only for occasional lectures. The building of a political party, with the aim of achieving Socialism in Ireland, appeared no longer to hold the attention of Connolly.

The affairs and problems of the I.T.G.W.U., the Citizen Army and relations with the radical sections of the republican movement occupied all his time until the great event at Easter 1916.

After the 1916 Uprising the Socialist Party of Ireland was scattered and disorganised. Some of its members had been picked up and interned because of their involvement in the uprising. In 1917 there was a coming together of some of the members and for a time they resumed meetings and lectures.

In that year, in February, there was the revolution in Russia, which overthrew the Czar, and this great historic event was hailed with a monster meeting in Dublin's Mansion House. Later in the year, the great October Socialist Revolution was acclaimed by all Irish Socialists and the progressive forces in the Labour movement.

In the post-1916 situation, with the increased British military occupation up to the Truce period of July 1921, the Socialist Party of Ireland and most other sections of the Labour movement were restricted in their activities; the S.P.I. resumed its meetings in October (1921) and the Party's paper, "The Workers' Republic," reappeared. Outdoor public meetings and other forms of activities were undertaken.

The ideological and fundamental political issues which confronted the Labour and Socialist movement in all countries arising from the Russian Revolution, the overthrow of capitalism and the victory of the Bolsheviks, had repercussions in the ranks of the Socialist Party of Ireland soon after it again began to function. Those in the Socialist Party of Ireland who fully supported the Russian Bolsheviks favoured the Party transforming itself into a Communist Party and seeking affiliation to the Communist International. In the debate which ensued, a majority of the Socialist Party of Ireland members supported identification with the Communist International. Among the members of the Socialist Party of Ireland who opposed this development were William O'Brien (later he became the General Secretary of the I.T.G.W.U. and was for many years to exercise a reactionary influence in the trade union movement) and Cathal O'Shannon (later to be editor of the I.T.G.W.U. paper "The Voice of Labour" and who finished up as a member of the Labour Court).

### **O'Brien, O'Shannon Expelled S.P.I.**

In the S.P.I. paper, "The Workers' Republic," the following is reported: "At the weekly meeting, on October 14, 1921, of the S.P.I. the following resolution was passed:

"In accordance with our policy, and with our decision to adhere to the Communist International, we hereby take the preliminary steps to observe the second condition of affiliation to the C.I. and expel the following members:

"Cathal O'Shannon, William O'Brien, on the grounds of reformism, consecutive non-attendance at the Party, and consistent attempts to render futile all efforts to build up a Communist Party in Ireland."

The Secretary of the newly-formed Communist Party of Ireland was Roddy Connolly.

Impinging very immediately on the Communist Party of Ireland in late 1921 was the outcome of the London negotiations for an Anglo-Irish settlement. When the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty became known, the Communist Party of Ireland opposed them and its position was set forth in a Manifesto.

The Communist Party of Ireland led unemployed agitations and there was the seizing of the Rotunda building in Dublin. The Red Flag was hoisted. However, in a matter of days, the I.R.A. police were used to clear the building and again made it safe for the private owner.

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The remarks of C. D. Greaves in his book, "Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution," puts the situation at the time:

"On 14th December (1921) the Dáil assembled. In this predominantly petit-bourgeois gathering was concentrated the power of decision of the whole nation. Outside, the Chambers of Commerce passed their resolutions. Country merchants, cattle dealers, manufacturers, great and small, took up from their natural superiors, agrarian and financial, the cry for order and for peace which alone could assure it.

"Also outside was the Labour movement. It gave no lead. Out of over a thousand branches and councils of trade unions, only six even passed a resolution. "The Voice of Labour" treated the issue as an irrelevancy. Only on the extreme Left were warning voices heard. The Communist Party of Ireland described the Treaty as a shameful betrayal.

"Larkin wired in similar terms from his American prison. These voices were lost in the general clamour. As the delegates took their seats both the Republican police and the Black and Tans were arresting the Wexford farm workers on strike for trade union recognition."

### **C.P.I. Manifesto on Treaty**

The C.P.I. Manifesto, in part, declared:

". . . This Treaty proposes the most shameful betrayal of Ireland's fight for national independence and of the cause of Irish Republicanism.

"In exchange for a hollow mockery of the aspirations of the Irish people, Ireland, as a 'Free' State, is asked to become an ally of the most hateful tyranny that history has produced. Thinly disguised as partners, we are asked to become lackeys of the British Empire in her efforts to subjugate the whole world and ruthlessly suppress every spark of Freedom that exists. . . .

"On this momentous occasion, the Communist Party of Ireland, as the vanguard of the Irish working class, addresses the people of Ireland and in particular the revolutionary workers, to warn them of the danger that confronts them and help to overcome it. We call upon all true revolutionaries in An Dáil not to betray the men of Easter Week, not to dishonour their Oath of Allegiance to the Irish Republic, but to denounce the Treaty, and stand fast for the Republic. . . . No compromise will be tolerated by the Irish working class. For the working class is the only class revolutionary to the end. The politicians of the upper class have always compromised on the most vital principles of the struggle of the people for political and social freedom. They are about to do so again. . . .

"Workers of Ireland! No state within the British Empire is free. . . . This so-called Free State will bring neither freedom nor peace. Instead, civil war and social hell will be loosed if it is accepted. . . .

"Those who have accepted this compromise have become afraid of a Republic. They fear that the people, glorifying in political freedom, may demand social freedom. They fear that an Irish Republic would be transformed into a Workers' Republic. . . .

"Workers of Ireland! Heed not the declaration of politicians that this is a step towards the Republic. It is no such thing. It is a backward step, not a forward one. It is not toward freedom. What freedom can we expect allied to the bitterest foe of freedom in the world? . . .

### **Against Empire, For Republic**

"As against the British Empire we stand for an Irish Republic. As against any State that will foster or promote the interests of the British Empire we will fight for an Irish Republic. We stand and fight for an Irish Republic against the Free State. We will ourselves to whoever fights against the Free State for an Irish Republic.

"The Communist Party swears no allegiance to the Free State; will not be faithful to King George. We repudiate with scorn and hatred common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain as she is now. We denounce as a fraud and a mockery the British Commonwealth of Nations. The only true commonwealth of Nations is the World Federation of Workers' Republics. Only as a unit of such a World Federation can Ireland achieve her freedom. . . .

"Long live the Irish Republic.

"Long live the World Federation of Workers' Republics.

"Work for a Republic! Hold your guns and fight for a Republic! . . ."

The Labour and trade union leadership was sharply attacked by the Communist Party of Ireland for their support of the Treaty terms. After the Dáil had endorsed the Treaty in December 1921 and the danger of civil war began to emerge, the Labour leadership declared for a policy of neutrality. When, finally, the Provisional Government, with British guns, attacked the Four Courts on June 28, members of the Communist Party of Ireland were involved in the Dublin area in the fighting alongside the anti-Treaty (Republican) forces.

Some time after the Free State forces had overcome the resistance in Dublin, and the main body of Republican resistance was concentrated in the South, the Communist Party of Ireland sent emissaries to General Liam Lynch with the proposition that a Republican Government should be set up in Cork, as its capital, that a democratic programme should be published to rally the people, and that in this way the Republic would be saved. Desmond Greaves in "Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution", p. 359, comments: "To Lynch it was merely a doubtful proposal for 'getting Labour behind Republicans'. The vision was absent. . . . He had been trained as a small-town shop assistant and such matters were foreign to him."

### Comintern Statement

Some ten days before the outbreak of the Civil War (June 28, 1922) the Executive Committee of the Communist International published "a message to the workers of Ireland" giving its estimate of the situation arising from the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The quotation given here is as it appears in p. 334 of "Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution":

"After prolonged peace negotiations English imperialism is again preparing to coerce the Irish people by force of arms. After all the efforts of the English bourgeoisie to maintain its domination by force of arms had been frustrated by the heroic, self-sacrificing defence of the Irish people, it was obliged to come to an understanding with the Irish bourgeoisie. For the semblance of an independent Irish Free State, the representatives of the Irish capitalist class, Collins, Griffith and Co., sacrificed the friends of the long and successful struggle and received in return the right to exploit the Irish workers together with the English bourgeoisie."

R. J. Connolly was the Communist Party of Ireland delegate to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International held in the early part of 1923. On his return, he put forward the proposition that since the military struggle was not going in favour of the Republicans, full political action should be resumed, including the taking of seats in the Free State Dáil. The military units of the Republican movement were to be maintained, but not in active service. Connolly's proposal was rejected by some members of the Communist Party of Ireland and, from the Republicans, Peadar O'Donnell, strongly denounced it. It was some months later that the "cease fire" was declared, all arms to be kept in safe keeping. Some four years later, the majority of the anti-Treaty Republicans abandoned abstention and entered Dáil Eireann under the leadership of Fianna Fáil and de Valera.

### Larkin Goes to America

Jim Larkin left in 1914 for America following the drawn battle in the Dublin 1913 Lock-out between the united employers and the infant I.T.G.W.U. He was to be absent for more years than he would have liked.

During his years in America, Larkin was prominently identified with the left-wing of the Socialist movement. Early on he proclaimed support for the Russian Revolution. He was involved in many of the negotiations and conferences which led to the foundation of the Communist Party of the United States. Larkin



JIM LARKIN SPEAKING IN BELFAST IN 1907.

was rounded up in the infamous Palmer raids which put hundreds of radicals and revolutionary workers into U.S. jails in 1920. Larkin was put on a criminal anarchy charge. He got a total sentence of ten years. He was released in early 1923, having served 30 months, mostly in Sing Sing. He returned to Ireland very soon after his freedom.

The Communist Party of Ireland and other Left forces had been campaigning for Larkin's release and were hopeful of greatly added strength from Larkin's support on his homecoming. Their reckoning was wrong. Larkin, back home, had not changed in any essential. He would not be associated with the Communist Party of Ireland, apparently because it had no real following among the mass of workers; he was not one to subject himself to the discipline of a party; as well, his immediate interest was to sort out his relationship with the I.T.G.W.U., of which he was the founder in 1909 and remained its General Secretary.

In a matter of a few months Larkin was in sharp collision with the leadership of the I.T.G.W.U., as a result of which he was removed from the post as General Secretary and was expelled from membership. Larkin's popularity with considerable numbers of workers had not waned. This was to be seen at the great meetings he could muster in Dublin and other areas.

### Comintern Invites Larkin

He went to Moscow on an invitation from the Communist International. During his absence the breakaway Workers' Union of Ireland was formed. Larkin was nominated General Secretary. In a matter of weeks the new Union won over from the I.T.G.W.U. some thousands of members, notably among the dockers, carters and coal workers. It was their way of protesting against the I.T.G.W.U. leadership which had openly identified itself with the Free State Establishment, putting behind them the militancy of 1913 and using the name and cloak of Connolly to cover up their co-operation with the Free State agents of imperialism.

The Workers' Union of Ireland became an affiliate of the Red International of Labour Unions (R.I.L.U.). Ireland was unique in these islands at the time; it was the only country to have unions affiliated to this body—Larkin's Union and the short-lived Kilkenny Miners' Union. Larkin was elected to its executive committee.

Larkin returned from his visit to Moscow and brought back with him a banner bearing the inscription, "From the Transport Workers of Moscow to the Transport Workers of Dublin". It was carried at the head of a huge demonstration which paraded through

Dublin to greet Larkin's return. It was an occasion when Larkin in his speech described himself as being "one of the twenty-five rulers of the earth".

Larkin's old 1913 paper, the "Irish Worker", was revived and it was soon to be involved in a number of libel actions, the result of one such was to cause Larkin, a few years later, to be unseated as a member of Dáil Éireann. The "Irish Worker" League was launched at a meeting in the Round Room of Dublin's Mansion House, with Larkin, Bob Stewart and other visiting speakers on the platform. Some 500 workers enrolled for membership, an indication of the potential to develop a Marxist Party. In the weeks and months that followed, no attempt was made to consolidate the gains of the Mansion House meeting by developing appropriate forms of organisation to meet the needs of the new organisation. Occasionally, for a time, meetings, which anyone could attend, were held at Unity Hall, the W.U.I. headquarters. As an organisation it never functioned. It never became a basis for the development of a Marxist Party.

## Larkin Conflicts Confined to Dublin

The clash among the Labour forces in Dublin had little reflection in the Belfast movement, and only in a few places outside Dublin in the Twenty-Six Counties. In those years, following the Civil War in the South, the Unionist monolith was strongly entrenched in the Six Counties to an extent its leaders never believed possible. In later years, the Unionist leaders acknowledged that the Civil War and the deep divisions in the South secured their position.

The success of four Labour candidates in the 1929 general election for Stormont was regarded by the Unionists as a possible start of a challenge to their monolithic position that could develop and grow, if not nipped in the bud. For them the disturbing aspect of the Labour success was the loss of Unionist support among Protestant workers. To secure their electoral position in future elections, the Stormont regime proceeded to dismantle the P.R. method of voting in elections.

In the situation of strikes, demonstrations and mass activities which had developed around the Larkin movement, the Communist Party of Ireland was just swamped and its small membership was, if anything, getting less. The members met and decided to terminate the Party existence in early 1924 on a proposal of the Communist International and resolved to play their part in the building of the "Irish Worker" League to be the party of the revolutionary Irish working class.

The Irish Worker League became the Irish section of the Communist International and at its 5th Congress Larkin was elected to be a candidate member of its executive committee.

In the June 1927 General Election the Larkin Irish Worker League contested with three candidates. Larkin senior was elected in Dublin North with over 8,000 votes; in Dublin South John Lawlor, President of the W.U.I., got some 2,500 votes and in Dublin County, Jim Larkin junior got about the same number of votes. The intervention of Larkin junior in Dublin County resulted in the defeat of the Labour leader, Tom Johnson. Larkin senior was unable to take his seat in the Dáil because he was an undischarged bankrupt arising from libel actions against his paper, "Irish Worker". It was the Labour Party that moved the proposal that he be unseated.

## Students Go to Lenin School

An invitation to send students to the Lenin School for the development of political cadres was acted upon in 1928 by the "Irish Worker" League. Among the people selected to be students were Jim Larkin junior, Seán Murray, Dan Buckley of Cork, Bill Denn, member of the I.N.U.W., Seán Shelley junior, Charlie Ashmore. A total of twelve students were sent. Only Larkin junior,

Seán Murray, Bill Denn and Dan Buckley completed the 2½-year course. The others came home, not being suitable as students. Seán Murray alone remained with the Communist Party, until his death, in Belfast, in May 1961.

In the early 1930's there were others who went to the Lenin School, among them being the late Jim Prendergast and Donal O'Reilly from Dublin, Betty Sinclair, Tommy Watters and the late Tom Geehan of Belfast.

**T**HE W.U.I. was very much isolated at the time in the trade union and Labour movement. Larkin senior was mainly concerned to rescue the union from its accumulated difficulties. In the years since its formation in 1924 it had fought many strikes, not a few of them ill-advised, being directed not against employers but against the I.T.G.W.U. All the blame was not with Larkin, it was a two-way traffic.

With large-scale unemployment and emigration operating, the W.U.I. was losing membership. Larkin senior drifted from the Communist movement and in a short time he was seeking accommodation with the social democratic movement. His militant and erratic past dogged him to the grave. The social-democratic establishment never really embraced him. To his credit he never said or involved himself in any anti-Soviet statements or actions.

1928 was not a time for working class advance in Ireland or for that matter in Europe. Reaction was in the ascendant. With great unemployment, the working-class movement was badly divided, with international reaction gathering strength. The employing class in Ireland were pressing for wage reductions—and succeeding.

The Dublin building workers fought a great battle, in which Communists were much involved, against a wage reduction. After three months of struggle, the settlement was for a reduction of one old penny per hour, instead of the employers' demand of two old pennies. The old-age pension was cut-back by one old shilling to nine shillings a week. Unemployment and social welfare benefits, as known today, were non-existent at the time.

The improvements in social welfare benefits are not the result of either Fianna Fáil or Coalition generosity. They are the result of the persistent struggles of the Labour and trade union and unemployed struggles.

## I.W.L. Still Did Not Function

Despite the impressive votes and success of the "Irish Worker" League in the general election, the organisation, as such, remained moribund. It was the Connolly Workers' Educational Club which provided a forum for lectures, discussions and educational classes. Also, it helped out in the organisation of unemployed demonstrations and other social protests.

A new effort to build a Marxist Revolutionary Party in Ireland, after the failure of the Larkin period, was taken on March 22, 1930, when there was held in Dublin a conference of delegates from revolutionary groups. Dublin and Belfast were represented, also Longford, Cork, Leitrim and Kilkenny and some individuals from other counties.

From this meeting was started the Revolutionary Workers' Groups, with the aim of laying a foundation for the launching of a Communist Party of Ireland.

The conference decided to launch a weekly paper to support its work, the "Irish Workers' Voice", the first issue of which appeared on April 5, 1930.

At the time that the conference was being held, there was taking place in Galway a small farmers' congress and from that body there was sent a message of support from the small farmers for the launching of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups. A message of worker/small farmer solidarity was enthusiastically reciprocated from the Dublin meeting.

A Manifesto adopted by the Conference declared :

"In our partitioned country, as in other capitalistic countries, the present situation is one of crisis. The puppet governments, which the British imperialist 'Labour' Government aids to function in the twenty-six counties of the 'Free State' and in the six counties of Northern Ireland, offers no solution whatever to our problems, since both they and their opposition parties stand for the 'rights of private property' . . . ."

"In Ireland, as a consequence of past tradition, disrupting leadership, and general confusion of purpose, there exists as yet no party of the working class, and no paper to voice the needs of Irish workers and help them to organise their forces against the employer and governments which despoil them.

"The time for this to be remedied is long overdue. . . ."

In its first editorial (5/4/1930) the "Irish Workers' Voice", under the headings "Our Policy : Class Against Class", declared : "We make no secret of our aims and objects. Our policy is as follows :

"The establishment of an Irish Workers' Republic, through which all power will be in the hands of the working class, and which shall socialise all means of wealth production for the benefit of the producers, and guarantee to the working farmers the use of such land as they can work without the exploitation of the others.

"Complete independence from British or any other imperialist robber state, and the unity of Ireland under workers' rule. . . ."

"Further, we shall devote all our energies to see to it that no Irish worker takes up arms against the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, as this is the only fatherland which the workers of the world possess. . . ."

The "Irish Workers' Voice", the weekly organ of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups, editorially and otherwise, was a forthright expression of the revolutionary demands and position of the members and supporters rallied around the Revolutionary Workers' Groups.

## Dictatorship of Irish Capitalist Class

In its first editorial it proclaimed that the Free State and Northern Governments were the instruments to maintain the dictatorship of the Irish capitalist class, that

"The so-called 'Opposition parties' (De Valera, Devlin, the Labour Party) represent only other strata of the property owners and have nothing in common with the 'people of no property'. . . ."

"Our policy is to organise the workers of Ireland into a party which shall have as its leading slogan : Class Against Class."

A May Day meeting in 1930 in Dublin's Mansion House had to be cancelled at that venue, the City Commissioners refusing the hall to the Revolutionary Workers' Groups. This was to be the start of the denial of civil and democratic rights by local authorities and Government down the years to the Communist and progressive and democratic movements. The meeting was held instead at Cathal Brugha Street.

The Inchicore Communist group, based on the railway works, published a works' paper, "The Hammer". The group held lunch-hour meetings outside the works gates; similar activities took place at other factories and work-places in Dublin.

From the Lenin School, in Moscow, Jim Larkin junior, on behalf of the Irish students, sent a message of greetings to the R.W.G. and the "Irish Workers' Voice". The message called for support for the building of a Communist Party—"a party composed of the most class-conscious members of the Irish working class; a party trained in, and based on, the revolutionary principles of Marx and Lenin. . . ."

In Longford the recently-formed branch of the R.W.G. exposed in the "Irish Workers' Voice" the bad working conditions which obtained in the local bakery—with a working shift of 12 hours or 72 hours a week. During a by-election (June 1930) the R.W.G. held a public meeting to expose the social conditions in

the town and denounced the social policies of both the Government Party (Cumann na nGaedheal) and Fianna Fáil.

The Red International of Labour Unions was the trade union section of the Communist International. The Workers' Union of Ireland was affiliated but was not actively involved in its work. Larkin senior was no longer involved with the International Communist movement by the time that the 5th Congress of the R.I.L.U. was held in 1930.

From Moscow, Jim Larkin junior reported on the 5th Congress of the R.I.L.U. in the columns of the "Irish Workers' Voice". He pointed out that the tasks set by the 4th Congress of the R.I.L.U. for the W.U.I. had not been carried out, that a left-wing trade union movement had not been developed and that the Irish workers were "disunited, disorganised, bewildered and incapable of presenting a solid, united front to the capitalist class and its Labour lieutenants, the reformist trade union officials" .

The standpoint of the R.W.G. at the time to trade union officialdom was expressed in the opening sentence of the report on the annual meeting of the Irish Trade Union Congress of that year in the "Irish Workers' Voice" (August 9, 1930) :

"From the first word to last the annual conference of the Irish Trade Union Congress did not strike a class note. The real problems facing the workers were not dealt with. . . . It was a gathering of trade union politicians who were more concerned in their own careers than the interests of the working class. . . ."

The call was made for "the militant elements within the unions" to come together "on a common platform of class struggle to break the sabotage of the bureaucrats.

"Above all," it was urged, "it is essential for the revolutionary workers to bend all their energies towards the formation of a workers' party capable of leading the workers in their struggles against capitalism and its agents—the reformist trade union bureaucrats." ("Irish Workers' Voice," August 9, 1930.)

The R.W.G. in a matter of months from its formation entered the elections with two candidates for the new Dublin City Council. Six years earlier, the Free State Government had abolished the Dublin Corporation, for alleged corruption. Three Commissioners were appointed to run the city's affairs.

The Dáil legislation covering the creation of the new Dublin City Council provided for a City Manager to carry out the functions of the former Town Clerk. The City Manager, unlike the Town Clerk, had administrative powers superior to the elected representatives of the people. On one day of the year the Council members can refer back for consideration the financial proposals of the City Manager.

The standpoint of the R.W.G. to the new Dublin City Council was that it "was a rotten fig-leaf to cover up the dictatorship of the Cumann na nGaedheal Government, ruling in the interests of the Irish capitalists." ("Irish Workers' Voice," August 23, 1930.)

The two R.W.G. candidates were Jim Larkin junior for a North-side constituency, and Mrs. Esther McGregor for an area on the South-side, which took in Inchicore.

The R.W.G. in the elections opposed all other parties and candidates. "We are against all of them—Cumann na nGaedheal, Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party."

## R.W.G. Wins Seat on City Council

A local election programme was published which covered the problems of unemployment, housing, health, child welfare and all other aspects of work involved in local authority administration.

The outcome of the election was success for Jim Larkin junior. He got 967 first preference votes and secured an early seat. Mrs. McGregor got 129 first preference votes, but did not secure a seat. Larkin senior's "Irish Worker" League put up twelve candidates but won only one seat, with Jim Larkin junior. The Labour Party won three seats and Fianna Fáil five seats. The undemocratic electoral system favoured the business and property interests, giving them a majority in the Council.

At a public meeting celebrating the R.W.G. success in securing a seat in the new Council, Jim Larkin junior said: "Any fight inside the City Council could only be effective in the measure that the workers outside backed it up with militant action. Therefore if we are to get real value out of our election victory, and if we are to fight effectively the forces of Irish capitalism, then we must build up a real political party of the working class here in Ireland."

The attitude of the R.W.G. in the early 1930's to the Labour Party was put in an article published in the "Irish Workers' Voice", September 6, 1930:

"The role of the Irish Labour Party conforms to the same role as the British Labour Party and Social Democracy throughout Europe, as being one of active agents of capitalism in carrying out the policy of capitalism under a cloud of democratic phrases, and, at the same time, using all the oppressive machinery of the State to break the resistance of the workers against the capitalist offensive."

The weekly "Irish Workers' Voice" and other forms of printed material, as well as public meetings in Belfast and Dublin and in other places, when possible, were among the means in the building of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups.

## Unemployment Was High

It was a constant, uphill fight against the entrenched forces of reaction to develop support for the Communist Party. In the early 1930's the capitalists were on the offensive, the Cosgrave Free State (Cumann na nGaedheal) Government was implementing reactionary social policies on all fronts. Unemployment was high, social welfare, as such, was unknown, wages were being forced down. The world capitalist offensive was on.

In Dublin, in January 1933, a conference was held, the purpose of which was to review the political situation and the work of the R.W.G. At the conference targets were set to further develop the work of the R.W.G. in Dublin and its immediate area, in particular to recruit members from among railwaymen, building workers and some selected factories. The necessity for expanding the sales of the "Irish Workers' Voice" was emphasised. Harry Pollitt, General Secretary of the British Communist Party, conveyed greetings to the conference and messages of support were received from the Scottish and other sections of the British Party. The R.W.G. in Belfast also conveyed greetings.

A left-wing bookshop had functioned at a premises in Winetavern Street, Dublin. It was intended to serve as a centre for left-wing socialist and communist literature. The Franciscan Fathers, who were close by at Merchants' Quay, used the influence they had in the neighbourhood to promote enough bad feeling and hostility to compel the close-down of the shop. The gentle, sandle-soled, brown-habited Fathers had their way. Easy access to knowledge about socialism and what it stood for was not wanted and was not to be allowed.

## No Civil Rights

In the two bourgeois States which emerged from the War of Independence there was from the start an absence of civil and democratic rights. In the South, the Civil War and its aftermath was used to make easy the implementation of the most repressive and anti-democratic types of legislation. Where necessary old British Acts of Parliament were used to curb civil and democratic liberties.

There was an absence of civil and democratic rights for Republicans, Communists and Socialist-minded people in the 1930's and in the years to follow. In the years of the Cold War, from Winston Churchill's (1946) Fulton speech, militant, hooligan anti-

Communism was rampant in the country. No section of the progressive, Labour or Republican movement escaped the onslaught of the fascist, gombeen and clerical-inspired anti-Communist hate campaign.

The ("Catholic") Standard took over leadership of the campaign in the 1950's; the Communists, the unemployed, the Labour Lefts—they all came in for attack. The campaign against the Communists was the worst. Photos, with names and addresses of Communists and their places of employment were published in the pious rag, with the suggestion that their employers should dismiss them in the cause of Christ and country. It was made particularly difficult for those in public authority employments.

Larkin senior, and his leadership of the W.U.I., came in for strong criticism from the R.W.G. during the Dublin building workers' strike of 1930, when he raised the divisive issue of "English versus Irish unions". The "Irish Workers' Voice" put the criticism of Larkin senior thus: "So the issue in dispute (the building workers' demand for 2d. an hour increase and 41½ hours a week) is not a class issue, a fight between the wages of the workers and the profits of the bosses. Oh, no! It is Kathleen Mavourneen versus Britannia." (31st January, 1931.) And further:

"To raise the issue of the English unions versus Irish at a time when the whole forces of the workers should be directed to fighting the employers' attack and to raise it in the form of a lament to the employers is simply to draw a red herring (and a white one at that) across the workers' struggle.

"We are in favour of Irish unions under a militant leadership, as against the unions dominated by the 'English' and 'Irish' reformists."

Larkin junior, the representative of the R.W.G. on the Dublin City Council, opposed his father's position at the time and that of the Labour Group in the Council. He was the only member of the City Council to oppose a motion in the name of the Labour Group "to compel the carrying out of the building contracts for Corporation houses at the old rates". Speaking on the motion, Larkin junior said: "Today in Dublin an active class struggle is in progress between the workers and the employers in the building trades, and this Council is in the struggle—on which side we will soon see. It is on a class basis this motion will be decided. I am not so simple to think that Councillor McGloughlin (a building employer), for instance, will take a stand against the employers. He will stand by the employers. I will stand by the workers."

## Wage Reductions

In the late 1920's and early 1930's the employers were imposing wage reductions, in the order of 10%, and in most cases succeeding. Such was the weak position of the working-class at the time.

The bosses of the Greenmount and Boyne Linen Co., at Harold's Cross, Dublin, told their workers that a 10% wage reduction was being imposed.

There were some militant workers there who inspired the rest not to accept the reduction, to resist the bosses' demand and, in fact, to go forward for a wage increase and other improvements. They were an unorganised section of workers.

A committee of the workers served notice on the bosses for a 20% increase, abolition of fines, a proper system of sharing work to avoid wasting of time, and all time over 44 hours to be paid at time-and-a-half.

The workers' committee had Annie Murray and Tom Powderley as joint secretaries. Both were to be prominent for some months during which the workers were on strike.

Annie Murray became a member of the R.W.G. From the start, the Greenmount Linen workers had the active support of the R.W.G. Sean Murray, Jim Larkin junior, J. Nolan and others were always on call at meetings of the strikers.

Contact was made by the Dublin strikers with the linen workers at Lurgan and Drogheda. In Lurgan, at the time, the weavers were on strike to stop a reduction in wages.

An effort by the Dublin Greenmount bosses to get enough scab labour failed; out of a strike force of 230 only some 12 in number went to work. For their militant picketing activities some of the Dublin strikers were arrested. Annie Murray was bound to the peace for 12 months.

After 13 weeks of stubborn struggle, the Greenmount textile workers were forced to return to work. During the strike they had joined the textile section of the Workers' Union of Ireland.

They had put up a great fight, but it did not end in victory. The absence of support from the other sections of the trade union movement robbed them of success. They had a very strong case against the bosses, but the trade unions in the industry used technical reasons for their lack of support. An added, but very important factor, the Workers' Union of Ireland, which they had joined, was, at the time, outside "the Pale" of the trade union movement.

## May Day

May Day, 1931, was celebrated with a united working-class parade and meeting, thanks to the efforts of the R.W.G. The railwaymen were on strike, and Peter Timmons of the N.U.R. was chairman at the meeting and the speakers were Jim Larkin senior (W.U.I.), Bill Denn (R.W.G. and I.N.U.W.), Councillor George Dixon (W.U.I., Independent Labour, Dun Laoghaire), Loftus Johnstone (Belfast Secretary, R.W.G.), Jim Larkin junior (R.W.G.), Barney Conway (W.U.I.), John Sutherland (W.U.I., Railway Section) and Nicholas Boran (Castlecomer Miners).

For many years, May Day had not been celebrated by the I.T.U.C. or the Labour Party. The Sunday nearest to May 12, the date of Connolly's execution, was substituted. This remains the position to the present day.

In the 1930's May First was observed by the R.W.G. and the C.P.I. in co-operation with other left-wing groups. The war years disrupted, but as is pointed out elsewhere, in the 1950's and to the present time, May First has been celebrated as Labour Day in fraternity with the working people of all lands.

## Coercion Act Warning

The "Workers' Voice" warned as early as June in 1931 that the Cosgrave Free State Government was preparing for new repressive legislation aimed against Republicans, Communists and all democratic forces. The worsening economic situation was a great concern for the Government and the mounting discontent on all aspects of its policies, political, social and economic, were seen as a challenge.

A factor influencing the Government on the course of new coercive legislation was the holding of the conference to inaugurate "Saor Eire", which was intended to be the Socialist, radical expression of the I.R.A. Republican movement. This was one of a number of attempts to provide the I.R.A. Republican movement with a political front.

Between June 27 and September 5, 1931, no issues of the "Irish Workers' Voice" were published. The reason: the printer of the paper was involved in a dispute with the union; it was not possible to find alternative arrangements for the printing of the paper; in those days, printers refused and all kinds of pressures operated against the printing of a Communist paper.

In the two months that the "Irish Workers' Voice" was out of circulation many important events took place; it was a crippling blow for the R.W.G. to be without its weekly paper. On resumption, September 5, 1931, the editorial stated:

"These two months in which our paper was out of action has been a fateful period for the working-class. International finance has staved off for another short period the collapse of the fabric of German capitalism. Next comes the turn of Britain. The second Labour Government which had served capitalism so well is no more. A combination of McDonald, Baldwin, Lloyd George and the Craigavon sub-committee in the Six Counties now takes up the task of pillaging the slender resources of the British and Six Counties workers, that the tottering fabric of capitalism may be saved.

"The Free State Government prepares its Coercion Act in an endeavour to stem the tide of revolt which its policy of robbery of the working masses is now calling forth. . . ."

The faithful servants of the Irish propertied classes, the Bishops, moved into action and well to the fore was Dr. Fogarty, a tried and trusted diehard. From his pulpit at Ennis he declared: "There is a group of people who have adopted the methods as well as the principles of Soviet Russia and are preparing by murder, intimidation and propaganda to clap the harness of Communism on Ireland's back."

Saor Eire had just been launched as the political off-shoot of the I.R.A.; it had attracted the support of a variety of left-socialist elements; it aimed to win the support of the workers and working farmers, and put forward the slogans of "No Rent, No Grabbers".

## "Two Voices" in Saor Eire

Dr. Fogarty and the Government were concerned that Saor Eire, with its I.R.A. backing, would draw to itself support from the discontented, then held in control by Fianna Fáil and the conservative trade union and Labour leadership.

The Revolutionary Workers' Groups pointed out that two voices were in evidence at the founding conference of Saor Eire—that of the working-class Republicans and the working farmers seeking a class line of advance to the struggle for a free and united Ireland; and that of the urban middle-class which wanted to hold the movement along the old "non-class" bourgeois channels.

"United front forms of organisation to direct the struggles of the workers and peasants in the anti-imperialist fight are essential—not new 'political parties'. The party now needed to lead the forces of the Irish working-class, North and South, is the Communist Party of Ireland."

Saor Eire was still-born. After its founding conference it never functioned. But on went the campaign for the new Coercion Act, with the Government and the Bishops making the so-called Communist menace the issue. The Republican leadership did not meet the challenge. It faltered and floundered. They put up no real campaign against the Cosgrave terror legislation.

The R.W.G. issued a call to smash the Free State Terror Government, in the course of which it stated:

"The Free State Government is launching a reign of terror against the working-class and toiling masses of the Twenty-Six Counties. This is the remedy of Irish capitalism for the present poverty and unemployment in town and country.

"One hundred thousand working men and women walk the streets and roads of Southern Ireland without work. Cosgrave's starvation Government brings in a Bill which makes it a penalty for the workers to organise politically to fight the battle for existence.

"Ten years of Free State 'freedom', and the result—a Coercion Act! Ten years of the Craigavon Six-County regime, and the result—an Act to rob the unemployed workers! This is what Irish capitalism presents to the Irish working class in 1931.

"The present Coercion Act is a desperate attempt by the capitalist class, headed by the Cosgrave Government, to drive the

Irish workers and small farmers into tame submission to the robber capitalist regime. In this the capitalists have the support of the whole forces of reaction in the country from Trinity College to Maynooth.

"The workers are to be robbed, the poor farmers to be evicted, the workers' organisations to be suppressed and their leaders jailed and executed—all in the name of religion, private property, law and order, and democracy!

"The Irish workers and working farmers must take up the challenge. From every factory and workshop, every trade union branch, every workers' club, every public body, every street corner, cross-roads and ceilidhe house in Ireland, the voice of the workers must go forth in a torrent of wrathful protest against the hangman's conspiracy now being enacted in the Free State Parliament.

"The gang of terrorists in Leinster House hope to provoke premature insurrectionary acts or counter-terror from the revolutionary Nationalists in opposition to its rule.

"To every worker and farmer's son in Ireland we declare that mass action on class lines will alone defeat the capitalist imperialist menace. The effective 'terror' is the combined attack by the workers and working farmers against the forces of privilege, profits and rents, through resistance to wage cuts and dismissals, resistance to payments of rents and taxes, the fight for unemployment maintenance. It is exactly these issues the capitalist-imperialists and their hirelings wish to smother; it is these issues which the toiling masses must raise."

An effort to have a special meeting of Dublin Corporation convened was made by Larkin junior on behalf of the R.W.G. to protest against the Coercion Act. It was defeated by Lord Mayor Alfie Byrne and the Free State majority on the Council.

The build-up for the new Coercion Act was fantastic. The Government had the support of the "Irish Times" and the "Irish Independent". The "Independent" in the William Martin Murphy tradition excelled itself then, as it was to do in later years on so many occasions in looking for terror actions against the Republicans and militant workers. In 1931 it claimed that "anti-social activities" were widespread throughout Dublin. (Shades of the campaign in 1913 against the sending of strikers' children to workers' homes in Britain.)

## R.W.G. Alone Held Protests

All over the country in the County Councils and public bodies, the reactionary elements were demanding action. The Republican and working-class forces were on the defensive. Labour spokesmen, in some instances, behaved disgracefully. For example, in the Wexford Corporation, Alderman Dick Corish, T.D., who was the Labour Mayor at the time, refused to give his vote against the Cosgrave Coercion Act at the meeting of the Wexford Corporation because the resolution against it did not include a condemnation of the "revolutionary opposition to the Free State Government".

Conor Cruise O'Brien and his kind are not newcomers, politically speaking, to the Labour Party. In earlier years there were the Dick Corishes, the Davins, the Dan Morrisseys, the Anthonys and so on. They all add up to a package at total variance with the Socialist James Connolly, who saw the connection between the social struggles of the Irish workers and the demand for national independence.

The R.W.G. organised public meetings in protest against the Cosgrave Government all over Dublin. It was the only section of the Labour Movement to undertake this campaign. The Free State Government created a crisis atmosphere about the Coercion Act; Dáil Eireann was surrounded with armoured cars, Dáil Deputies and Senators were given protection whether they wanted it or not. There was the Bishops' Pastoral about the threat of a "Red" take-over. General O'Duffy, the Free State Chief of Police, had

sold his story to Maynooth and the Bishops, all of them stout Free Staters and staunch upholders of the Empire and all that, moved quickly, and so there was the Pastoral about the terrible "Red menace".

By midnight on Saturday, October 17, 1931, the Government was provided with all the coercive, anti-democratic and repressive laws it had demanded.

On Sunday, October 18, at College Green, Dublin, the R.W.G. held a mass meeting in protest against the Coercion Act. The slogan was: "Workers: Fight the Terrorists. A United Working Class will Smash the Coercion Act."

College Green for the occasion was crowded with people, it was a meeting of many thousands and it indicated that the working-class and democratic forces were opposed to the Coercion Act, a fact to be confirmed a few months later in the General Election by the defeat of the Cosgrave Free State regime.

## R.W.G. Banned

At the meeting, Jim Larkin junior presided and those on the platform were: Peter Timmons of the National Union of Railwaymen, Sean Murray of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups, Barney Conway of the Workers' Union of Ireland, Bill Denn, a member of the Irish National Union of Woodworkers and the R.W.G.; Jack Carney, Assistant Editor, "Irish Worker"; Donal O'Reilly, E.C. member of the Plasterers' Union.

The Coercion Act went into effect. A list of Republican and working-class organisations were put under legal ban by the Government, among them the Revolutionary Workers' Groups.

The weekly paper, the "Irish Workers' Voice", was published for a few weeks; each week as it left the printers it was seized. In the circumstances, publication was stopped in November 1931 and did not resume until April 1932, shortly after the de Valera Government took over.

In an article in the "Irish Workers' Voice" (September 5, 1931) Sean Murray in a general way summarised the position at the time:

"The Free State Government's ten years' regime has been one of plunder, prison and death for the toiling masses of the Twenty-six Counties. Like the Philistines of Capitalism in other countries, it fondly believed it had conquered its difficulties and those of the class it rules for, when it had drowned with fire and sword the resistance to its sway, and had stabilised its finances over the hungry bodies of the workers and small farmers. Vain hope! Its sins are now coming home to roost. It is confronted with the upsurge of the working people impoverished by its regime of starvation and oppression.

"This is life under the besmirched tricolour of Leinster House. And the Union Jack flies over Stormont in the North, over similar conditions of poverty, unemployment, and a working-class and farmer population facing further attacks on their means of livelihood.

## Ten Million Unemployed

"And the Stars and Stripes. The Irish workers, numbered in tens of thousands among the 10 million unemployed! Dollar Imperialism has no further use for the manhood of Ireland's working people. It has neither work or wages for the toilers on whom it had battered. But it has (with its French brother) £80,000,000 for the age-long oppressor of Ireland, British Imperialism.

"This is the situation, local and international, under which the Irish working masses come upon the field of battle for their social and national liberation.

"In such circumstances, the burning question facing the Irish toilers is to find the central link in the chain of common interests which unites our hitherto divided workers and toiling farmers. What is that link? There can be only one answer—the link of a

common exploitation. But it may be argued this link has always been present and yet united struggle has not been possible. True, but under vastly different political and economic conditions.

"Throughout the greater part of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century the development of capitalist imperialism throughout the world, particularly in Britain, provided the ruling class of England and Ireland with the means to disintegrate the struggle of the Irish people. British imperialism was able to give definite advantages to a strata of its own workers and a similar strata of the Irish workers and farmers in the north. American imperialism was similarly developing upward and offered a capitalist 'way out' to large masses of the Irish workers and peasants. Similarly, middle-class nationalism had its future all before it: Hill and valley rang with the oratory of our lawyers, clergymen and shopkeepers about what life would be when they—'the native Irish'—would supplant the foreigner in the rulership of Ireland.

"The masses of the Irish workers and peasants north and south, have now had a bellyful of these 'solutions' for their grievances. British imperialism is rocking under the ravages of the crisis—which is now a crisis of the whole capitalist system. We have seen American imperialism at its best; it has also entered its march to eternity, and middle-class nationalism from its 'Home Rule Acts on the Statute Book', its Anglo-Irish Treaty, its Dáil's first and second, now stands before the verdict of history, tested, not by promises, but performances, and revealed as bankrupt in relation to the needs and aspirations of the toiling millions of the Irish race.

"These tremendous political experiences of the Irish workers and peasants, with capitalism bankrupt in the reigning countries of the world and Socialism marching to victory on its ruins in one of the greatest of the world's empires (Czarist Russia)—these are the new conditions which bring new opportunities for our advance to victory over the forces which are oppressing us.

### Full Circuit

"History has made a full circuit in Ireland. The historical conditions of '98, which made possible a united movement of the whole Irish rising middle-class and exploited poor against the aristocracy, now present themselves in a new form and for new tasks. Now the workers take the place of the middle class; the capitalists of the aristocracy; the Socialist Republic supplants the capitalist republic as the goal of endeavour. How to realise this objective, how to get the correct forms of approach to our task, how to apply the correct methods in the struggle—these are the crucial questions now facing the revolutionary forces in Ireland.

"The happenings of the last few weeks in the North signalises the danger which confronts the rising workers' movement. The present discontent can take the road to reaction as easy as it can the road to revolution, unless there is a powerful working-class movement at its head. This is the lesson of Cootehill and Portadown.\*

"We are not concerned with the intentions of those who participated in the Cootehill affair. We are concerned with its results. And these results are all on the debit side of the revolutionary balance sheet.

"It can be argued that Cootehill was an anti-imperialist upheaval, and this is certainly true, so far as the Republican participants were concerned. But to give battle to imperialism in the

form of suppressing an Orange demonstration in a Catholic district of the Free State, is just to give battle to imperialism on its own chosen ground. We live in Ireland! The suppression by force of an Orange demonstration in a nationalist area means the suppression of a nationalist demonstration in a Unionist area. It means the fight between orange and green, the very form of fight which disrupts the class movement of the exploited against the exploiter, and leaves the masses on both sides the victims of their respective capitalist leaders, lay and clerical.

"The breaking of the power of Ulster Unionism must be the work of the Northern workers. This power can only be broken by the winning of the workers to the line of class struggle against capitalism. The spectacular adventurism of Cootehill politics can only solidify the grip and influence of Ulster imperialism on the Northern masses.

### No Isolated Incident

"Cootehill is no isolated incident. It follows directly out of the politics of middle-class nationalism. The rising movement of Irish Republicanism has made steps towards a class policy. This development must find its reflection in the application of a class policy to the present situation. Cootehillism represents the past. The emphasis must be upon the issues common to the whole Irish workers and peasants and not upon the forms of the fight which emphasises the antagonisms.

"The unifying and co-ordinating of the struggle of all anti-imperialists within the country is now essential for the progress of the united battle of the Irish workers and small farmers for their emancipation."

In the few months that the Coercion Act operated before the General Election of February 1932, the R.W.G. was proscribed from being involved in public activities. Group meetings were brought together at members' homes and activities planned and discussions held. As well, members were involved in various forms of social protest actions, particularly in regard to relief workers and other grievances.

The world crisis of capitalism was having its effects in Ireland. In the Party campaign against the Coercion Act, it was pointed out that a prime factor influencing the Cosgrave Free State Government to seek extra coercive powers was the social and political upheavals that could arise from the impending full blast consequences of the world economic crisis. Irish agriculture had been cushioned from the crisis because of the special relation to the British market. That was now endangered.

Before the full blast of the economic crisis descended on all sectors of Irish life, the Cosgrave Government decided on a General Election, earlier than was required.

### Most Reactionary in Europe

The Cosgrave Government, at the time, ranked high among the reactionary Governments in Europe. It was tied to the most dyed-in-the-wool reactionary social policies, even more than the notorious MacDonald-Baldwin set-up in London—if that were possible.

It was a situation in which the vigorous and forward-pushing Fianna Fáil Party could gain new and impressive support.

The workers had bad wages, the unemployed no social welfare, the slums were terrible, the small and middle farmers were burdened with land annuities and other inequities; and there was the great mass of Republican supporters who had been discriminated against in all sorts of ways by the vindictive Cosgrave administration. It was a situation that built up to a defeat for the Cosgrave Free State Government and success for the de Valera Fianna Fáil Party.

The R.W.G. entered the 1932 General Election with two candidates in the Dublin South and Dublin North constituencies. A

\* The Cootehill incident: An Orange demonstration, with banners, etc., was arranged to take place in Cootehill, Co. Cavan, on August 12, 1931, with contingents taking part from Monaghan, Cavan, Portadown and other areas in the Six Counties. Union Jacks were much in evidence on the occasion and the outcome was an attack on the parade.

Before the parade, the Campaign Committee of the Irish Working Farmers had circulated a statement, which said: "Working farmers and wage-earners of the planter stock, take the lead in exposing the mean purpose behind Orange demonstrations, drive the robbers who stage these parades in among the protecting police and soldiery where they belong."

very vigorous campaign was carried out, with public meetings and literature in the two constituencies. The candidates were helped by visiting speakers from Britain, among them William Gallacher and Bob Stewart.

The R.W.G. candidates were Jim Larkin junior in Dublin South and Joseph Troy in Dublin North.

The R.W.G. policy position in the election saw no real difference in the basic policies of the Cosgrave Government and the de Valera Fianna Fáil. It was likened to a Tweedledum and Tweedledee situation.

The outcome of the election was the defeat of the Cosgrave Government. Fianna Fáil secured enough seats along with Labour's seven to have a majority over Cumann na nGaedheal and its fringe hangers-on.

The R.W.G. candidates did not secure election; Jim Larkin junior in Dublin South got almost 900 votes; and Mr. Troy in Dublin North got 128 votes.

In the long years of Fianna Fáil rule that followed, there were to be many disappointments and frustrations to be experienced by Republicans and those in the working-class movement who put much hope on a victory of Fianna Fáil. They did not understand the class nature of the social struggle and also that as the years went by, with Fianna Fáil in office, they earned and won new support among the propertied classes—the new rich in particular—their own creation, while they managed, by clever pieces of indulgent legislation, to hold on to popular working-class and small farmer support.

## R.W.G. Paper Re-appears

The defeat of the Cosgrave Government was an occasion for much rejoicing all over the country. The I.R.A. and most sections of the non-Fianna Fáil Republicans had helped in every way to ensure the ousting of the Free State Government. The Coercion Act was suspended and the prisoners were set free.

The R.W.G. in a matter of weeks was again publishing its weekly paper—the "Irish Workers' Voice", with Brian O'Neill as Editor. Despite the change of Government, the farmers were still faced with the bailiff, while the position of Mr. de Valera was that with the removal of the Oath, all further reasons for protest or action were removed: "there will be no excuse for anyone to give perfectly willing obedience to the law. We stand for one Government and one Army. I do not think I need say more."

Here was, in those early days of Fianna Fáil rule, a warning to the I.R.A., whose help was so important to get Fianna Fáil elected.

With the change of Government, the position of the R.W.G. was outlined in the editorial article by Seán Murray:

"Last October the ruling class of southern Ireland openly embraced the methods of a political gangster in the fight against the working masses. The depths to which this class is prepared to go in that struggle is written large in the court proceedings, barrack rooms and jail cells of southern Ireland.

## Graveyard Not Cheated

"The graveyard, too, has not been cheated as the relations of James Vaughan can testify.

"The Coercion Act was one of Cosgrave's weapons in the search for a solution of the crisis which then confronted, and still confronts, the Irish capitalists. That crisis pricked the 'democratic' bladder of the Free State Constitution and unmasked the capitalist dictatorship of which it was the cloak.

"But the crisis did not cease with the passing of the Coercion Act: nor the revolt of the working masses. That revolt has compelled another change of front. A new government tries its

hand at the task of solving the crisis. Naked Coercion again vacates its seat and Madam Constitution is again enthroned.

"We share the feelings of every toiler in Ireland in regard to a government associated with ten long years of the most vicious crimes against the masses of the Irish people—the government of national betrayal; of jails and executions, of poverty and oppression of the working masses. To break with Cosgrave and everything he stands for has been and is the policy of this paper.

"And just because of this we are against the present government. For the Fianna Fáil Government has not broken with the Cosgrave policy despite its seeming 'rebel' manoeuvres. It is pursuing under other forms and phrases, the objects of the Cosgrave ministry. To conceal this fact from the Irish workers and farmers, to pretend that Fianna Fáil is pursuing a real struggle for national freedom, is 'a people's government' and all that, would be to abandon the fight against British Imperialism and Irish Capitalism.

"We stand for neither Oath nor Empire. We stand for the struggle of Ireland's oppressed toilers in town and country, north and south, for the uprooting of the system on which Empires and Oaths are reared, the system which enslaves and beggars the masses of the Irish people—the Capitalist system of society.

"We therefore take our stand with the workers in the linen mills of Ulster, the farms and factories of the Free State, at the labour exchanges and relief queues in the bitter struggle for a livelihood against capitalism. The Free State and Six County Governments whether they call themselves Tories or Republicans are linked arm and arm with the Federations of Employers, Chambers of Commerce, Bankers, and Stock Exchanges against the working people.

"We appeal for unity of all revolutionary fighters who accept the fight of the working-class and peasant farmers as the road to a free and united Ireland. We ask them to get together for the work of building the movement which will lead the struggle."

The Land Annuities, which was a major issue in the elections, remained central to the struggle within the country and in the clash between the Dublin and London Governments. Large numbers of farmers were not paying their annuities. It was the policy of the de Valera Government that they should pay their share to the Irish Exchequer. At the same time, the Dublin Government was negotiating with London to have previous financial agreements changed.

## "Firm Grip" on Homestead!

The R.W.G. supported the movement among the farmers to withhold payment of annuities and revived the Parnell slogan of the 1880's: "Pay no rents, keep a firm grip on your homestead."

The R.W.G. declared: "The Free State Government is arguing the merits of the case with the imperialists but is moving against the farmers to compel them to pay the annuities. . . ." It was emphasised that what was needed was a militant leadership among the small farmers to organise their spontaneous action in refusing to pay over the land annuities.

Along with resumption of the weekly "Irish Workers' Voice" public meetings were held by the R.W.G. These were at various parts of the city—East Essex Street, Cathal Brugha Street, Upper Abbey Street, Thomas Street.

A general meeting of the Dublin members was convened at which the political situation, following the general election, was discussed; preparations were undertaken for the holding of a meeting of delegates of the Dublin, Belfast, Longford and other Groups.

The Labour and trade union leadership conformed as readily to the new situation created by the coming to power of Fianna Fáil as it had ten years earlier when it played the rôle of "loyal opposition" to the first Free State Government. For them the class struggle had limited aims, concerned with economic and social policies. The shaping and direction of national policies were left entirely in the domain of the Government.

Connolly's aim in 1916 was to join together in common struggle against British imperialism the forces of nationalist revolutionary discontent and the Labour forces of social protest, and in the course of the struggle to seek to win for the working class the leadership of the fight for national and social independence. Connolly's advice to the Citizen Army, before they left Liberty Hall on Easter Monday: Hold on to your guns, those with whom we are allies today, may not be with us tomorrow, indicated in all clarity that for Connolly the 1916 Uprising was but a first stage in the struggle to uproot imperialism and lay the basis for a Socialist Ireland.

From all that has happened in the years since, the fact is that Connolly's revolutionary aims were eschewed by the Labour and trade union leadership. The policies of social reformism became their guidelines. And this has meant that Connolly's socialist, anti-imperialist thinking and aims have not been the guiding influence for the Irish Labour and trade union movement. There has been, of course, no scarcity of lip sympathy to his memory and his socialism on the part of those who have no intention of adhering to his principles.

## **An Imperialist Rampage**

Within six months of the de Valera Government taking office, in February 1932, the defeated Cosgrave Free State Party was stumping the country for its policies that Ireland should stay close to the Empire and Commonwealth. The former Minister, Paddy McGilligan (at Waterford) declared: "We could have an honoured and respected place in the Commonwealth and be freer in it than if we were a little lopsided Republic, sticking in England's flank and having neither honour nor respect from them."

Paddy Hogan, the former Cumann na nGaedheal Minister for Agriculture, was more blunt when he declared: "I want to say quite clearly that I am against separation. I think that for this country there is more real independence, politically and economically, within the British Empire than outside it."

The Communists demanded that the anti-national, anti-democratic activities of the defeated Free Staters should be effectively curbed by Government action. Wherever the Free Staters attempted public meetings they had the protection of the State forces in face of the mass opposition and indignation of the Republican and working class population.

The Revolutionary Workers' Groups and the I.R.A. Republicans demanded that the Free State C.I.D. should be disbanded. Typical of the de Valera Government's capacity for compromising policies, most of the C.I.D. were transferred to other police duty. This body of men played a notorious role in the Civil War in harassing, murdering, torturing and persecuting Republicans and for a long time after the Civil War ceasefire. (Soon Fianna Fáil created the "Broy Harriers", later to be known as the C.I.D. and now the Special Branch. This force acquired a reputation for like action against republicans and militant workers and it continues to be its role to the present time.)

## **"Chained to Treaty Shackles"**

The Revolutionary Workers' Groups declared that the Fianna Fáil Government would not move against the anti-national, anti-democratic forces of the Free State Cumann na nGaedheal because it was "chained to the shackles of the Treaty, politically, and the handcuffs of capitalist property rights socially".

As the incitement to national treason went on, with the Cosgrave Party urging the ranchers and capitalists to open revolt, the R.W.G. urged the need for strong action by the Government:

"The big Irish capitalist class, supported by the main force of the property holders in land, are against Irish independence and openly in support of the foreign enemy. The national independence fight is bound up with the class interests of the Irish working class and working farmers; hence the treason of the big capitalists.

"Our demand that the capitalist farmer shall pay every penny of his annuities, every penny of his rates and taxes, in no way slackens our fight for the release of the poor farmer from these same burdens. By the vigorous prosecution of such a class policy can a successful independence fight be developed.

"The Southern Irish Government continues its wearisome policy of toleration to the big capitalist treason mongers.

"The national fight can perish, the heroic sacrifices of the masses be dissipated, but under no circumstances may anything be done to infringe the sacred rights of the robber rancher, the emigree employer, or Uncle mortgage holder.

"Threats without action—this sums up the line of the present Government of the Twenty-Six Counties."

Dr. Tom O'Higgins early on took the initiative to form the Army Comrades Association. This Association was made up of former members of the National Army, some of whom had "distinguished" themselves in torture and brutalising of their Republican opponents in the Civil War. There were many fierce and bloody fights between them and Republicans at public meetings of the Cumann na nGaedheal Party. It was the Cosgrave Party's way of saying to the de Valera Government that they had their own protection for their public meetings.

The first Chief of the Garda Síochána, General Eoin O'Duffy, was dismissed by the de Valera Government in February 1933. O'Duffy was hostile to the new Government. He immediately entered into relations with the A.C.A. As a result, the Blueshirts were born. General O'Duffy became the leader of a newly-named organisation—the National Guard, with the blue shirt and black beret its uniform.

For August 1933, there was a build-up for a march of the Blueshirts on Dublin. It was much advertised and was likened to the Mussolini Blackshirts' march on Rome, which, for so many years, ended democratic rule in Italy.

The Republican forces were mobilised; the de Valera Government also put on a brave show but fell back on the Cosgrave Government's "Public Safety Act" to act against the Blueshirts. The O'Duffy challenge melted, the Blueshirt march was called off. The National Guard was declared to be an illegal organisation.

## **I.R.A. Condone De Valera**

The I.R.A. leadership condoned the de Valera Government's actions, but the Communist Party of Ireland opposed and pointed out the danger of re-activating the reactionary, anti-democratic legislation of the Cosgrave Government to deal with the Blueshirt menace. It warned that, in time, such legislation would be used against Republicans and militant workers. That is what happened.

In the Blueshirt paper, "United Ireland," Professors James Hogan, Michael Tierney and others peddled their Mussolini-type fascist ideas. Such men were the "ideologists" of the Corporate State concept, while the Cosgraves, McGilligans, Blythes & Co. had the job of putting the new deal over at public meetings.

The de Valera Government reactivated the Military Tribunal under the Coercion Act, but it was mostly the Republicans and working people who had put an end to the challenge of the Blueshirts. The great parade through Dublin of some 10,000 trade unionists, under the auspices of the Irish Trade Union Congress, was a salutary warning to the O'Duffy Blueshirt formations that they would meet with full resistance.

Thereafter, the cracks began to appear. O'Duffy was removed as leader of Fine Gael. The Blythes, Costelloes, Mulcahys & Co. folded their Blueshirts and berets and put them away in mothballs and wanted to be allowed to forget about the Blueshirt fascist adventure. It hadn't worked.

The I.R.A. Republicans had within their ranks all the class divisions which made them dither and show confusion; in time, de Valera was able to buy off some of them (jobs and pensions) and

to jail the difficult ones. With the Blueshirt problem behind him, with O'Duffy abandoned and Cosgrave, Dillon, Costello and the others having got rid of their Blueshirts and resumed the appearance of being back on the "democratic" way, de Valera was free to direct all his attention to dispersing his troublesome "left-wing".

To back up its claim during the 1932 election campaign that 10,000 more jobs could be created, the de Valera Government imposed a series of tariffs to curb imports, mainly from Britain. The R.W.G. criticised this policy and stated: "The Government is fighting to preserve the home market for the local manufacturers which it says is worth making sacrifices for". At the same time, the Government decided to subsidise some exports, mainly to Britain, such as butter. The R.W.G. pointed out that "the Irish workers are being taxed to preserve both the home and foreign markets for the capitalists".

### "Blackmail"

Calling it "blackmail", the R.W.G. denounced the economic war launched by Great Britain against Ireland because of refusal to hand over the land annuities. The British Labour renegade, J. H. Thomas, was the spokesman for Britain's National Government. "Mr. de Valera's declaration that 'no threats from outside and no misrepresentation of the facts can deflect the Government from its course' is all very well and very welcome, but unless the masses of the Irish workers and working farmers are brought into the fight against the imperialists and the treacherous blackmailing capitalists, there can be no real fight for independence," stated the "Irish Workers' Voice", 21/7/32, and continued:

"The enemies of Irish freedom are looking to their ally in the leadership of the Irish Labour Party. Thomas's threat has found its echo in the ranks of reformist Irish Labour. Davin (a Labour T.D.) is for the Empire. 'I would not under present circumstances, consciously give a vote that would drive the State out of the British Commonwealth of Nations,' declared Davin. Here is a live photograph for the Irish workers of the reformist Labour and trade union bureaucracy. The bosses' handyman in wage disputes is the imperialist agent in the national-imperial struggle. And Davin speaks the mind of Irish Labour reformism and is a great anti-Communist."

In a debate in the British House of Commons on the situation arising from the punitive economic measures against Ireland, over the withholding of the land annuities, a Labour member stated that he had information from Mr. William Norton, the leader of the Irish Labour Party, that the de Valera Government was collecting the land annuities from the Irish farmers and was putting them into a "suspense account", pending agreement between the two Governments on arbitration terms. The Dominions Secretary, J. H. Thomas, said he was delighted to have such information—"it makes the issues much simpler and the (British) Government's task much easier". The de Valera Government never intended a serious fight against Britain. From the start of the conflict and before, arbitration and retreat were the options.

"No Irish worker, no anti-imperialist will accept arbitration on the robber tribute, whose only moral sanction is the centuries of murder and oppression," was the standpoint of the R.W.G.

### "Economic War"

While the economic war was causing problems for agriculture and the loss of jobs in the cities, the banks were reporting increased business and profits. The R.W.G. demanded that the banks and insurance companies should be heavily taxed to lessen the burdens on the workers and working farmers. The de Valera Government did not so act. Those least able to bear the burdens were left to carry the consequences of the economic war.

Fianna Fáil, of course, did not want the masses in action in the prosecution of the economic war. For them it was a diplomatic

exercise. The Labour and I.R.A. leadership also did not do anything to involve the working people in mass struggles. Both were content to leave the problems of the time for resolution by the "genius of de Valera".

That was not the position of the R.W.G. which at the time called for "a great mobilisation of the Irish toilers, leading up to a national convention of elected delegates that will declare in the name of the masses of workers and working farmers the determination to resist British imperialism, to break the connection with the Empire, to sweep away the social order which has plunged Ireland and the whole capitalist world into chaos and misery. . . ."

While the notes and recriminations passed between Downing Street, London, and Merrion Street, Dublin, the battles of the Irish workers went on. The railwaymen, confronted by a demand for a 40% wage reduction, countered with the demand for nationalisation. It was to be some 20 years later before the railways and transport generally were to come under State control.

The extension of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups was being developed outside of Dublin. In Longford the weekly sales of the "Irish Workers' Voice" had started with 30 copies. In Leitrim, Jim Grafton had got together a group and as is told elsewhere, this activity was to lead to gangster actions by the local reactionaries, inspired and abetted by the clergy and finally led to Government action for the deportation of Grafton back to America.

In Cork, a Revolutionary Workers' Group was formed, starting with 12 members. House-to-house canvassing with the "Irish Workers' Voice" was the initial activity of the Group.

In New Ross the R.W.G. held a demonstration in support of the unemployed demand for work, against the bad local housing position and other grievances. Gabriel Lalor initiated these activities.

### Worst Attacks From Reaction

It was in the period after the de Valera success in 1932 that the Revolutionary Workers' Groups were to experience the worst attacks and obstructions in their efforts to develop support and the organisation of branches. It was the period of advancing reaction in Europe, Mussolini's Italy was there and Britain and France preferred Hitler in power in Germany rather than Thaelmann, the Communist Party and the working class.

The anti-Communist, anti-working class campaign gained momentum. Those involved in the work of organising Revolutionary Workers' Groups around the country were especially singled out.

Cumann na nGaedheal sent out a circular to its branches warning to be on the alert for any and all signs of "Communist" activities in their areas and in particular to rally the young men to counter the efforts "of the Communist organisations operating from Dublin to capture imaginative young persons by false Russian propaganda under the cloak of national or social disguises".

The phoney organ of religion, "The (Catholic) Standard" was to the fore, but also giving a helping hand in the anti-Communist, anti-working class tirades were the "Irish Times" and the "Irish Independent". They were for "a fight by every means in our power" to halt the progress of Communist organisation among the working people.

From the pulpit there was the sermon, with all its influence; at the cross-roads there was the harangue from the local politician and from the newspapers, local and national, the editorials urging and warning of the terrible dangers of Communism. From such activity by the media there followed action.

In the Midlands a young man merely suspected of having Communist sympathies was forced to leave his home and his neighbourhood on the insistence of the local clergyman. In Cork,

the unemployed, who had dared to organise and voice their grievances were hounded from the pulpit. Dr. Tom O'Higgins, the local Fine Gael T.D. and the founder of the "White Army", the Army Comrades Association (A.C.A.), mobilised the local unit to prevent an unemployed meeting being held. An unemployed worker who was wrongly identified as the speaker at the meeting was almost murdered by the O'Higgins braves.

Reaction was on the rampage, and everywhere that the R.W.G. had won support and organised local units, it was made next to impossible for them to function.

In the early 1930's there was the concerted onslaught to stifle any manifestation of the revolutionary working class to follow in the Connolly Socialist tradition.

The position taken up by the Labour and trade union leadership was that they did not want to be involved in defence of the democratic rights of Left-wing elements. The so-called liberal elements had a like position.

The booklet "Communism in Ireland" (an historical survey) by Sean Murray was published in 1932. It was to be the first of the pamphleteering activities of the Communist movement which has continued to the present time.

## De Valera Goes for Early Election

Within a year of being in office and with evidence of increasing support for its policies for the abolition of the Oath, demotion of the position of the Governor General, the tariffs to promote employment, a forward housing programme to ease the appalling slum problem, as well as various promises to put through legislation on social questions, the de Valera Government decided in January 1933 to hold a general election to secure a complete overall majority. De Valera wanted to end dependence on the Labour Party support in Dáil Eireann and have his own party majority.

Fianna Fáil in the 1933 election won its majority, securing 77 seats.

The Revolutionary Workers' Groups failed to secure nomination of a candidate for reasons of financial difficulties. The R.W.G. although out of the contest, held meetings in many parts of Dublin and explained its position in the Election Statement:

"The British Government's economic war on Ireland has forced the Fianna Fáil Party to seek a fresh mandate from the electorate. Despite the Free State Government's failure to accept the British challenge and go forward on a clear policy of separation, the real issues before the Irish people are:

"Irish independence versus the British Empire.

"For or against the British Government's coercion of the Irish people.

"For or against the payment of £5,000,000 in annual tribute to Britain.

"For or against the Cosgrave agents of British imperialism in Ireland.

"These are the central issues for the working men and women of Ireland and all fighters for freedom in this election."

## 1933 — General Election

Analysing and summing-up the results of the 1933 General Election, Sean Murray wrote:

"The attitude of the working masses to the British imperialists and their Irish agents is made clear in the huge anti-Cosgrave vote. The masses are bitterly against the payment of tribute and surrender. Does this mean unqualified support for the Fianna Fáil policy? Does it mean that the masses voted for the holding of the disputed tribute in the suspense account awaiting arbitration? Does it mean a vote for retaining the Cosgrave C.I.D.? Does it mean a vote for liberty for the White Army buccaneers? Does it mean a vote for a Gaelic shopkeeper as Seanaschal as against an imperial Civil Servant as Governor-General? Does it mean a vote for reforming the imperialist Seanad and not abolishing it? Does it mean a vote by the workers and poor farmers for subsidies to ranchers and starvation pittancees for the unemployed?"

"The workers and working farmers voted for none of these things. They voted for a fight to end this abominable plunder and oppression of the Irish people. They voted for Irish independence, for a United Ireland, for better living conditions for themselves and their families.

"The Fianna Fáil will not carry the independence struggle in accordance with the desire and demands of the working class. The aspirations and class interests of the workers were raised in the election by the Revolutionary Workers' Groups alone. To carry forward to victory the fight against the imperialists and capitalists, the election manifesto of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups must now become the platform for the working masses. The independent working class anti-imperialist party of the Irish workers needs to be launched. Fianna Fáil claims it is the alternative to Communism. The workers will prove that the Communist Party is the alternative to Fianna Fáil."

At the time of the de Valera election victory, the dark clouds of reaction were thickening over Europe. Von Hindenburg made way for Hitler. For the following 12 years Europe and the world was to pay a terrible price before the Fascist menace was overcome. Thanks to the sufferings, sacrifices and heroism of the Soviet people, Fascism was defeated and a number of countries were taken out of the capitalist system. The aims of Hitler and the monopoly capitalist plans were not to be realised. Among the greatest achievements of the post-war situation was the creation of the German Democratic Republic, now among the most forward of the Socialist states in Europe, and a sure guarantee against the German nation ever again becoming a bastion of reaction.

The meaning of Hitler in the situation of 1933 and the menace it represented was put in an article by Donal O'Reilly ("I.W.V.," February 11, 1933):

"Every newspaper has given much publicity to the German situation, but not one word of the real essence of these developments. Not one word showing that the heroic struggles of the German working class have reached such intensity that the German capitalists and the foreign imperialists of France, England, America are all looking towards Hitler as the man to crush the revolutionary working class.

## Fascist Menace

"The mask of capitalist democracy has been torn aside, and Fascism, with its dictatorship of the big exploiting interests, declares bloody war on Communists. Only the suppression of the Communist Party which is rallying the working class for bread, work, freedom and Socialism, can guarantee to the world capitalists the deeper enslavement of the toiling masses of Germany and the whole world.

"It is not to be expected that any of our Irish capitalist papers would explain the factors which have assisted so much in the development of Herr Hitler, 'the greatest statesman since Bismarck'.

"The Treaty of Versailles acts on the German nation much the same way as the Annuities act on us here. As our capitalists in Ireland pass the burden of the slave tribute to England on to the backs of the workers and working farmers, so also in Germany. The last three years brought a reduction of over 300 million marks in the workers' income. Unemployment increased and is now officially 6,100,000, and 26 per cent of this total are in receipt of unemployment benefit. This benefit was reduced by the Brüening Government. The average weekly wage of an industrial worker has declined from 42.20 marks to 22.45 marks (a mark equals a shilling, roughly).

"In the last two years, milliards of marks squeezed out of the starving workers, were placed into the hands of the big bankers, the heavy industrialists, and the Prussian junkers in order to save their bankrupt undertakings and big estates. This is the social background permitting Corporal Hitler to make his meteoric rise. The big-scale capitalists are driven towards catastrophe, the burden of Versailles barring any way out from the crisis by means

of successful competition on the world market.

"The workers' resistance was growing. So strengthening and threatening movements of the workers under the leadership of the German Communist Party, have bred as even their counterpart—the counter-revolution.

"The coming of Fascism in Germany is not a sign of its strength, but of the weakness of capitalist-imperialism on a world scale. It means that the social basis of the bosses of Germany is narrowing, and that they are compelled to use sharper weapons of suppression.

"The situation in Germany has two sharp lessons for Ireland. Fascism in Germany (as in Italy eleven years ago) comes to power by mobilising the nationalist sentiment of the middle class, and small farmers. The Nazis have used the most demagogic propaganda and agitation, claiming that the solution to Germany's ills lay in the smashing of the Versailles Treaty and the banishing of the Jews.

"Everything was promised to everybody, and while the petty bourgeois masses stood spellbound, the chains of all the existing and further burdens were wound tighter. Only the Communists united their propaganda and agitation with the day-to-day struggle. In Ireland let us avoid mistakes by avoiding carefully those 'revolutionists' who confine their activities to theory, talk, and seeking; never assisting.

"And what part does the Social-Democratic Party (first cousin of the Irish Labour Party) play? Despite the tremendous growth of Communism among the German workers, the Social-Democratic Party still retains influence over many important sections. By adapting itself cunningly to the shifting stages of the struggle, always with the purpose of screening the growth of counter-revolution, the Social-Democratic Party has actually been the main prop of German capitalism, holding back masses of the workers and preventing them from coming into the struggle against the Fascist terror.

### Social Democrats

"This role the Social-Democrats have played well, but today the developing Fascist coup is unmasking it, and increasing numbers of the Social-Democratic workers are fighting shoulder to shoulder with their Communist comrades against the Fascist terror banners. When Comrade Ernst Thaelmann, leader of the Communist Party, recently reviewed the great march past of the Berlin workers, a strong detachment of the uniformed Social-Democratic Reichsbanner marched proudly in the ranks.

"Germany is a centre of revolution, towards which the international working class look with sympathy and hope, learning the lessons that are to be learned, understanding that the German Communist Party stands for the unity of the working class against the Fascist dictatorship.

"Every Irish toiler must stand behind the fighting vanguard of the German working-class revolution."

Despite the continuation of the attacks against the Revolutionary Workers' Groups in several parts of the country, the campaign and plans went ahead for the convening of the national conference to launch the Communist Party of Ireland. April 30, 1933, was the date set. In the call for the conference it was stated:

"To meet the situation which lies ahead, it is now necessary to weld together the fighting forces of the Irish working class in a strong Communist Party. The prospect of the future is one of sharper class battles against the capitalists, of intensified struggle for national freedom.

"The Irish working class have the task of breaking clear of the paralysing leadership of the middle-class nationalism which, through the de Valera Government, seeks a fresh compromise with the Empire as a means of building up capitalism in Ireland on the enslavement of the Irish people."

For over a year and more a series of articles had appeared in the "Irish Workers' Voice" by leading members in the R.W.G. explaining the need for the formation of the Communist Party of

Ireland. The last in the series to appear before the C.P.I. was launched, was one by Jim Larkin, jun., from which a few quotes are given:

". . . Why must this party be a Communist Party? Why such an insistence on the name rather than on the programme and policy of the party?

"Programmes and policies are more important than names, but names have also their significance. What particular significance has the name 'Communist' Party that makes it essential that this must be the name of the revolutionary workers' party in Ireland?

". . . to discard the name 'Communist Party' at the present moment in Ireland, would not only be politically incorrect, not only a failure to understand the whole immediate, political and economic situation and the tasks facing the Irish working class, but it would also be moral and political cowardice. To discard that name in the face of the present barrage of slander, lies and filth that have been poured out on the Communist Movement and on the Soviet Union would be to retreat in the face of the bitterest enemies of the Irish working class.

### Must Not Desert Name

"It would mean desertion of the whole international struggle of the revolutionary workers throughout the world. Here it must be clearly stated that the several attempts that are being shyly made to establish 'revolutionary working class political parties' under other names are definitely expressions of this retreat in the face of the enemy, where they are not definite attempts to head off the workers' advance towards the Communist Party by dangling a 'political carrot' in front of their noses in the hope that they will bite at it and thus pass by the Communist Party.

"The Communist Party of Ireland will be established by the Irish workers. Neither political unclarity nor Labour and national reformism can stop it, nor moral and political cowardice. The acceptance by militant Irish workers of the name 'Communist Party' is the expression of their understanding of the political and economic tasks which face them and of their determination to fulfil them. Not to have faith in the acceptance by Irish workers of that name is to lack faith in the ability and courage of the Irish workers to win their own economic and national liberation."

The conference for the re-formation of the C.P.I. had to be postponed from April 30 and was not convened until the weekend of June 3rd to 5th.

Between March and June, the anti-Communist campaign reached new heights of violence and blackguardism. The Kilkenny miners were under fierce attack, as was Jim Galton and his supporters in Leitrim. In Dublin, meetings of the R.W.G. came under constant attack, the sermons from the pulpits and the speeches from the Cosgrave platforms became more insistent in demands for actions against the Communists. The Fianna Fáil organ, the "Irish Press," was now in the close company of the "Irish Times" and the "Irish Independent", the "Cork Examiner" and the rest howling against the Communists and the Soviet Union and never missing to point the warning finger at any section of or action by workers to right the most simple wrongs.

### Connolly House Launched

In early March a new headquarters was opened by the Revolutionary Workers' Groups at 64 Great Strand Street, Dublin. It was named Connolly House and it provided suitable accommodation for party and editorial offices, members' and public meeting rooms, a literature sales centre and a printing plant. For the R.W.G. it was aimed "to make Connolly House a real live centre of working class activity in Dublin, and as the centre of the whole Irish working class movement. The Revolutionary Workers' Groups, the organisers of the Irish Communist Party as the real inheritors of the Marxian Socialist traditions of James Connolly, have dedicated their new headquarters to his memory. We will not merely be satisfied with this, but will strive with might and

main to realise in our time the goal of Connolly: 'A free Ireland, a free working class'."

A central headquarters of the Communist movement in Dublin was regarded as a challenge that apparently demanded an early answer by the reactionary forces. It came in a matter of weeks. On Monday, March 27, a gang attacked the premises. They had been inflamed by a sermon during a Lenten Mission in the Pro-Cathedral and marched on Connolly House where they broke the windows, took books and pictures from the shop window and burned them. The police arrived on the scene, took no action against the hoodlums, but warned the occupants of Connolly House to behave themselves. District Inspector Clarke, a Free Stater, left no doubt as to whose side he was on.

The attack went on for two days and two nights. Prominent in its organisation were members of the Army Comrades Association (the "White Army")—forerunners of the Blueshirts and a criminal gangster element known as the "Animal Gang".

"The pogrom is no longer the monopoly of Ulster imperialists in the fight against the Irish working class," stated the "Irish Workers' Voice" editorial (1/4/33). "It has become a prime weapon of the Southern Irish ruling class in the fight against the workers."

### F.F. Government's Responsibility

"It is only over a year ago since drumming parties brought the police forces of the Northern Government to disperse the Belfast workers on the Newtownards Road. The pogromists in Dublin have taken their cue from this tactic of imperialism's agents. They are working up popular demonstrations with the use of the worst type of gangsterdom as a lever for Government intervention against the revolutionary working class movement. . . .

"The responsibility for the present unloosing of imperialism's agents against the revolutionary working class movement rests on the shoulders of the Fianna Fáil Government. Instead of a resolute struggle against British imperialism we have the toleration of naked sabotage by the pro-imperialist interests and their gangsters."

After the first night's attack, the Connolly House story was front page news; for the next two days and nights the occupants were held in siege. Many workers rallied in defence, including rank and file members of the I.R.A. Despite much pressure from the rank and file, the I.R.A. leadership refused permission for I.R.A. units to move into action against the A.C.A. and the gangster elements.

It was the sort of occasion that called for effective action that would quickly smother the A.C.A.-led and reactionary-clerical-inspired mob attack. In the circumstances of the time, it was only the I.R.A. had the strength, the organisation, discipline and prestige to do it. It did not happen, because the MacBride-Twomey leadership allowed itself to be drawn into the world-wide big capitalist-motivated anti-Communist campaign.

### Communists Out: I.R.A. Order

The order went out, no Communist could be a member of the I.R.A. This was followed by an Army Council statement clearly and firmly repudiating and rejecting Communism. There was no connection with it, no belief in it. The "retreat from Moscow" was on, was how the C.P.I. described it.

On the Tuesday (March 28) Connolly House was under siege all day and in the evening the A.C.A.-Animal gangs made several attempts to storm the building. They were repulsed each time, although they had a good supply of the most frightening weapons—iron bars, hammers, hatchets, razors, knives and what have you. In between the assaults, there was hymn-singing, followed by howls and shouts and a liberal use of crude language.

That night, each assault on the building was repulsed, the defenders inflicting many injuries on the A.C.A.-led gangs with

bricks. To provide this sort of "ammunition" a wall in the building was broken down. Sam Nolan (senior) and "Aitchie" Cullen, both ex-soldiers of the 1914-18 war, helped no end in keeping up the stock of this "ammunition" and also in giving guidance to deal with the attack. "Aitchie" Cullen, after his stint with the British Army, joined the I.R.A. and was involved in the War of Independence and the Civil War on the Republican side. Bill Abbott, another ex-soldier, who was badly gassed in the 1914-1918 war, was also in Connolly House, as were I.R.A. members Bill Gannon, Jack Nalty, Christie Clarke and others who were members of the R.W.G. The other Party members rallied in great numbers, as well as non-Party workers.

On the third day (Wednesday) the crowds of both sightseers and attackers greatly increased. Some people came to demonstrate their support for those inside Connolly House. Among them were Mrs. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, Dr. Nora McCormick, Lil O'Donnell and others.

### Bedding Factory Fired

On Wednesday night after a series of assaults, with the police doing nothing to stop them, the A.C.A.-led mobsters succeeded in setting fire to bedding material in a factory adjacent to Connolly House. This action endangered the building and compelled evacuation. A number of the defenders were rescued from the roof of the building by the Fire Brigade and they were attacked by the mobsters on being brought to the street. Most, however, got away in other directions over the roofs in the Strand Street-Capel Street-Abbey Street area. The Fire Brigade had a difficult time with some of the mobsters who attacked them in their efforts to put out the fire in the factory. Some of the defenders who took refuge in the St. John Ambulance building nearby were ordered to leave by the police while the mobsters were still prowling and howling in the area. They refused and finally the police had to yield and give protection. Sean Murray made his escape over many roofs and came out in a timber yard in Upper Abbey Street, but not before he had a fall and injured a leg.

Through an entrance from the factory, the police got into Connolly House and roughed up the few remaining defenders, among them Donal O'Reilly. They arrested Charlie Gilmore and he was charged with possession of a revolver. He spent some time in jail on remand and was found "not guilty" at his trial, although the Judge did his best to have it otherwise. Gilmore was defending Connolly House, not one of the attackers was apprehended by the custodians of law and order!

After the attack had succeeded, the A.C.A. and the hoodlums, encouraged by the inaction of the police, moved on to attack Mrs. Despard's house in Eccles Street, which housed the Workers' College, then on to the headquarters of the Workers' Union of Ireland (Unity Hall) in Marlboro' Street.

Larkin, senior, was apparently stunned by the rampaging of the reactionary gangs, and remained quiet during the period. Some brave voices were raised in protest, among them, Father Michael

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O'Flanagan (President of Sinn Fein), Nora Connolly-O'Brien, Mrs. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, and others.

Emboldened by their successes, the mob next turned their attention to the Republican-I.R.A. Kevin Barry Hall in Parnell Square for window smashing and attack. By then, the worst of Dublin's gangster elements had joined in and they turned their attention to attacks on the big stores in O'Connell Street, windows being smashed and looting taking place. It was only at that point that the police took action.

At the conference to launch the Communist Party of Ireland on June 3rd and 4th, 1933, delegates were present from Revolutionary Workers' Groups in Belfast, Cork, Leitrim, Castlecomer, Thomastown, Dublin, Longford, etc.

Jim Larkin, Jun., took the chair. In his speech he pointed out the heritage of the Party. The generations of national struggle. The rising wave of industrial battles. He showed the lesson of their industrial fight for work and wages. The Castlecomer miners strike (which was on at the time) he instanced as a magnificent example of the fight that the workers could develop, under the rank and file leadership. He pointed out, despite the whole effort of the reformist trade unions and the local clergy on behalf of the mine-owner imperialists, those miners had secured an increase in wages. In the railway strike, on the other hand, he mentioned there was, on the surface, a greater possibility of success. But a strong trade union and a strong section of the Irish working class lost and wage cuts and mass dismissals were carried through.

The difference in result lay in the fact that the railway strike was conducted by the trade union reformists who led the railwaymen to defeat and betrayal. These lessons must be learned, he said. The inauguration of the party must meet the need for the development of a real leadership of the workers' struggle.

## Not an Easy Road

"Let us, everyone, dedicate ourselves today to the service of Ireland and our class. We have not an easy road to travel. It is a road that will call for self-sacrifice, perhaps the ultimate sacrifice from some of us, but we are strengthened by the invincible power of our class and by the knowledge that the final victory is with us."

Resolutions of greeting were sent to the Communist Parties of Britain, Germany, France, to the American Party, to Tom Mooney, the Irish-American trade union leader then in an American jail for 17 years.

The resolution applying for affiliation to the Communist International was greeted with applause and carried.

Introducing the Manifesto, "Ireland's Path to Freedom," Seán Murray said:

"Our Congress is a break with the old traditions of the class fight in Ireland; it is a step from the situation in which the revolutionary working class movement consisted of scattered groups with very little central leadership.

"I welcome the delegates here today. Our Congress is living proof that in this twentieth century Irish workers can break through all the barriers of sectarian bigotry and racial animosity erected for its own ends by the ruling class and can form a Society of United Irishmen. The delegates here from the four corners of Ireland—from the shipyards and linen mills of the North, the mines and factories of Kilkenny and Cork, the bleak holdings of Connacht no less than from Dublin—come to the United Irishmen of today.

"The Congress proves that there is a growing consciousness of the need for a class Party of the Irish workers; it is a proof of the growth of the revolutionary movement.

"Let us examine the resolutions and materials before the Congress. With what problems are we faced?

"We are living in a nation that is torn asunder and ruled by British imperialism and that again and again has been betrayed by the Irish capitalists. It is clear that we must devise ways and

means of breaking the imperialist rule and uniting the revolutionary forces as a first step on the road to social emancipation. How are we to achieve this? It is necessary that we see the conditions under which the struggle is going forward. If we could not see the difficulties of our ancient foreign enemy and the differentiation at home, we should be the blindest leaders of the blind.

"Almost the first in our manifesto is the statement that 'today revolutionary Ireland obtains a mighty international ally such as it never had before in all history'. Britain is in difficulties. The plundering power of the British Empire is lessening. In India a tremendous revolutionary struggle is proceeding. Britain is losing its place as an imperialist world power; it has to make economic concessions in order to safeguard its military and political position; the coming war forced it to make such concessions at the Ottawa Conference. The gold standard has gone. And the crisis is not peculiar to Britain. Even the capitalists in the U.S.A. are in a bad way, and the crisis there is even more severe than in some of the countries defeated in the Great War. The supreme conflict is between the forces of the national liberation and socialist movements which will force capitalism out of existence.

## National Question

"The national struggle is the prime question with which we are faced in Ireland. It is necessary, therefore, that we understand the stage we have reached in the struggle. If the Irish capitalists had done what they should the national question would be solved. But they also fight against the independence movement who shout loudest about nationality. We Communists are internationalists, and we are also the greatest exponents of the national independence struggle. The battles of the past prove that the Irish capitalists have deserted the national movement. They no longer even worship the past leaders of the national movement. Wolfe Tone is a 'cut-throat'. Emmet is denounced. As Marx once said of the French capitalists, 'Even their own gods have deserted them'.

"The capitalists are against national independence. They have betrayed the struggle for liberation. They fear that the solving of the national question will also pave the way for their destruction and the building of socialism. They see clearly that the Republic will weaken the capitalists and lead to the socialist revolution.

"The formation of the Communist Party of Ireland will drive forward the national revolution. This is proved by our Congress where the Ulster workers come together with the best national fighters from the South. The national struggle under the leadership of the Communists takes on a class form and makes clear to the Northern workers that the national struggle is the way to the smashing of the class power of the capitalists. The Manifesto points out that the national struggle is a class question and victory or defeat will depend upon which class is at the head of the struggle. In the past our weakness was that we did not see clearly that it was necessary to change the class leadership of the national struggle.

## Workers Leading Force

"As far back as '98, the leaders of the United Irishmen were forced to see that the merchants had betrayed the struggle. As Henry Joy McCracken put it: 'The rich always betray the poor.'

"Can the peasant farmers lead the struggle?

"We must conclude that they cannot. The farmers have always been under the leadership of the middle class. The farmers are not concentrated and are difficult to organise—they are themselves divided into classes and at the present time the big farmers have come out openly on the side of the imperialists. But though the peasant farmers cannot lead they can be powerful allies of the working class, and no movement for national and social liberation can be successful that does not take into account the reserves of the revolution in the countryside.

"The first word of our Manifesto is directed to the workers. It is necessary to burn into the minds of the workers that they are the only class that can lead the national struggle. We must tell the poor farmers that there is no hope of escape from poverty without an allied fight under the leadership of the workers.

"Why do we proclaim that the working class alone can lead the struggle? Like the capitalists, they are concentrated in towns and factories, even though the factories in Ireland are small. And they are not held back from revolutionary struggle by small property ideas.

"The Communists alone can really solve partition. Sinn Fein and the other groups, by their sectarian, anti-working class attitude, drive away the only class in the North that can unify the country. But the Communists bring together workers from Waterford and Shankill who could meet on no other basis. The national movement in the North must break away from its religious sectarian basis if it is to come to grips with British imperialism.

## Best and Only Road

"On the basis of our manifesto we must proceed to recruit more and more workers into the Party and to build powerful units. We must build up a strong local and national leadership. We must have a stronger spirit of Party discipline and a loyal carrying out of decisions. I am convinced that if we succeed in doing this we shall be following the best traditions of the Irish fight for freedom. We are taking the best, the only road to the Party of the Irish working class, to national independence and to the social emancipation of the Irish toilers"

Delegates participated in the discussion on the Manifesto and on other proposals that came before the inaugural conference. Unfortunately, records have not survived of the names of all of the delegates who attended; as all the delegates would have spoken extempore and there was no staff to record what they said, it is not possible to report any of their speeches.

A central committee was elected at the conference; at its first meeting, Sean Murray was elected General Secretary; Jim Larkin, Jun., Chairman. Among its members were Loftus Johnston, Belfast; Nicholas Boran, Kilkenny; Sean Nolan, Dublin; Peter Connolly, Longford; Tom Watters, T. Geehan, Betty Sinclair, Belfast, and others.

The conference was held in semi-legal circumstances. The meeting place had to be booked under false auspices. The Dublin Total Abstinence Society was the name given to the owners of the premises. It was held at the meeting rooms, 5 Leinster Street, which at the time was rented by a religious group.

## "Daily Express" Story

Fraternal delegates were present from the British Communist Party, also Jack Carney, assistant Editor of Larkin's "Irish Worker" was present as an invited guest.

With the Communist Party of Ireland re-formed, the reactionary forces campaigned to work up public hostility to make next to impossible its functioning as a political party.

The "Daily Express" published a highly-coloured "inside" story of the proceedings of the Party Conference. The miscreant responsible was quickly known. He was confronted with his guilt and was advised that it would be sensible for him to leave the country. He has not been in Ireland since.

The so-called "Catholic Standard" was launched as a weekly paper in 1928. The British Catholic weekly, "The Universe", was circulating in Ireland at the time, but it was not giving the required space or prominence to the anti-national, anti-worker, anti-democratic rantings of the Irish bishops. "Tone was a cut-throat," Emmet deserved his fate, "Hell was not hot enough nor

eternity long enough for the miscreant Fenians". Such were the Christian sentiments of the holy bishops of the time and they wanted full publicity for them.

"The Standard" filled the gap and its Editor, a Mr. Gunning, gave all the space required to the bishops, the parish priests and anyone who indulged in ranting or felon-setting against Republicans, Communists or any group who were for anti-imperialism, for Socialism and working-class militancy.

Mr. Gunning was tricked on occasion, into publishing silly stories about Communist activities. He fell for a deliberate "leak" about an imaginary Communist conference in Trim (of all places). Such ploys helped in establishing who was the guilty person in the Party supplying information.

The attacks on the meetings and public activities of the C.P.I. were greatly intensified. The weekly public meetings at Upper Abbey Street, Dublin, were subjected to organised opposition. On one occasion, Sean Murray had to run for his life from attackers from Upper Abbey Street to O'Connell Street where he succeeded in getting on a bus. The bus conductor helped by pulling down the "Bus Full" sign.

The I.R.A. leadership of the time was told by the C.P.I. that it was a great mistake to stand to one side and allow any section of the anti-imperialist movement to be singled out and dealt with piecemeal by the reactionary forces. The I.R.A. leadership (Twomey-MacBride) and the Labour leadership (Norton & Co.) did not heed. They kept their silence, making no protest against the onslaught on the civil and democratic rights of the Communists and all other left-wing workers.

## Connolly's Writings

Over the years the credit is entirely due to the Communists for keeping alive and developing interest in James Connolly and his socialist teachings. In the 1940's and 1950's Connolly and his socialism or any other brand of socialism found little mention or encouragement in most sections of the Labour, trade union or Republican movements. His writings were not made easily available. In fact, large quantities of them were allowed to rot in the basement of the I.T.G.W.U. premises at 35 Parnell Square, Dublin, rather than make them available for sale. Such was the influence of clerical reaction within the workers' movement and the cowardice of the leadership of the time.

The effort of John Swift of the Irish Bakers' Union to make the Union's new headquarters at the Four Provinces House, in Harcourt Street, Dublin, a centre for Labour educational and cultural activities was killed by the combination of some backward elements within the union aided by and encouraged by reactionary forces without who wanted no advance at all for Irish Labour, politically or culturally.

"New Books Publications" was launched in 1942; in the years since it has made the biggest contribution in the publishing and distribution of Connolly's writings, as well as those of Marx, Engels, Lenin and so on. After being not available for many years, New Books Publications issued 5,000 copies of "Labour, Nationality and Religion" in 1955. The printers, The Kerryman Ltd., made difficulties, refusing to put their imprint on the booklet, fearing, apparently, they would run a risk of being accused of printing "Communist" literature; they would have stopped publication altogether only they had gone so far in their commitment and had accepted part payment; the booklet was released, without The Kerryman imprint.

In the years since, all of Connolly's essential writings have been kept in print. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Connolly's birth, in 1968, there were published "The Re-Conquest of Ireland", "Erin's Hope and The New Evangel"; these titles had not been available for many years. Also, for the first time, was published in booklet form Connolly's military writings under the

title "Revolutionary Warfare", with an introduction by Michael O'Riordan; these articles originally appeared in "The Workers' Republic" in 1915. "Labour in Irish History" has been published in four editions by "New Books Publications", totalling 25,000 copies. The contribution of the Communists here is in marked contrast to the poor effort of the Labour Party, which claims to be the Party of Connolly; in the 57 years since 1916, the Labour Party has published only one of Connolly's titles ("Socialism Made Easy"). In the long run, it will not be the social democrats, the coalitionists, the class collaborationists of the Labour Party who will benefit from the widest circulation of Connolly's writings; it will be the revolutionary workers organised in the Communist Party whose aim is Ireland, United, Socialist, Free.

In Dublin, in 1933, after the re-formation of the C.P.I., the pressures against the Party were considerable. In places outside Dublin, such as Longford, Cork, Waterford, to mention only a few, it was a lot more difficult for the smaller numbers involved. In those areas, those known to be associated with the C.P.I. were singled out and subjected to all imaginable pressures. Some of the people involved left their areas and came to Dublin; others left the country altogether.

In the situation created by the persistent attacks, the functioning organisations of the C.P.I. were confined to the two main cities—Dublin and Belfast. There were like experiences in the Six Counties, Protestant and Catholic reactionary forces coinciding in their attacks against the Communists in places such as Coleraine and in Derry City.

Despite the great obstacles the C.P.I. members stood up to the challenge and at all levels played their militant and positive part in the affairs of the trade union movement and in the organisations of the people. For some it was very difficult; in the trade unions at branch and district level and among the workers on the job, the C.P.I. members were recognised as reliable, dedicated, trustworthy workers.

## Clash of Class Interests

The clash of class interests were always present in the ranks of the I.R.A. These surfaced more after de Valera came to power. Those in the I.R.A. leadership and among the rank and file who wanted the movement to be on the side of the working people quickly saw that de Valera in power would further strengthen capitalism's grip on the country. They wanted no part of it and a clash of political attitudes developed within the I.R.A. organisation.

The parting came in April 1934 when, from a meeting held in Athlone of some I.R.A. Executive and other unit leaders, there was issued a Manifesto calling for a great hosting of all anti-imperialist forces for a united front to challenge and defeat all the forces standing in the way of national and social advance. The Athlone Manifesto (with some minor deletions) declared:

"We believe that a Republic of an united Ireland will never be achieved except through a struggle which uproots capitalism on its way. We cannot conceive of a free Ireland with a subject working class; we cannot conceive of a subject working class in a free Ireland.' This teaching of Connolly represents the deepest instinct of the oppressed Irish nation.

"The fight for freedom in our day has been weakened by the failure of the workers in the North East to see that their freedom is inseparable from the national struggle for freedom. Now that deep wedges there are freeing themselves from the illusions which so long held them in bondage to their Imperial exploiters, the national issue must be brought sharply forward.

"On the other hand, the Republican movement in the Twenty-Six Counties must see that Irish capitalism is the holdfast at this end for the Imperial connection and that the forces which defend Irish capitalism are the forces which in the final push for freedom

will be called out to maintain the connection 'with an economy of British lives'.

"The lip-service paid to the Republic by leaderships that are tethered to Irish capitalism can therefore only confuse sincere Republicans and withdraw them from their struggle for freedom.

"Such organisations steadily dwarf the national demands. It was such an organisation that reduced the Republic to the stature of Document No. 2 in 1921.

"It was a government based on such an organisation which, when the British challenged the sovereignty of this nation on the Annuities, met that challenge, not by raising the Republic and rallying the people, but by waving British Acts of Parliament and a parade of lawyers.

"This retreat from the Republic was not, unfortunately, resisted by those organisations which could have rallied the people on the high ground of the Republic. Had the I.R.A. leadership understood that the economic war was not being fought to free Ireland but to serve Irish capitalism they would have carried out this mobilisation first before giving any support to that war. On account of their failure the Republican issue has been pushed farther into the background.

## Republic to be Main Issue

"This mistake must now be remedied. A congress of Republican opinion must be assembled to make the Republic a main issue dominating the whole political field and to outline what are the forms of activity to move to its support.

"Into this congress will come anti-imperialists from N.E. Ulster representing sections of workers who have hitherto held aloof from, or have even been hostile to the national struggle. The areas of recruitment for Republican forces in the South of Ireland are:—

"(1) Industrial workers who are being dragged into degrading working conditions to found a factory system at a time when the experiences of Europe and America are there to warn us of the horrors ahead.

"(2) In the Gaeltacht areas which must be in close support of the Irish working class. . . . The Gaeltacht is the pound of Ireland that went down at Kinsale. The Gaeltacht youth must get help to tumble its walls and get free access to the broad ranches.

"(3) Small farmers and petty traders are strongly represented in Republican organisations and here is urgent work, for this section of the nation can only free itself as the ally of the working class. The Land Commission will never be abolished and the road open to the ranches except when a revolutionary government of workers and small farmers has achieved power. . . .

"As the Republic when established, will be a Republic of the workers and small farmers, the forces that will achieve it must be drawn from these sections of our life. In order that these forces may be drawn forward to their task, we, on their behalf, call for a Republican Congress and pledge ourselves to take up the work necessary to build it."

## C.P.I. Welcomed Athlone Manifesto

The Communist Party welcomed the Athlone Manifesto as the decision of an important section of the I.R.A. to declare for involvement in the social struggles of the people. A statement of the C.P.I. said (April 14, 1934):

"The revolt of a large section of the Irish Republican Army is a reflection of the growing discontent alike with the Fianna Fáil Government and the policy of the Army leaders.

"Anti-imperialists see the Fianna Fáil Government, which was elected on Republican promises, deserting the Republic in the interests of the industrial capitalists. Finance-capital is increasing its grip over the country. The Cosgrave-created State apparatus of Civil Service, C.I.D., police and Land Commission is function-

ing actively against the interests of the mass of the Irish people.

"Imperialist England, through its Fascist Blueshirts, is preparing civil war on Republican Ireland. The whole State forces of the Fianna Fáil are flung into the work of protecting and furthering the growth of Fascism, whilst at the same time launching a reign of repression on anti-imperialists—batoning, raiding and arresting opponents of Fascism.

"The policy of the I.R.A. Council is one of political servitude to Fianna Fáil, complete passivity in the face of the Fascist threat, and isolation from the workers' and farmers' struggle against the effects of Fianna Fáil's capitalist policy.

"The Communist Party welcomes the desire of the militant Republican youth for a break with this policy, which can lead only to the defeat of the national cause and the victory of the Fascist imperialist dictatorship over the working people. The Irish Communists will work wholeheartedly for the achieving of the national mobilisation of workers and farmers called for by the Republican leaders.

## C.P.I. Criticism

"At the same time the Communist Party is compelled to point out certain important defects in the Republican statement. In the failure to name the organisations that have deserted or are hampering the national struggle—i.e., Fianna Fáil and the I.R.A. under its present leadership—there is the same avoidance of the struggle for political clarity that has proven so harmful to the revolutionary movement in the past.

"In the same way, no indication is given that the present action means a decisive break with the policy of the Army Council.

"The form in which the anti-imperialist struggle now presents itself—in the struggle to rout Blueshirt Fascism—is nowhere made clear; while the purpose of the National Congress, not to form a new political party, but to win a national hosting of working men and women of all organisations is not sufficiently stressed.

"It is essential that the proposed Congress be made the biggest hosting against capitalist imperialism the country has seen since the Anglo-Irish War. The Congress must be the starting-point of a nation-wide struggle, based on the immediate issues confronting the working masses, for the winning of national freedom and the establishment of the United Republic of the workers and farmers. . . ."

The Republican Congress attracted a most diverse section of support from within the Labour Party, the trade union movement and left-wing elements. In a short time the original purpose of the Athlone Manifesto and those who initiated it, was being subverted. From the aim of being a united front organisation, some Congress spokesmen began to publicise the idea that a new "revolutionary workers' party" should be formed.

The Communist Party questioned the Congress on this development. It was the late Michael Price who first put out the suggestion of a new political party.

## Congress Divides

Michael Price had an outstanding record in the I.R.A. It was much of a surprise that he supported the Athlone Manifesto. He had previously shown no signs of being concerned with progressive social policies, and it would have surprised few had he stayed with the Twomey-MacBride I.R.A. leadership.

Michael Price's suggestion for a revolutionary workers' party was taken up by other persons at leadership level and among units of the Congress. By the time the "great hosting", which was called for in the Athlone Manifesto, was assembled in the Rathmines Town Hall, Dublin, in September 1935, the Congress was sharply divided as to its aims.

There were two main resolutions before the Congress; they reflected the divisions that had developed as to the aims and purpose of the Congress since the publication of the Athlone

Manifesto in June 1934. At the Rathmines assembly, Resolution No. 1, which had the backing of a majority of the Congress Bureau, declared for the aim of a Workers' Republic and with it was implied the creation of a left-wing political party. Resolution No. 2 was in direct opposition; it proclaimed for a People's Republic and that the Republican Congress should function as a united front organisation.

R. J. Connolly moved Resolution No. 1 (the majority resolution), which declared for a Workers' Republic and the creation of a political party to achieve it. In support, he said, the difference between the two sides was over the line to pursue for the working class to move forward. For him, he said, there was the question of bringing together the best of the Labour and Republican elements in order to place the working class in power. The slogan of the Workers' Republic was adopted as covering all previous slogans. It was the oldest slogan in the country, a slogan that all could understand and that showed the working class as the leadership.

Peadar O'Donnell moved the proposition that the aim of the Republican Congress should be the winning of the Irish Republic and the uprooting of Irish capitalism on the way. He said he stood for the Workers' and Farmers' Republic but the issue between the slogans was this: what stage of the struggle were they in? He saw the struggle halted in 1921 when the strength of the working masses carried capitalism into power. Capitalism had entrenched itself in the Republican movement and made sure that its basis would not be attacked. The Treaty was a betrayal of the working people, but all the talk was about the defection of Griffith and Collins.

"Today it was important to show that no other force other than the working class and the small farmers could win national freedom. Those who opposed that point of view would still leave the conduct of the independence struggle in the hands of the middle class."

## O'Donnell Asks . . .

O'Donnell asked the Congress: "Are you going to allow de Valera to get off with the claim that he is still a Republican? Are you going to allow the I.R.A. leaders to say they are out for the Republic while we are out for the Workers' Republic? . . ."

"Our quarrel with de Valera was not that he was not a Socialist, but that he was not a Republican."

George Gilmore seconded O'Donnell's proposal. Michael Price supporting Roddy Connolly's proposal said that having endured the ignominy of expulsion from the I.R.A. he could not subscribe to anything less than a declaration that they stood for the overthrow of capitalism.

Sean Murray, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland, declared that he was for Resolution No. 2, the one sponsored by Peadar O'Donnell, which put the aim of the Republican Congress as the achievement of a People's Republic and the uprooting of capitalism on the way and that the Republican Congress should function as a united front organisation. In his speech, Sean Murray said:—

"When we discuss these two resolutions we must remember the kind of country in which we live. We live in a country that is nationally oppressed. The fight for the Republic under a capitalist leadership is one thing, but the fight for the Republic under the leadership of the working class is a totally different thing. The best guarantee we have in this great Congress that the fight will develop forward to the Workers' Republic is that we will work to build the workers' leadership in the national struggle against British Imperialism.

"It would be the grossest opportunism to support the majority resolution. De Valera and the capitalists are forsaking the fight for a Republic. The majority resolution asks the Congress also to forsake it.

"We are told that the Northern masses are opposed to the idea of national independence. So because of this we should drop

the national independence objective and accommodate ourselves to the imperialist prejudices of certain sections. But who are responsible for these imperialist prejudices? It is the British imperialists and their big supporters in the North. We must not abandon the struggle for national freedom just because sections of our class have been misled by the imperialists against the fight for national independence.

"Michael Price says O'Duffy might give support to get a republic. There is as much likelihood of the Fascists doing so as there is of them waging an honest fight on Land Annuities.

"What is the guarantee that the fight for the Republic will be different from past fights? It is that the Congress as a united front organisation will drive forward the Republican fight on the basis of an alliance between the workers and working farmers. On the basis of the minority resolution we can destroy the influence of the capitalists in the rural areas.

"In the present stage it would be disastrous to abandon the struggle for a free united republic. It is not we alone who determine the stage of the fight; British imperialism has also a say in the matter.

"In the recent past we were not wrong in fighting for an Irish Republic; nor was Connolly wrong. The mistake in the past struggles was that the leadership was not in the hands of the working class, but that of capitalists.

"We have been told by Roddy Connolly that the slogan of a Workers' Republic is a very old one. He says that it was raised thirty years ago by James Connolly. Yes, it is true Connolly did use it, but at no time did he put it forward as a slogan of immediate action.

## Connolly's United Front

"Connolly believed in the united front struggle for the Irish Republic, and he proved this when he signed the Republican proclamation in 1916. Connolly recognised that the fight for the Irish Republic and national freedom was not an abstraction, as a delegate stated, but an issue of life and death for both the British Empire and the Irish people.

"Resolution A would hamper the development of the united front struggle of town and country. The mass of the Irish people, North and South, are against British rule. On the basis of the fight for national freedom joined to the day-to-day demands of the masses for bread, work, land and homes it is possible to build up a great united front of struggle which will open the way to national and social liberation.

"It is possible to win the support of the great mass of the rural population for the Republican fight. But not all the classes who support national independence will go so resolutely forward for the establishment of the Workers' Republic. The two classes—the workers and toiling farmers—will get acquainted in the fight with the common enemy, imperialism. This will ensure that they will not free the country to hand it over to the capitalists, but that great support of the farming masses will be won for the Workers' Republic.

## North Needs Rid of Imperialism

"Craigavon fears most at this juncture the fight for a free and united Ireland. He and his Government are most active against the masses when they move in this direction. The North is held entirely by British imperialism. There are British troops, British police, British capital and the Government machine is manned by the direct agents of imperialism.

"Who will be so foolish as to say there is any other place that needs to rid itself of the power of British imperialism more than the North?

"We must be definitely clear on this point: we cannot rid ourselves of capitalist oppression until we destroy the power of British imperialism. And the majority resolution advocates the

opposite—that we must have capitalism abolished before we can destroy English imperialist power.

"This Congress is historic. It is representative of the militant masses in town and country, North and South. It will fulfil its task by the creation of the united front as the way forward to the unity and independence of Ireland and the realisation of the ultimate goal of Connolly, the Workers' Republic."

A majority of the Rathmines Congress assembly was won for the Minority Resolution, that is, for the People's Republic; it was not, however, a big majority. What should have been and could have been a significant move forward for all left-wing Republican and Socialist forces in the country was wrecked by the ultra-lefts, the impatient ones, those who use high-sounding revolutionary phrases without any regard to the stage of development of either the working people or their movement. When their ultra-leftist phrase-mongering has resulted in wrecking, they clear out, desert and more often than not show up later among the conservative and right-wing elements.

Nothing but the Workers' Republic would suit Roddy Connolly in 1935; he played no small part to force the issue and in the process helped to wreck the great hopes of the Republican Congress.

Mr. Connolly, in 1973, as Chairman of the Labour Party, has left the fight for the Workers' Republic behind him. He is a supporter of the Labour Coalition with Fine Gael and is lined up with Liam Cosgrave and Conor Cruise-O'Brien and their anti-national, anti-socialist policies in regard to Northern Ireland.

In the Presidential Election campaign of 1973, he co-chaired a meeting, in Dublin's Liberty Hall, in support of the Fine Gael candidate, Tom O'Higgins, a former Blueshirt Fascist. Roddy Connolly's co-chairman was Maurice Dockrell, Fine Gael T.D., whose father, Sir Maurice Dockrell, lauded the actions of Sir John Maxwell and the British military in suppressing the 1916 Uprising; which included the shooting, strapped to a chair, of the wounded James Connolly.

The Republican Congress survived for a few years as an organisation after the Rathmines Town Hall meeting, but its impact was considerably weakened. It joined, on occasions, with the C.P.I. in joint meetings, parades, etc.

Some of its members were among the first recruits to the International Brigade for service in the cause of democracy in Spain in 1936.

## 1935 Tram Strike

In the early 1930's buses became increasingly a form of public transport and a number of privately-run companies came into existence. The Dublin Tramways Co. undertook bus transport also, while retaining the electric-generated trams. This company was the biggest employer of transport workers; the workers were organised in the A.T.G.W.U. and there were many clashes between the union and the employers involving wages and conditions.

The most notable was the long drawn out strike of the Dublin tram and bus workers in 1935. (Nationalisation of the transport industry did not come until 1950, during the first Coalition Government.) The C.P.I. members employed in the Dublin Tramways were in the forefront of the strike struggle. During the 11-week-old strike they published a weekly paper, "Unity," which had considerable influence among the workers. It continued to be published for some time after the strike had ended.

There was an occasion during the strike, after a mass meeting when the workers had decisively rejected proposals for settlement, and there were further talks between trade union officials and employers. The talks were not getting far and the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass, said: "If you want to settle this strike, go down to Connolly House" (the C.P.I. headquarters). Here was recognition of the influence the C.P.I. transport workers had among their fellow striking workers.

Among the Party members of the time who were involved in the struggle were the late Tom Burke, Jim Keane, Bill Conway (he emigrated to Canada), Bill Fox and Larry Wright (still a bus conductor). The story of that episode in the history of the Irish working class has been told in a pamphlet published by the C.P.I., written by Pat Devine. Pat Devine died in London in 1973; he was a popular speaker at the public meetings of the C.P.I. in Dublin and Belfast in the years 1934 to 1937. He had the unique distinction of being a member of the National Committees of the Communist Parties of the U.S.A. (he was deported from that country for his working class militancy), of the Communist Party of Britain and also of the Communist Party of Ireland. For a number of years he was a delegate for the British Communist Party to the Communist International in Moscow.

The 1935 Bodenstown Wolfe Tone Commemoration was a big demonstration, some 10,000 taking part. They came from all parts of the country. The year before there had been the split in the Republican Movement and the emergence of the Republican Congress.

Apart from the I.R.A. contingents there was an impressive presence of left-wing contingents, made up of the Workers' Union of Ireland (with band), the Communist Party of Ireland, the Irish National Unemployed Movement, the Republican Congress and others.

The I.R.A. chief of the time was Sean MacBride. He was also the spokesman for the Wolfe Tone Commemoration Committee. He refused permission to all non-I.R.A. groups to carry banners; they were to form an anonymous group and to be a tail-end contingent of the I.R.A. procession.

The Republican Congress contingent was subjected to a deliberate attack by units of the I.R.A. It was an ugly scene and was no credit to the Twomey-Fitzpatrick-MacBride I.R.A. leadership of the time. On that occasion the I.R.A. leadership was in a state of great confusion, and was actually helping de Valera to score in his policy of splitting the anti-imperialist forces.

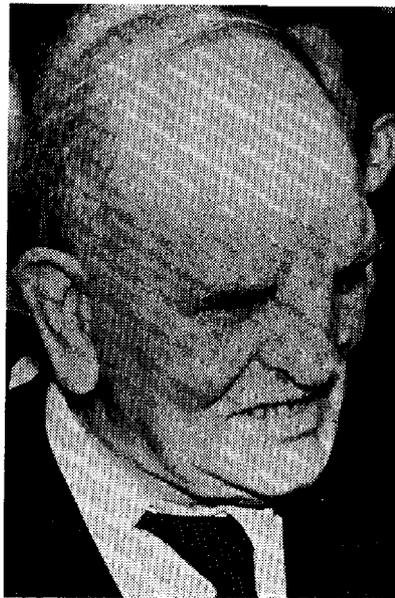
## Emergence of New Rich

Fianna Fáil, after being in power only a few years, was already shaping itself into the party of the new rich; for the new type of social upstarts, any conception of national independence or what the men and women of 1916 and later were after had little meaning or attraction. The new rich, behind the protection of the tariffs soon found it better to have good and friendly relations with British business interests. In the years since there have been the amalgamations of the weak Irish-based concerns with those of the more powerful British firms. And now there is the E.E.C. and the Continental monopolies. There have been significant changes in Ireland in recent years. The wealthy sections in Ireland have joined in partnership with the bigger, foreign-based concerns.

At its 1936 annual conference the Irish Labour Party, meeting in Dublin, adopted a new constitution and programme which declared the Party's aim to be to secure "a free workers' Republic, the political union of Northern Ireland with the Saorstát, with such degree and form of autonomy as may be found desirable, and meanwhile to foster friendly co-operation between the two parts of the country".

Introducing the new Constitution and programme, the Party Leader, Mr. William Norton, said: "Private enterprise has failed. The Labour Party stands for a planned economy. The political objective of the Labour Party is a Workers' Republic. It is no mean tribute to us," he declared, "that the declaration of this objective has been attacked by the two leading organs of British imperialism in this country—the 'Irish Times' and the 'Evening Mail'."

Some elements (Roddy Connolly among them) who had failed at the 1935 Republican Congress to have that body convert itself




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**BOB STEWART**  
Foundation member,  
British Communist  
Party; spent periods  
in Ireland helping to  
develop a Marxist  
movement.

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into a political party, with a Workers' Republic as its objective, went over to the Labour Party. Their activities succeeded in foisting on the Labour Party the ultra-leftist policies they had failed to have the Republican Congress accept.

A warning note was sounded as early as April 17 by the Catholic "Standard", only two months after the Labour Party had adopted the new leftist policy: "While preening ourselves on the defeat of Communistic agitation we would do well to examine if Socialism, only less anti-Christian than Communism, has not got hold of some leaders of thought amongst us. The most strident advocates of a Workers' Republic do not merely approach the danger zone; they have crossed into it, perhaps unaware."

Things began to move within the Labour Party and trade union movement arising from the conference decision to make the Workers' Republic an aim. The Bishops were consulted by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Bishops, not averse to poking their noses into political matters, decided that the Workers' Republic as an aim of the Labour Party did not conform to Catholic social teaching—in other words, it offended against the interests of capitalism and could not be tolerated. The campaign against the Workers' Republic got under way and the Labour Party leadership, with William Norton in the forefront, were falling over one another to conform to the Bishops' wishes and get rid of the Workers' Republic. At its 1938 annual conference the Labour Party got rid of the Workers' Republic, with Mr. Norton being as pompous and enthusiastic at its funeral rites as he had been at its initiation at the 1936 conference. The Labour Party will never be the party to provide leadership of the Irish working class to build socialism. In 1936 the Workers' Republic was declared to be the objective; in 1938, fearing a belt of a bishop's crozier, there was a helter-skelter, cowardly scurry for shelter by the leadership, and the Workers' Republic was flung out the door. In 1969, in Dublin's Liberty Hall, "Socialism in the '70s" was proclaimed the Labour Party's aim; never, never again would there be a coalition with Fine Gael or any other bourgeois party; it was to be socialism or the wilderness. In a matter of two years, there was the shift again. Socialism was abandoned; opportunism took over, coalition with Fine Gael was again on.

Brendan Corish, the Labour Party leader, declared in 1969 in Liberty Hall, that he would move to the back benches if the Party decided to enter again into Coalition with Fine Gael. In 1973 Mr Corish is the Tanaiste and a Minister in a Coalition with

Fine Gael, helping to make Irish capitalism work. Socialism is out, capitalism is in.

Such a party will never effect basic social changes in Irish society.

On January 11, 1936, in the Rathmines Town Hall, Dublin, a public meeting was held at which Sean Murray presided and the principal speaker was Harry Pollitt, General Secretary of the British Communist Party. It was a well-advertised meeting and attracted a "full house", with an admission charge. Prior to the meeting, a "Catholic Action Group" put on a picket which was ineffective. Later, a contingent arrived in lorries from the outlying area of Balbriggan and attempted to break up the meeting. They caused some disturbance and some chairs were broken for use as weapons. The hooligan element were ejected and Harry Pollitt, Pat Devine, Sean Murray and Jim Larkin jun. were given enthusiastic hearings. The Dublin City Manager used the disturbances to justify refusal of further meeting facilities to the C.P.I. for the Rathmines Town Hall or the Mansion House.

## 20th Anniversary of 1916

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the 1916 Uprising, the C.P.I. organised a number of special functions, lectures, meetings, etc., to mark the occasion; a pamphlet entitled "The Irish Revolt" by Sean Murray was published. Also published for the occasion were two books, "Easter Week" by Brian O'Neill, which told the story of the Rising, and "Easter 1916" by Montagu Slater, a play which featured the 1913 Lock-out and the 1916 Uprising. It was staged by the London Unity Theatre in 1936.

The National Commemoration was held on Sunday, April 12, 1936, and consisted of a march from St. Stephen's Green to Glasnevin Cemetery. The "Irish Workers' Voice" called for full support and Dublin units of the C.P.I. were urged to muster in full strength and also to rally support for the public commemoration meeting that was being held on Easter Monday at College Green, the speakers being William Gallacher, the Communist M.P. for West Fife, Roddy Connolly, Jim Larkin Jnr., Sean Murray, Peadar O'Donnell, Jack Carney, with Frank Ryan presiding.

The 20th Easter Week anniversary celebrations in Dublin did not pass off without a series of incidents. On Sunday morning the C.P.I. contingent was attacked as soon as it moved off at St. Stephen's Green. The C.P.I. ranks were held, despite the ferocity of the physical attacks on its members all the way through the city and on to Glasnevin Cemetery. The rear of the procession consisted of a cycle group of the I.R.A. but at no time did they intervene to restore order in the procession, which was persistently disrupted by the physical attacks on the C.P.I. contingent. Ahead of the C.P.I. contingent was the Republican Congress; on the road nearing the cemetery, they came under attack; again the I.R.A. units went on their way, offering no resistance to the anti-national hooligans, the remnants of the Blueshirts.

## Easter Meeting Attacked

After the Glasnevin incidents, there was the public meeting at College Green on the Easter Monday night. A very big crowd gathered. There was a mix-up about the lorry that was to serve as a platform. The owner took fright and did not show up. Peadar O'Donnell, substituting for Frank Ryan who was in Manchester as a speaker at an Easter Commemoration, mounted a lamp-post and opened the meeting. It was an uncomfortable arrangement, but a very brave action by Peadar. He had barely started speaking when the organised gangs began hurtling stones, bottles and other missiles.

The Gardai took no steps to safeguard the right of free speech. In the circumstances the holding of the meeting became impossible. After the Glasnevin incident on the previous day, the gangster elements had come to College Green well prepared, they had all sorts of weapons, stones, bottles, petrol cans, hammers,

crow-bars, etc., etc. The Gardai left the trouble-makers alone, no arrests were even attempted despite the open display of the lethal weapons.

The I.R.A. "form-fours", "eyes right", "eyes left" perfectionists were not around to stop the gangster elements. The MacBride-Twomey I.R.A. units had done their stint for God and Ireland over the Easter week-end and why bother that former Blueshirt and gangster elements were in action in the name of "religion" to deny civil and democratic rights to other sections of the anti-imperialist movement.

The "Irish Workers' Voice" commented: "Two things stand out clearly. One is that while the dregs of the city are being hurled against the revolutionary workers, the people who stand behind the whole vile business are the most unscrupulous and reactionary cliques of the wealthy interests. The second is that this blackguardism is not exclusively, nor perhaps even primarily, directed against the Communist Party. Its aim is to throttle the last remnant of freedom of opinion, freedom of speech and democratic rights left to the masses of the people. The disunity in the ranks of the working class and Republican movements is the main cause of the shameful spectacle presented by Dublin twenty years after the death of Connolly and Pearse. If Republicanism and Labour of all shades had united this Easter, as the Socialists and Nationalists did in Easter 1916, capitalism's political ruffians would not have invaded Glasnevin and turned the city into pandemonium."

A few nights later a protest march and meeting was held against the attacks at Glasnevin, College Green and other incidents in the city. Several hundred workers took part in the march and more joined the meeting at Cathal Brugha Street. Frank Ryan presided and said that the Murder Gang of 1922 was attempting to come back. Peadar O'Donnell said: "Imperialism cannot suppress us. The workers of Dublin will continue to demonstrate on the streets of their Capital. The Blueshirts were trying a new stunt by hiding behind the Catholic Young Men's Society. But we issue a warning to these gangsters. We tell them 'hands off Republican and workers' meetings'. Hands off all sections of the independence movement. We will not tolerate interference."

## "We Will Burn the Butts"

In all sorts of ways, at the time, the anti-Communist campaign was in evidence. For example, a new housing area in Kilkenny got national publicity because of the suggestion of the Labour T.D., Alderman Pattison, at a Corporation meeting, that the "Butts" housing scheme be named James Connolly Place. The Fine Gael representatives, Alderman Tynan and Councillor Carthy, supported by the British Legion man, Councillor Hayden, were immediately on their feet to protest. "The clergy will be poorly complimented by the new title you are proposing to put on this area," said Alderman Tynan. The British Legion man said it would be a disgrace if the Kilkenny Corporation called a housing scheme after James Connolly, the Communist. Not satisfied with that, he threatened: "We will burn the Butts if it is going to be called after a Communist." The Kilkenny Corporation decided that the housing scheme would be called after James Connolly, Fianna Fáil and Labour voting together.

All over the world at the time there was a campaign demanding the release of Tom Mooney, the Irish-American Labour leader who had spent a number of years in jail on a frame-up charge. A new Ambassador arrived in Dublin at the time and it was made an occasion to highlight the demand for Mooney's release. The Ambassador, Mr. Owsley, was greeted on his arrival at Kingsbridge rail station by a number of people shouting slogans and carrying placards about Tom Mooney.

The protest action was repeated even more vigorously a week later when Mr. Owsley presented his credentials to Mr. de Valera in Dublin Castle. This time the case of Tom Mooney was joined with those of J. B. McNamara and the Scottsboro' boys, also

victims of the U.S. frame-up system. On arrival at the Castle. Mr. Owsley was confronted with banners demanding the release of Mooney, McNamara and the Scottsboro' boys. The C.I.D. used rough measures in dealing with the demonstrators. After the Castle ceremony, on Mr. Owsley's return journey to his residence in the Phoenix Park, was again confronted with protest actions.

From the County Jail of San Francisco, California, the Communist Party of Ireland received a letter, dated May 18, 1936, from Tom Mooney :

"Dear Comrades : I want to thank you very kindly for sending me a copy of the Dublin Committee's report on the attack by the Fascist Blueshirts of Ireland on the Easter Commemoration services. I appreciate this information very much and thank you greatly for it.

"It is a true world that we live in. The assaults that are being made upon the working-class throughout the world are substantially the same. The form and details may be different, but in substance and effect it is the same. It does not matter whether it is a white worker in the North of the United States or a black worker in the South, whether it be an Irishman in Ireland, or a German in Germany, or a Chinese in China, where they fight in defence of the working-class, they lay their life on the altar of proletarian sacrifice in that age-old mission of the working-class in their march down through the ages, their historic mission to free themselves from exploitation.

"I send you from this master-class bastille of the living dead, my profound, heartfelt, thankful, proletarian appreciation, with warmest working-class greetings of solidarity.

"I am, with every good wish to you and your cause for proletarian unity,

Yours sincerely,

TOM MOONEY—31921."

Despite the pressures and assaults of reaction, the C.P.I., to the best of its ability fulfilled its internationalist obligations and rallied support for the world-wide campaign to save the imprisoned German Communist leader, Ernst Thaelmann; in the closing days of the war, Thaelmann was murdered by the Nazis; to cover up their foul crime, they put out the story that he had been killed in an air raid; meetings and other activities were also organised in support of Georgi Dimitrov, the hero of the German Reichstag Fire Trial. Dimitrov's outstanding revolutionary behaviour during his trial, particularly his confrontation with Goering, won the admiration of people all over the world. The Nazis put Dimitrov away, but lost the political battle of his trial.

## Rescued by Soviet Union

Thanks to the Soviet Union, Dimitrov was rescued from the clutches of the Nazis and became the Secretary-General of the Communist International. He was the outstanding leader at the 7th Congress (1935) of the Communist International, at which he delivered the historic report calling for the unity of all working class and democratic forces in every country to give battle to the forces of Fascism. That was to be the last World Congress of the Communist International.

The C.P.I. was represented at this, its first international meeting since its re-formation, by the General Secretary, Sean Murray.

Sean Murray was a fraternal delegate to the 1934 National Convention of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., held at Cleveland, Ohio; he toured and spoke at meetings in many parts of the U.S.A. during his visit.

In June 1936 elections were held for the Dublin Corporation. The C.P.I. nominated two candidates, Jim Larkin, Jun., and Sean Murray. There was an active anti-Communist pogrom atmosphere in the city. At the Easter Commemoration Parade to Glasnevin there had been the organised attack against the C.P.I. contingent; a normal election campaign was difficult; however, the party held meetings, canvassed voters, distributed literature and

put up posters. It was, probably, the toughest election campaign in the history of the Party; neither of the candidates were elected.

Housing was a big question in the course of the election campaign. The Town Tenants' Tribunal was held during the campaign and some of the submissions to the Tribunal proved of value to the Communist Party's campaign. For example, the submission of the St. Vincent de Paul Society stated : "When a butcher sells diseased meat, he can be sent to jail. But here are people selling diseased houses and all the forces of the State are behind the landlords to enable them to recover the money." The C.P.I. made a submission to the Tribunal which gave instances of landlords' extortions and put forward proposals for reductions in rent and the development of new housing schemes.

## Tenants' Struggles

It was as a result of the sustained efforts and activities of the C.P.I., the Republican Congress and the Tenants' Leagues that brought into the open the scandal of the high rents for slums and the urgent need for new housing development. Members of the Republican Congress spent periods in jail for their work on behalf of Dublin's slum dwellers. At the time there were 11,682 houses in the small country towns of the Twenty-Six Counties unfit for human habitation and in Dublin it was a conservative estimate that some 14,000 families were living in overcrowded conditions.

The financial problems of the C.P.I., always parlous, finally compelled the suspension of the publication of the weekly paper, "Irish Workers' Voice," on June 13, 1936. A brave and persistent effort had been made by the party members in Dublin, the area of its greatest circulation, to win new readers and financial support to save the paper. The political atmosphere was not favourable and the printer had a big bill to be met.

The loss of the weekly "Irish Workers' Voice" was a big blow when it was so much needed to counter the attacks of reaction and by means of the printed word to report the struggles of the workers and to explain and give guidance and leadership on political, economic and social questions.

The hope that the weekly paper would re-appear in a matter of weeks was not achieved. In fact, the weekly "Irish Workers' Voice" did not appear again as the organ of the C.P.I. The title was resurrected in 1949 for the monthly paper of the Irish Workers' League.

In July 1936 to help somewhat fill the gap caused by the demise of the "Irish Workers' Voice", there was published a weekly 4-page duplicated Bulletin called "The Worker". Constant appeals for finance to re-start the "Voice" did not meet with enough response. It was a time when even workers in employment had not much spare cash, apart from the unfavourable political climate.

July 1936 saw the start of the Spanish Civil War, and inadequate though it was, "The Worker" Bulletin played an important part in countering and exposing the torrents of lies and calumnies that were hourly and daily poured forth by the "Irish Independent", the "Standard" and the other reactionary papers which supported the international Fascist cause. In "The Worker" were published some verses about the "Christian Front" and "O'Duffy's Braves", under the pen-name of Somhairle Mac Alaistair. A selection of these verses are included in this publication.

## "Christian Front"

There were the church-door collections to help the so-called Christian Crusade in Spain and the "Christian Front". Big meetings were held around the country. The reactionary forces developed a new courage. The anti-Communist, anti-democratic pro-Franco bandwagon got the open support of some Labour T.D.s, such as William Davin (Leix-Offaly) and Michael Keyes (Limerick).

With Labour support at this level, there was militant and vigorous opposition to every sign of social protest.

An example was to be seen in Co. Tipperary. Mr. P. J. Ryan, Oldbawn, Loughmore, near Templemore, had been appointed an organiser of the newly-formed Farm Labourers' Union. He arranged a meeting for the local hall in Templemore to win support for the union. The priest, Rev. Fr. Fogarty, C.C., was not sympathetic and denounced the meeting as "Communitic". A hostile crowd turned up and stopped the meeting and Mr. Ryan was later threatened at his home by a number of young men.

Late in 1936, the British monarchy crisis developed, and the C.P.I. declared:

"British imperialism is thrown off its perch. An American woman who is difficult to please in husbands has thrown a wrench into the works. And the lovely work of art, the British monarchy, is now exposed as a thing as corrupt and rotten as its late Czarist brother. The present crisis over King Edward's marriage shows the decay that is rotting the whole imperialist system and is a symptom of the crash that is impending. It shows also the morals of capitalist society, though there will be no outcry from Christian Front platforms about it.

"The constitutional crisis gives an opportunity for the Irish people, north and south, to take a definite stand on this question of the golden link of the Crown. What is the attitude of de Valera? The Republican issue becomes a burning one in face of the exposure, on a sensitive spot, of the most highly decorated part of the imperialist structure. The place for Ireland is out of the imperialist mess." — "The Worker," 12/12/1936.

The C.P.I. further declared:

"The working class, thanks to its servile Labour leadership, was unable to rise to the occasion and utilise the position created to drive a nail in the coffin of the whole monarchical sham and steer Britain on the course to the Workers' Republic. The workers were 'confined to barracks' by their Labour chiefs, and Baldwin and the ruling cliques were left to settle the issue with even scant reference to Parliament, and secured from molestation from the masses. In spite of all this, the Monarchy and indeed the whole imperialist structure has emerged weaker and more exposed to attack than it was before the 'crisis'.

## Craigavon's Part

"Craigavon, the ex-'Covenanter', took a man's part in de-throning King Edward, as was to be expected. After all it is not the first time James Craig conspired against an occupant of the throne. Craigavon, Carson & Co., all but sent Edward's father packing over the Home Rule business in 1912-14. Craigavon and the Ulster caste around him are back as fresh as paint at the old 'loyalty' game again. But Ulstermen can have too much of a good thing.

"We now come to Leinster House, Dublin. Donal Buckley, the Maynooth grocer, who deputised for 'our Sovereign and liege Lord', also signed his abdication. The de Valera Government in so doing took a step forward. That was on Friday, December 11th. But on Saturday, the 12th, the Fianna Fáil Government proceeded to off-set its work of Friday by providing for King George VI to act as head of the State in the region of external affairs; a gesture to the masses of the people on Friday, a gesture to British imperialism on Saturday. The tricolour for the kitchen, the Union Jack for the drawing-room. Such is the position of the de Valera Government.

"To our shame, be it said, there was not a group of members, or even a single member in the Dáil, to move for ending the whole King business and establish a Republic. In the British Parliament there at least were five members, headed by Gallacher and Maxton, to move for a Republic. Not so in Republican Dublin! The Labour Party played its usual helpless role. For all the wordy twisting of Norton & Co., in practice it simply meant a criticism of the Government for 'too hasty action' in dismissing

Buckley. The Labour Party missed the chance of its life: to move to compel de Valera to face the Empire v. Republic issue. Well might Rev. Fr. O'Flanagan say at the recent meeting in support of Spain: 'We had a Larry Ginnell in the British Parliament in Easter Week. But we never had one in this Dáil Eireann'."

"The Worker" Bulletin continued for 35 weeks. It stopped shortly before the appearance of the weekly publication, "Irish Democrat". That paper first appeared for the week-end of March 27, 1937. It was sponsored by the Northern Ireland Socialist Party, the Republican Congress and the C.P.I. The first editorial stated it was "a product of the growing unity of the workers—Socialist, Republican, Communist and of men and women of no property. We will proclaim that, regardless of opinion, all workers and freedom-loving citizens should unite their forces against the common foe of all. . . .

"The national and social freedom of this nation can only be the result of the struggles and sacrifices of its working masses. This will be a cardinal article of our faith. The capitalist parasite must go, together with the alien tyranny which still divides and hinders this country. . . .

## "Irish Democrat" Launched

"We will be condemned in high places for this mission. . . . Truth has been declared an outlaw by those who want to keep the multitude in ignorance, poverty and servitude for their own ends. But it is the sign by which the toiling manhood of this nation will conquer."

The "Irish Democrat" was published weekly from March 1937 to December of the same year when financial difficulties forced it out. It served a very useful purpose during its nine months.

There were clashes on the editorial board from time to time about both contents and editorial opinion. The paper had some regular, excellent features, such as the International Commentary by "Observer"; Peadar O'Donnell's weekly column, and the hard-hitting commentary by "Covenanter" on current affairs.

The paper had the support of a representative selection of political activists, Frank Ryan, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and her son Owen, to mention only a few.

Early on, the Christian Front started a campaign to have the paper boycotted by newsagents. This had its effect and also adversely influenced advertisers. The paper consistently covered the anti-Franco struggles in Spain and week by week carried news about the Irish Unit of the International Brigades.

(Elsewhere, in brief, the story of the Irish Unit of the International Brigades is given.)

An important question at the time was the rallying of support against Franco Fascism. A Committee, of which Mrs. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington was chairman, the "Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic", did great work; it organised medical and food supplies and helped the returned members of the Irish Unit of the International Brigade.

## Father O'Flanagan

Despite the pro-Franco climate in the country, helped by most of the clergy, there was a great volume of support for the Spanish Republic in the Labour and trade union movement and among progressive-minded people generally.

Father Michael O'Flanagan was a tower of strength in those days. He never hesitated from the start to declare support for the Spanish Republic and against Franco and Fascism. Father O'Flanagan did a great job; he toured North America in support of the Spanish Republican cause and spoke at many meetings in Dublin and elsewhere.

Father Ramon Laborda, a Basque priest, had been to Ireland in 1932 during the Eucharistic Congress. He was back in Dublin and was a principal speaker at a large public meeting in the Gaiety Theatre. Attempts that were made to wreck the meeting

were overcome and the great majority of the audience cheered for Fr. Laborda and the Spanish Republic.

The de Valera Government pursued a policy of so-called non-intervention in accordance with League of Nations decision; that was also the position of the Labour leadership and of Fine Gael.

The year 1937 saw the emergence of the de Valera Constitution. It was a much publicised document. The C.P.I. said of it: "There was no Republic, no King, but there was Capital: The social character of the document is an affront to the working class. The property rights of the possessing classes are declared to be sacred, whilst the propertyless mass of the proletariat are dismissed without rights and instead are offered a phrase in Section 45 about 'Justice and Charity', which the authors are careful to state are only 'intended for general guidance' and have no force in law.

"The Constitution embodies the retreat of the Fianna Fáil Party from the Proclamation of 1916 and the Programme of the First Dáil, and bears from beginning to end the imprint of the reactionary clamours of recent years."

## 1937 Constitution Criticised

The criticism of the Constitution, as far as it went, was good but more was required. It was not pointed out that some of its clauses, particularly the one about the special position of the Roman Catholic Church, was really not necessary and would only help the Orange right wing in the North to strengthen its influence over the minds of the Protestant workers.

The Constitution of 1937 was recognised, with all its shortcomings, and they were numerous and were added to as the years went by, as a further manifestation of Fianna Fáil's effort along the constitutional path to assert an appearance of independence. "The Irish people will always be suspicious of any attempt to settle the national status of this country short of the declaration of full and complete independence," declared the C.P.I.

The C.P.I. asked the voters to reject "this reactionary document" and at the same time urged in the General Election to ensure the annihilation of the Imperialist Party of Mr. Cosgrave.

In the General Election the outcome was: Fianna Fáil got 69 seats; Fine Gael 48; Independents 7; Labour, with Larkin, sen., got 14 seats.

The new Constitution, which fell far short of the full national aims, was carried by 157,746 votes, but 116,196 people spoiled their votes and 450,613 people did not vote at all.

With the snap election of 1938 Fianna Fáil again secured a parliamentary majority which ensured it in office for the full five-year term to 1943.

## Dublin Branch Problem

It was a time of much difficulty for the C.P.I.; in effect the Party was confined to the Dublin and Belfast branches. In both cities, unemployment was high, and Party activities were mostly concerned with social agitations. In Belfast, with the danger of war growing, more workers were being employed in the aircraft, shipyard and engineering industries. Not so in Dublin where emigration had begun to take its toll and this added to the difficulties of maintaining the membership and activity; its activity was mainly confined to weekly branch meetings, educational classes, Friday night public meetings at Abbey Street corner.

In the years from 1938 the Dublin Branch of the C.P.I. had to contend with serious difficulties and set-backs. There was the problem of leading members leaving the area, some for economic (job) reasons; others retired from active involvement in the Party without indicating any political disagreement. That was the case

of Jim Larkin jun. He never expressed disagreement with the Party, but ceased to play his part as a member at any level; he became involved in the affairs of the Workers' Union of Ireland and played the principal part in the next few years in transforming the organisational structure and democratic functioning of the union. The loss of Larkin Junior to the Communist Party was a grievous blow, as was the departure of Larkin Senior ten years earlier.

Larkin's departure was an encouragement to others in the Party to involve themselves more and more in trade union work and to be less and less identified with the Party. The Belfast branch was at this time well-rooted in the trade unions and continues to be; this was a real weakness for the Dublin branch in the years before and during the war years.

The Dublin Branch membership continued to decline; emigration was taking its toll of all sections of the Labour and working class movement; withal, among the membership there was enough conviction and enthusiasm to support the launching of a weekly paper; this was done in a situation where there was no working class or Socialist paper, and there was a great need for one that would give political leadership and guidance to the working people at a time when Hitler Fascism was a mounting menace for all peoples, and Government legislation was making serious inroads on democratic and civil liberties and living standards were being worsened.

The "Irish Workers' Weekly" started to be published on April 22, 1939. The Munich Agreement had encouraged the Hitler Nazis to press on with their predatory aims which were only to be finally halted six years later when Hitler's Berlin and his 1,000 years German Reich fell before the hammer blows of the Soviet Red Army and the Allied forces.

The standpoint of the C.P.I. on the Munich Agreement was put in the editorial article in the first issue of the "Irish Workers' Weekly":

## C.P.I. on Munich

"The trail of agony and suffering which Fascism is inflicting is seen today in the ravages of the Japanese invaders in China, in the hideous and cowardly massacres of the defenceless people of Abyssinia by the Italian Fascists; in the invasion of Spain by Fascist Italy and Germany and the destruction of the lawful Government elected by the Spanish people.

"It is seen in the forcible conquests by German Fascism of the free nations of Austria and Czechoslovakia and now the invasion and conquest of the little State of Albania by the Fascist Government of Italy.

"Now it is the turn of the Poles, Rumanians and, in fact, of all the people within reach of the Fascist vultures. The liberties of every land are in jeopardy unless the Fascist conquerors are halted by the combined might of the peoples of all nations.

"Let Irishmen and women make no mistake: Fascism aims to destroy the independence of the smaller nations already free, and to keep in enslavement the countries that today are not free. It is the mortal enemy of the national freedom of all nations."

The statement concluded with a call for the release of all political prisoners in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain, the abolition of the Special Powers Act and the dropping of the coercion legislation then going through the Dáil—all of which was described as a menace to democratic freedom in Ireland.

"Against Fascism and imperialism," declared the statement.

"For the unity of the Irish, American and British democracies. For a Free United Ireland."

That was the political position of the C.P.I. in early 1939, before the World War was unleashed in September.

The Labour and trade union movement supported the position of the de Valera Government; so did Fine Gael. That remained their position throughout the war years. They supported all the various measures of the Fianna Fáil Government which they regarded as essential for the maintenance of neutrality. The C.P.I. had a different position, examining separately each new development and being always guided by its proletarian internationalist duties and responsibilities.

Its every policy statement and action was concerned to weaken imperialism and to safeguard and advance the interests of the working class. In November 1939 the C.P.I. called for the withdrawal of the six counties from the war, declared against the coercion laws which had been enacted by the Fianna Fáil Government, which used the pretext of safeguarding neutrality, and demanded a series of measures to uplift the people's living standards—such as a curb on high prices, additional aid for small farmers, increases in workers' wages and a big increase in Government spending on housing.

The Party Manifesto was published in the "Irish Workers' Weekly" and was also issued as a four-page folder. The printing plant at St. Anthony's Place (Liberty Press Ltd.), Dublin, was raided by the Special Branch. All copies of both the "Irish Workers' Weekly" and of the four-page folder on the premises were seized. It was an example of the Fianna Fáil Government's use of the new coercive powers to stifle the C.P.I. from making known its militant and revolutionary working class position in the war situation. There were other occasions when the Party premises at Ormond Quay were raided and leaflets and other documents were seized.

The "Irish Workers' Weekly" explained and defended its position on the many issues which arose in that period, such as the "phoney war", the Finland-Soviet clash, the German-Soviet Pact and the German Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, which transformed the whole character of the war and of the world situation. The defeat of German Nazism became the overriding objective of the working people of the world.

### All-Party Rally

With the fall of France and the threat of Hitler to move towards Britain, there was the great campaign of bourgeois national unity in defence of neutrality. There was a new mobilisation of recruits to the Army and the creation of the 26th Battalion (mostly based on the Old I.R.A.). As well, there was the all-Party public meeting, with de Valera, William Cosgrave and William Norton on the same platform to urge support for the defence of the State and neutrality.

Over that week-end, a number of members of the C.P.I. were taken into custody and held until the all-Party College Green rally was over. Apparently it was feared there would be a counter-demonstration or organised interruptions to the all-Party rally.

The C.P.I., unlike the Labour Party, which relied on the de Valera Government in matters of national affairs, declared its position. Manifesto (June 1, 1940): "Ireland today stands in deadly peril from the menace of the fast-extending war between the rival English, French and German imperialists. . . ."

"The British Government has dragged six Irish counties officially into its war with Germany. . . . Now the conflict threatens to involve the whole country, as it has the small neutral states of West Europe. . . ."

The slogans issued to the workers by the C.P.I. in the Manifesto were: "Against all enemies, foreign and domestic. No truce with the capitalists who attack your wages. threaten your trade union rights and keep the nation in servitude to British imperialism. We serve neither Churchill nor Hitler, but Ireland."

The alert situation for the armed and auxiliary forces was maintained until there was the new turn in the war situation, when Hitler Nazism attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. For the de Valera Government, this was a welcome development, as it

was for Churchill's Britain. It removed the immediate danger of invasion by the Hitler forces for these islands.

The British Government's efforts to impose conscription in the Six Counties failed. Churchill, who wanted it, decided not to go ahead with it when he saw the powerful opposition against it, ranging from the C.P.I. to the de Valera Government. "It was irresistible," said the "Irish Workers' Weekly" (May 31, 1941).

The Fianna Fáil (1941) Trade Union Bill was designed to further deepen division within the trade union movement, so as to serve their anti-working class intentions.

The Trade Union Act was challenged in the Dublin Courts and the section which concerned the British-based unions was declared to be a denial of the right of freedom of association and was in conflict with the terms of the Constitution. The Dublin Court's decision was a set-back, a blow for the aims of the Fianna Fáil Government and the right-wing of the trade union leadership. From their different positions they both wanted the British-based unions out and to foist nationally-based unions on all sections of workers. Legislation was intended to replace a democratic decision of the workers who were voluntarily organised in British-based unions.

### Anti-British Union Salvoes

Although Larkin, senior, broke with the I.T.G.W.U. right-wing leadership in 1923 and pursued a militant political and trade union programme, it is a fact that, in the years after Larkin had deserted the Communist movement, he had a like position with William O'Brien (his arch-enemy of the I.T.G.W.U.) in regard to the British-based unions. Larkin, senior, launched anti-British union salvoes on occasions for reasons little better than to cover up his abandonment of militant policies. That was very evident during the building workers' long drawn out strike of the early 1930's when he disgraced himself by his storming off the platform at a public meeting in Dublin's College Green because there were billed to speak workers on strike who were Communists. In his post-1923 period in Dublin he often behaved in a manner which showed he was incapable of working class discipline, or of being a Communist or a Marxist; however, with all his shortcomings, he has a scoured position in the history of the revolutionary struggles of his class in Ireland. Compared to a William O'Brien, Larkin stands out as a beacon urging the workers on to the road for revolutionary change and the new society of socialism. William O'Brien, on the other hand, made his peace with capitalism and was rewarded by being made a member of the Governing Board of the Central Bank. Larkin left the Communist movement and in time joined the Labour Party. However, to the time of his death, in 1947, he was treated with suspicion by both the Labour and Government establishment. A Fine Gael and right-wing Labour get-together prevented him becoming a Labour Lord Mayor of Dublin. When he died, in January 1947, there was the well-deserved tribute by the Dublin workers; it was their acknowledgment of the great contribution he had made to their status as a class and the upliftment of their living standards. On the same occasion there were the hypocrites, they came from the employers and the right-wing trade union leaders who were not there to mourn Larkin's passing, but to conform to the social custom. For them Larkin's death was a relief.

### British-Irish Unions' Problems

The problem of British-based unions remains with us to the present time; it is a ready-made issue for those who want to create diversions and confusion within the working-class movement, to divide workers on non-class lines and to exploit for ulterior purposes, the identification or association of workers with British or Irish-based trade unions. In this matter, our country's history, the evolution of our trade union movement and the consequences of

the British-imposed partition on all sectors of Irish society must be taken into consideration. No matter how complex the problem or the situation, at all times, the safeguarding and advancement of working-class interests must prevail over all other considerations. There have always been and still are elements in the trade union and Labour movement who do not see things that way; they do not take a definite working-class standpoint. They are influenced by sectional or nationalistic interests.

There were magnificent protest meetings and demonstrations against the 1941 Trade Union Bill organised by the Dublin Trades Union Council, but important sections of the movement were not involved, such as the I.T.G.W.U. On the day that the Hitler invasion of the Soviet Union was launched there was a monster demonstration against the Trade Union Bill in Dublin; as should have happened, the demonstration was not transformed into a mighty protest against the attack on the Soviet Union. A speaker did express the confidence that Hitler would not win, that Moscow would not fall and that Nazism would be defeated.

## Murray Goes to Belfast

The Party organisation in Dublin at the time was not good. The Branch membership was much reduced, a serious feature being the loss of the publicly-known activists. The Branch was largely made up of unemployed workers and activity and involvement was mostly concerned with protest actions. The shift of workers to Britain and Northern Ireland to take up work in the war industries increased. The Dublin Party's loss in membership was to be a gain for the British Communist Party and also for the Party in Belfast. Seán Murray, the Party General Secretary, no longer a full-time worker, moved to Belfast and took up work in the shipyards. His move was a grievous political blow for the Dublin Party movement.

With the Dublin Branch position not improving, a discussion was initiated about its capacity and ability to fulfil its responsibility as a Communist organisation, guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism. The membership, at the time, reflected the very poor roots the Branch had among the workers. The leading committees of the Party were not functioning; in practice, for the Twenty-Six Counties, the Dublin Branch Committee was the only really functioning body.

In Belfast, the Party membership was expanding. The war situation was favourable to the work and development of the Party on the basis of support for the war.

## Neutrality

In the Twenty-Six Counties, the Party's position was different. For all imaginable reasons, immediate and historical, there was no other possible choice except neutrality; all that happened during the war and the role of British imperialism in Ireland since, confirms that neutrality was Ireland's manifestation of anti-imperialism and distrust in particular of Britain and the aims of its ruling class on the outcome of the war. Churchill, the mouthpiece of the British ruling class, on the day war ended in 1945, delivered his imperialist-colonialist broadside against Ireland and the policy of neutrality. In less than a year, the same Churchill delivered his Fulton speech which set out the programme for the Cold War, which was to have disastrous consequences for the forces of social progress and peace all over the world for some 20 and more years. The Labour Government, which came to power in Britain in 1945, had no different policy or aims in international affairs and relations to those of Winston Churchill. It was the same Labour Government which abandoned the traditional British Labour position towards democratic and nationalist Ireland and backed the Unionist ultras, confirming them in their power and denial of civil and democratic rights to the nationalist minority in the Six Counties.

There was a great amount of debate in the Dublin Branch Committee on its position and its ability to function as a Communist organisation. After much discussion by the leading committee, it was decided that the Branch membership would have to decide and on July 10, 1941, a general meeting was convened at which the following resolution was submitted by what remained of the National Committee:

"This Branch meeting, after hearing a report on the situation in the country and the position in the Labour movement, endorses the decision of the National Committee on the need to turn towards the organised working-class as an urgent step towards the building up of a revolutionary Socialist movement in Dublin.

"To facilitate this objective the Branch meeting agrees with the National Committee to suspend independent activity and to apply the forces of the Branch to working in the Labour and trade union organisations in order to carry forward the fight against the heavy attacks now being launched against the workers.

"In welcoming this step of the Party leadership, the Branch members shall continue to give the support and active co-operation in the publication and sale of the 'Workers Weekly' and will co-operate in every way to support any efforts that are made to widen its scope and extend its influence.

"The extension and sale of Socialist literature will equally have the continued assistance of all comrades who have so energetically carried out this work.

"While suspending the Branch as a political unit from the 10th July, 1941, the continuation of the existing sales and literature organisations, which at present exist, shall be retained.

"Finally, having as an organised force in the past, the members will in the new situation adhere to the principle of working in a conscious way and in an organised manner to infuse the working class movement with Socialist ideas and principles."

## Dublin Branch Endorses

The resolution was endorsed by the Dublin Branch membership at a general meeting, after much discussion and questioning. The terms of the resolution did not envisage a complete abandonment of Communist organisation and activity in Dublin. The "Irish Workers' Weekly", the Party's weekly, was to continue. The paper was published each week until November 1, 1941, when it was discontinued, principally because of the severe Government censorship, exercised in support of the neutrality policy. There were occasions when the Censor almost totally re-wrote articles and altered headings to articles in a way not to correspond to any kind of Communist or working-class viewpoint. Blank spaces, indicating the Censor's decision, were not permitted. A reference to the anniversary of the execution of Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey and Dick Barrett, with a picture of Mellows speaking at Tone's grave, was not allowed on the grounds that it offended against the national unity in favour of neutrality; in other words, it would cause offence to General Richard Mulcahy of Fúine Gael, the betrayers and executioners of the Republic in 1921-1923.

With the demise of the "Workers' Weekly" support was sought for the opening of a Progressive bookshop in Dublin, which would serve the twin purpose of making available left-wing, Communist and progressive literature and be a centre for all left-wing supporters. Enough support was forthcoming and "New Books" opened at 16a Pearse Street, Dublin, in January 1942. In the war years, there was published a weekly letter, privately circulated, which dealt with political problems, from week to week. Also, in the war years and up to 1948, there were organised, under the auspices of "New Books", lectures and week-end discussions. In 1945, there was launched the monthly "Irish Review". This journal continued until May 1948. In its three years of existence, it attracted a very wide selection of writers and served a useful political purpose.

With the end of the war and the release of those held at the Curragh internment camp the Connolly Group was formed in Dublin. They wanted a Communist organisation. In Cork, a workers' group emerged to contest the 1945 local elections. The candidate was Michael O'Riordan. There were 21 seats on the Cork Corporation. O'Riordan contested as a nominee of the Cork Socialist Party. There were 65 candidates and in the first count he was placed 21st in first preferences. He went on to the final count and just failed to be elected. A year later, in 1946, in a by-election for a Dáil seat, O'Riordan was a candidate, again on a radical social programme, as a nominee of the Cork Socialist Party. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael had candidates and the veteran I.R.A. leader Tom Barry went forward as an Independent Republican. The Labour Party did not contest. Fianna Fáil won the seat, but O'Riordan with almost 4,000 votes was in front of Tom Barry.

## A Bleak Period

This was a very bleak period of working-class politics. The Trade Union movement had been split by Fianna Fáil inspiration into the Irish Trade Union Congress and the Congress of Irish Trade Unions. The latter was heavily dominated by the right-wing leadership of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. On the political front there was a corresponding split. The I.T.G.W.U. forced a breakaway from the Norton-led Labour Party and set up a rival body, the National Labour Party.

The main activity of the National Labour Party consisted in attacking the Irish Labour Party as "communists" (!). This made the accused almost neurotic and in order to prove their innocence of the "smear" they in turn began to be even more pious and hypocritical in their reactions.

There was a helter-skelter scramble for protection against the accusation of being Communist, although most of those so accused could never be regarded as having relations or identification with the Communist movement. William Norton, the Labour Party leader, was alarmed that reaction's onslaught was including him and his pious party as not being wholly reliable to allow Catholic workers to be members of it; typical of the man and the Labour Party, he grovelled, protested indignantly, and wrote to the Pope to plead that he and his party were free from the taint of Communist.

## Labour Split "Healed"

The split in the Labour Party was "miraculously" healed, following the 1948 General Election, when the mixum-gatherum came together to form the Fine Gael dominated Inter-Party Government, with John A. Costello as Taoiseach and William Norton as Tanaiste. The two Labour Parties got seats in the Cabinet and Republicans of Clann na Poblachta got Seán MacBride as Minister for External Affairs and Dr. Noel Browne as Minister for Health.

It was in this period of cynical abandonment of even elementary Labour principles that there took place discussions for the public emergence of a Marxist-Leninist organisation based on the Communist Party of Ireland. It was not the most favourable time for such a move. The "Cold War" was reaching its zenith. Socialist ideas were not only abandoned in the Labour Movement, but were regarded with anathema generally because of the vigorous anti-Communist campaign conducted in the cinemas, by the press, both local and international, from the pulpits and in other ways. Joe McCarthy had been elected a member of the U.S. Senate, and his policies and methods were copied.

During the Italian General Election of 1948, Dr. McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, made a special radio broadcast for collections to fight the Communists. The collections took place in factories and house-to-house, and realised £20,000. As well, the Dublin and Cork evening papers carried long columns of adver-

tisements proclaiming that, at the request of the residents of various areas, that special Masses would be said for the defeat of the Communists in Italy.

It was a period when the Dáil passed special resolutions attacking the Yugoslav and Hungarian Governments, and when on May Day, 1949, a 150,000 strong rally was held, not in honour of Labour Day, but in solidarity with those opposing the Hungarian People's Government. For the record, it must be sadly said, that many trade union branches were represented at this rally with their union banners. The huge meeting was presided over by the Labour Lord Mayor of Dublin, John Breen.

However, despite the situation, in November 1948, at 133 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin, a meeting was held to launch a Marxist-Leninist organisation. Those who gathered were some members of the former Dublin Branch of the Communist Party of Ireland, members of the Connolly Study Group, which had been initiated by former members of the Curragh Internment Camp's Communist Group, and left-wing members of the Labour Party, who were in revolt at the shameful opportunism of the Labour Party's leadership at the time.

At the meeting there was agreement that whilst a Marxist-Leninist organisation was vital, nevertheless, the basis did not yet exist for a political party. After long debate, the title for the organisation chosen was the Irish Workers' League, a slight variation of the name that was borne by the short-lived political organisation which "Big Jim" Larkin had founded in 1924, and which had been affiliated to the Third Communist International. Fourteen years later, having developed its organisation, contested elections, and published a programme titled "Ireland Her Own", its Fourth National Conference changed the name of the organisation to the Irish Workers' Party.

## Educational Classes

After the founding meeting in Baggot Street, the "long haul" began. One of its earliest activities were educational classes in Marxism. These filled a long-felt need. With the exception of "New Books", at 16a Pearse Street, Dublin, which had been maintained by Sean Nolan, sometimes in the most hostile of conditions, there was no way in which young or old people could acquaint themselves with Marxism, or purchase the writings of Connolly, Marx, Engels or Lenin.

The educational classes were an important form of activity. Being unable, because of both lack of funds and of the "witch-hunting" atmosphere, to obtain premises, recourse was had to the holding of the classes in members' houses in various parts of the city. The venue for the meetings of the Executive Committee of the "League" was in Trinity College in a bedroom provided by one of the student-members. Regularly, the most unlikely looking student types passed a suspicious porter at the main gate of the university to the meetings of the Executive.

An all-out press campaign was launched against the I.W.L. Lurid tales of what was allegedly happening behind "The Iron Curtain" were published and linked with the existence and activities of the League. The purpose was to incite people against the public activities of the I.W.L. From time to time, interrupters planted themselves at public meetings to try and achieve this. On Sunday, July 17th, 1949, a gang of toughs were organised in a billiard saloon in O'Connell Street, Dublin, from which they emerged for the purpose of an all-out and vicious attack on the platform. The offensive began with pre-arranged heckling to create a hostile atmosphere. Having considered that this had been achieved, the gang rushed the platform and used boots and belts on the speakers. Many of the I.W.L. members were badly beaten up. The Gardai just looked on.

The I.W.L. was determined that it would not allow itself to be beaten off the streets. It was its first real test as an organisation, and it met it. There were always hostile elements at them,

but the sheer audacity of the League coming back on the streets seemed to frustrate them into helplessness. The I.W.L. established for itself the right to speak. Not only freedom of speech for itself, but for all other organisations as well.

In 1950, almost after two decades of deliberate neglect by the Labour leadership, the I.W.L. restored the tradition of May Day as a day of international working-class solidarity and of the people's struggles. For nineteen years it held a regular May Day meeting at Abbey Street corner, Dublin, and in 1969 it invited other organisations to form a United May Day Committee, and since then there have been united demonstrations of Communist, Labour, Socialist and Republican organisations marching together behind the Tricolour and the Red Flag.

In the great unemployed demonstrations of 1953, Party members played a most prominent part, some of them being jailed for their involvement. Also, in the unemployed struggles of 1957, Party members were much to the fore, the outcome of which was the election to Dáil Eireann of an unemployed worker, Jack Murphy. It was the first time, ever, in these islands that a spokesman for the unemployed was elected to a national Parliament.

There was the experience in Ballyfermot, Dublin, when there was the clerical-reactionary attack against the local co-operative. The local gombeen men were behind the onslaught, but the front-men were the parish priest and his curates. They were used by the local "men of property" and allowed themselves to be so used in a disgraceful onslaught against an effort by the people to safeguard themselves against the local gombeens. (In more detail, the story of the Ballyfermot Co-op. is told in this publication.)

## Social Agitations

As a workers' organisation, the I.W.L. engaged itself in many social agitations. Within a few months of its formation it initiated resistance to an attempted eviction of a family in Fatima Mansions. Down the years its members were involved in other activities, such as the campaign against Griffith Barracks, Dublin, being used as a reception centre for homeless families; it exposed the horrible housing conditions in Marshalsea Barracks; it has been involved in every activity of the Dublin Housing Action Committee from the Sarah Place resistance and all other protest actions on housing in Dublin.

During the disgraceful sabotaging of the "Mother and Child" Scheme, Party members played a most prominent part in collecting thousands of signatures of protest.

It prominently participated in the protest campaign against the jailing of the members of the Irish Telephonist Association and the E.S.B. strikers. There has not been a protest campaign that did not have a leading spokesman of the Party supporting.

Reactionary attacks have been a constant feature of the life of the Party. Such attacks were helped by a constant spate of anti-Communist films, books, sermons and newspaper articles.

In the 1950's the editorship of the "Standard" newspaper passed into the hands of Peadar Ward. Encouraged by the atmosphere, and the success of Joe McCarthy in the U.S., he proceeded to turn that journal into a vicious weapon against the I.W.L.

Photos of members, their names, occupations, etc., were splashed in its front page with highly coloured scripts that were meant for incitement. Comrades suffered many forms of victimisation as a result. Jobs were lost (at a time when unemployment was rife) and others suffered ostracism.

"The Standard" was sold at the church doors each Sunday; it specialised in highly coloured "exposure" articles designed to whip up the highest possible emotive reaction amongst sincere religious people.

In 1951 when the Workers' League contested its first General Election, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. McQuaid, intervened. A letter from him was read at all the Masses which declared that anybody who voted for the I.W.L.'s candidate would be guilty of



**PROFESSOR JANOCZY and SEAN NOLAN**

at the 8th Congress (1962) of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party; Professor Janoczy worked at the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1948-51; he was elected a member of the Central Committee at the 8th Congress of the H.S.W.P.

mortal sin. This was well and truly exploited by the "Standard". The effect of the anti-I.W.L. campaign generated by the Archbishop's blasting from the altar was to prevent the I.W.L. from pursuing a normal election campaign.

Whilst fighting on the home front, the Party never forgot, despite all its domestic difficulties, its obligations to peoples who were fighting imperialism elsewhere.

At its public meetings, by leaflets and with pickets it demonstrated its internationalist solidarity.

This was so in 1950 when the British General Templer was carrying out a murderous punitive war against the guerrilla forces in Malaya. It was the I.W.L. who brought home the "black and tannery" that was being practised in Malaya by publishing the pictures of British forces displaying the decapitated heads of the captured guerrilla fighters. When an English-Malayan type of "Green Berets" film that slandered the anti-imperialist fighters was shown in Dublin, it was the I.W.L. which led the campaign against it, and placed a picket on the cinema.

It was only natural in view of its stand on the war in Korea, that Brendan Behan should present to the Party his poem, "An Irish Boy Dies in Korea".

Again, when the war was raging in Kenya, it was the Party which set out to expose the falseness of the atrocity stories about the "Mau-Mau" and showed clearly the colonialist role of the British troops.

## The Rosenbergs

It placed a picket on the U.S. Embassy when the Rosenbergs were judicially murdered. It participated in the march of solidarity with Cuba; demanded the release of Tony Ambatielos in 1951; and was in the very first picket that protested against U.S. aggression in Vietnam.

The proudest achievements of the Party can be said to be its publication of the "Irish Workers' Voice" and later "The Irish Socialist" which is still striving. It has been a rough task to keep it going; for a long time it was not possible to have it printed in Ireland because of reactionary pressures, but this situation has changed.

How difficult is the task of producing a regular printed paper can be seen in the inability, despite all its superior organisation and resources, of the Labour Party to do so.

From 1948 to 1962 the Irish Workers' League and, after 1962, the Irish Workers' Party was the name of the organisation in the Twenty-Six Counties and in the Six Counties it remained the

Communist Party since 1933. There were no disagreements or conflicts in regard to national policies, but the organisations in the two areas functioned separately. In the early 1960's a Joint Council of the two Parties was established. This body met often in both Dublin and Belfast. From the work of this Joint Council there were published programmes reflecting the policy positions of the two organisations. The programmes coincided in their essential aims. They were published under the titles: "Ireland's Path to Socialism" (the Six Counties) and "Ireland Her Own" (Twenty-Six Counties).

The Joint Council's outstanding achievement was the organisation in March 1970, in Belfast, of the Congress, representative of Communists in all parts of Ireland, which unanimously decided on the re-formation of the Communist Party of Ireland on an all-Ireland basis.

The Communist Party never retreated, and never will, no matter what the odds and the circumstances. It has always held high the flag of national independence, the people's rights, and of solidarity with all peoples who fight against imperialism.

It faces the future with a seasoning of 40 years, and with the same confidence and sincerity that it possessed when first it began "the long haul" in 1933. The years have taught it the need for a very much stronger Party and for the unity of the entire Left forces in Ireland, and to this twin objective the Party in the period ahead will apply itself.

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## THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION :

### Mr. De Valera's Attitude

MRS. M. K. CONNERY was a prominent fighter in the Irish Suffragette movement with Mrs. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and the others. In the 1930s she continued to be militant on both social and political questions. It is appropriate to quote her short article that she wrote for the "Irish Workers' Voice" on March 18, 1933 :

"I would like to let your readers into a little bit of secret history which will reveal Mr. de Valera's attitude to the upsurge of militant labour and republicanism in Ireland in 1918, when he was the rising star on the Irish horizon, and which is of interest now in view of what has happened in Leitrim. [A reference to the Gralton case.]

"A group of radicals representing labour, suffrage and republican opinion formed a committee to organise a mass meeting of Dublin citizens to celebrate the Bolshevik Revolution, and send greetings to the Russian leaders from Ireland. The present writer, as secretary of that committee, was deputed to wait on Mr. de Valera and invite him to speak on our platform, and through him to associate militant young Ireland with the rejoicings at the downfall of Tzarism.

### Interview

"We had a long interview at No. 6 Harcourt Street, Mr. Arthur Griffith being present. What was Mr. de Valera's reaction to the world-shaking event which had taken place in Russia? He refused point-blank to speak or appear on our platform. The reason he gave for refusing is particularly interesting just now. He said that the Irish Bishops and clergy were opposed to Socialism, and he could not afford to antagonise the priests, as he had just been chosen to lead the Irish people.

"I spoke of Connolly and his work for Ireland and his teaching. I pointed out that the Bolshevik leaders in 1917 had demanded the recognition of the freedom of Ireland from the British Empire at the Peace Conference.

"His reply to that was this : 'Lenin and Trotsky are just politicians like Lloyd George.' Thus Mr. de Valera in 1918 !

"It is no surprise to find him now the catspaw of reactionary clericalism and Capitalist-Imperialism. The churchmen wiped their boots on him in 1922, and cursed him with bell, book and candle, saying all the things against the Fianna Fáil leader and the I.R.A. that they now say against Communists, that they said at an early date about the militant suffragettes, that they said in 1913 about Larkinism, and after the Easter Rebellion, when they stigmatised the leaders of the Insurrection as 'corner boys and blackguards'.

"How has Mr. de Valera won his way back into church favour? By swearing a false oath of loyalty to the British King, and by accepting the treaty of surrender with all its implications, including the partition of Ireland on a religious basis."

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## PARTY BUILDING IN THE NORTH

A BRANCH of the R.W.G. was launched in Belfast shortly after the Dublin conference in March 1930. Among its first activities were the sale of the "Irish Workers' Voice" and agitation among the unemployed. Most of the members recruited were out of work and demands on behalf of the unemployed were the principal policy points. It was a weakness of the early Belfast R.W.G. that only a few of the members were involved in the trade unions and mass organisations. Unemployment was consistently high, as was the level of poverty among the Catholic working class section of the population; also, for them, there was discrimination in regard to political, social and human rights; in most essentials they were treated as second class citizens.

In the early years most of the members were recruited amongst the Falls Road Catholics and this was reflected in the areas of activities and the forms of appeal. The R.W.G. held meetings at the Custom House steps where, in competition with the many religious and radical groups, calls were made for support and membership. The line of argument was very much the class against class variety, with strong condemnation of the Unionist Government and its sectarianism and discrimination in regard to jobs, housing and other matters.

Catholics suffered most from these injustices, but it was always pointed out that the social evils of unemployment, bad housing and poor living conditions also affected large numbers of Protestant workers.

### Not Strong on Theory

However, the calls to the Protestant workers made few recruits. It made little impact to ask them to come into the R.W.G. and help build the Communist Party with the aim of overthrowing capitalism and setting up the United Socialist Republic of Ireland.

On top of the Orange Order propaganda against an all-Ireland Republic, Socialist or otherwise, there was the added barrier in reaching to the minds of the Protestant workers of the powerful world-wide anti-Communist propaganda campaign; this propaganda was also used to full advantage by clerical reaction and the vested interests to encourage active hostility among the Catholic workers against the Communists and all forms of social radicalism.

The R.W.G. was not well equipped with theory, and fulfilled largely the function of an agitational and socialist propaganda organisation.

To guide it politically, it had the Manifesto that was adopted at the 1930 Dublin Conference that launched the R.W.G. Its propositions were : Partition must go and with it the domination of British imperialism in both parts of the country. To make this possible there was need for a Communist Party.

As well, there were the editorial and other articles in the weekly "Irish Workers' Voice".

There was missing from the documents of the founding meetings of the R.W.G. (1930) and the re-formation of the C.P.I. (1933) an analysis and evaluation of the serious and deep divisions within the working class that had emerged out of the war for independence, and which had, in the North at any rate, been institutionalised by the power and influence of the Orange Order among the Protestant workers.

The "carnival of reaction" that Connolly warned about had come with partition. The Protestant workers were in bondage to the ideology of Orange Order imperialism. This position has survived to the present day. To win the Protestant workers away from the reactionary influence of the Orange Order is necessary to make possible the development of a forward political Labour movement in the Six Counties and worthwhile political advance for the Labour movement in the whole of Ireland.

How to bring this about requires a programme and the strategy and tactics to achieve it.

The Protestant workers still have strongly built-in suspicions and fears of any talk of a united Ireland, whether as a socialist republic or any other form. They regard it as "Fenian talk" that would lead to the end of the "link" with Britain which they still regard as the keystone in the arch of their and "Ulster's" economic security and well-being.

### Clerical Influence in South

What has happened in the South in most matters—economic, social, cultural, has not helped to wean them from their Orange imperialist loyalty. The warning that "Home Rule would be Rome Rule" has proved to have some foundation during the first forty years of State building. During the periods of the Cosgrave and de Valera Governments, the Catholic hierarchy was allowed unrestrained influence in most public matters and were allowed to bludgeon and batter into the ground every manifestation of political and social radicalism which they feared might threaten the survival of their feudal ideology.

In the '70s they are still battling, as shown in their resistance to progressive education reform, and are aided by the Fine Gael conservative Minister for Education, Richard Burke.

Belfast was badly hit by the 1929-31 world crisis of capitalism, unemployment and poverty conditions being very marked. The R.W.G. was in the leadership of the unemployed struggles. Tommy Geehan, a member of the R.W.G., was the leading figure in the unemployed movement. Geehan had T.B. and his health was never good; he was a popular and convincing speaker at unemployed meetings. In the 1932 unemployed struggles he was the outstanding and popular person.

Arthur Griffin must also be mentioned in connection with the social struggles in Belfast in the early 1930's. Arthur had been roughed-up on a number of occasions by the R.U.C. and he had served a number of jail sentences. In those days, poverty was very real and Arthur often went without meals. His health was seriously undermined by his jail experiences and his long spells of unemployment.

### Arthur Griffin Dies in Yalta

Arthur Griffin, a young man, came out of prison, a very sick person. He was sent to the Soviet Union by the R.W.G. to get medical treatment in the hope he would be restored to good health and come back to continue in the struggle of the Irish workers.

The Soviet doctors did their best, but by the time Arthur came into their care, his condition was beyond repair. He died at a rest home in Yalta and he is buried in that area of the first Workers' State.

Arthur Griffin was from the Falls Road. He was dedicated to the cause of working-class emancipation. A Communist, he

**ARTHUR GRIFFIN**  
Jailed many times in unemployed workers' struggles in Belfast.

**JIMMY MURPHY**  
Labour Alderman, Co.eraine, in the 1950's. He died in the early 1960's.



was of the same tough, reliable working-class mould like Jimmy Kater, the Protestant carpenter. Both were united in membership of the Communist movement—the movement that will in the end bring about the unity of the working people of the Northern area and for all time end the reactionary, divisive sectarian conflicts that serve only the interests of British imperialism and the propertied vested interests in Ireland.

In the 1930's the close-downs and lay-offs affected thousands of Protestant workers; for the Catholics, they had long known unemployment, poverty, discrimination and oppression.

The textile industry was particularly badly affected. Councillor Dawson Gordon, Secretary of the Textile Workers' Union, said there were some 10,000 textile workers who had lost their jobs.

With Betty Sinclair and other R.W.G. members engaged in the industry, there were militant activities and demands in a number of the mills, despite the lay-offs and bad economic situation. In the Jennymount mills, in Belfast, the R.W.G. members published the "Jennymount Worker". It highlighted the grievances and demands of the workers and set an example to workers in like employment at the time.

Soon after its formation, the R.W.G. in Belfast was involved in elections for the Board of Guardians in June 1930. The R.W.G. candidate was Tommy Geehan, for the Falls Ward. He was secretary of the Belfast groups and also prominently identified with the Irish National Unemployed Movement. Phil Wilson and William Boyd were nominated by the Unemployed Movement for the Cromac Ward.

Phil Wilson was a long-time fighter in the Belfast working class movement and was in earlier years a member of the Board of Guardians. He was involved with James Connolly during the years the latter worked in Belfast; Wilson joined the R.W.G. on its formation.

In the Falls Ward, Tommy Geehan scored 632 votes and in Cromac Wilson and Boyd had a total of 551 votes. The Unionists won with big votes.

The workers in the Jennymount textile mill resisted the bosses' demand for a 10 per cent wage cut. It was their way of making the workers pay for falling profits. The workers were not having it. The leadership of the Communists inspired them to fight; only a small number of the workers were organised in a trade union.

The Special Powers Act, which from the time of its enactment was regularly used against Republicans, had provisions wide enough that it could be used against trade unionists or any

section of the people. The first example of its use against a Communist was in 1930, when the chairman of the R.W.G., Loftie Johnston, was put on trial for a speech he made at a public meeting, when he said that force might have to be used to end the rule of Ulster Unionist reaction. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment.

The work of developing support for the young Communist movement was attempted in areas outside of Belfast. A series of meetings were organised in Dunloye, Articlare, Stranocum, Ballymoney, Ballymena and in Coleraine, all to be part of the preparation for a conference of Antrim and Derry supporters in June 1930. The "live wire" in these efforts was Jimmy Murphy, of Coleraine. Down the years, he was a staunch and loyal worker for the cause of socialism; he used every occasion to explain and support the Soviet Union. He was for a number of years an Alderman on the Labour ticket on Coleraine District Council. In the early 1930's an unemployed agitation was developed in Derry. Tom Donnelly was its spokesman. He was arrested under the Special Powers Act, jailed for a month and then served with a deportation order. That was democracy in Northern Ireland, aided and abetted by the British Parliament.

## Orange, Green Reaction

The efforts to develop the Communist movement in the areas outside Belfast met with organised opposition; in the Twenty-Six Counties, the opposition was organised by Catholic clerical reaction; in the Six Counties, Orange and Catholic reaction combined to inflame hostile crowds to attack speakers and break up meetings. In the solidly Protestant areas of Coleraine and Ballymoney, it was the Orange associations that rallied to attack the Communist meetings. Orange and Green reaction had a common aim, to crush any effort to organise the working people under Communist leadership.

In the early 1930s, the R.W.G. in Belfast and elsewhere was in the forefront of the workers' struggles against the "economy" cuts of the Ramsay MacDonald-Baldwin Coalition Government at Westminster. These cuts took the form of reductions in the "dole" allowances of the 80,000 workers in the Six Counties who had been thrown on the industrial scrapheap.

The Orange drummers were always around to be used against the unemployed when they demonstrated and protested against their miserable allowances. The R.U.C. were also always on call and used their batons on many an occasion. In Ballymoney, in September 1931, a meeting was about to start, with Jimmy Murphy opening, when the drummers started the interruptions; the R.U.C. wanted the meeting abandoned but Murphy and the other speaker, Bob Stewart, would not agree and pointed to the small number of drummers who were causing the trouble and called for the R.U.C. to deal with them. At that point, the R.U.C. acted, but not against the drummers; they dragged Jimmy and Bob off to the local police station; the R.U.C. always acted against the workers; for them, democratic and civil rights were not among the priorities.

## Shipyard Badly Hit

In the crisis years of the early 1930s which led to the great unemployed battles of October 1932, unemployment had become so bad it was no longer the position that it was mostly a problem for the Falls Road people. The shipyards were badly hit and that was an indication that a big section of the Protestant workers were also on the breadline. Their common suffering led to the great unity at the barricades in the October struggles.

In 1930 eleven vessels were built in the Belfast shipyards with a tonnage of 135,800; in 1931, only four vessels were built with a tonnage of 56,130 and in 1932 all the slips were empty. Belfast's economy was in real crisis.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the October 1932 unemployed struggles, in October 1933, a contingent of unemployed from Dublin marched to the North to join their Belfast brothers in celebration of the great event and to pay tribute to those who had fallen or had been injured in the clashes. The R.U.C. put on a massive display of strength at the Border, with machine guns and other weapons to stop the Dublin marchers from going any further.

In the following year, 1934, the Stormont Government put a ban on all meetings organised to commemorate the 1932 struggles.

In Belfast, the C.P.I. was regularly involved with public meetings and agitations against the Craigavon Government and the policies which resulted in big unemployment, low social welfare, bad housing conditions and the ever-present discrimination and use of the Special Powers Act against political opponents.

The sectarian policies and practices of the Stormont Government were successful in keeping the working people divided and holding on to big support among the Protestant workers for their Unionist Party. The social democratic Northern Ireland Labour Party, despite its declaration of acceptance of Partition and conforming to imperialist interests, made little headway in winning support among the Protestant workers.

The Nationalist Party was the main Opposition in Stormont. This was an arrangement that suited the Unionists. Sectarian based, the Nationalist Party was a useless political instrument with which to fight the Unionist monolith. It was not until the rise of the Civil Rights struggles in 1968 that the Unionist monolith came up against a serious struggle, with consequences which today see the Unionist Party split three ways. Members of the C.P.I., Betty Sinclair and others, were prominently identified with the initiation of the early Civil Rights struggles and to the present day C.P.I. members are actively involved; at all levels of the trade union movement and the other mass organisations of the people, C.P.I. members give leadership in rallying support for the struggle for civil rights and basic changes in Northern Ireland.

## Tommy Geehan Jailed

In December 1934, the unemployed of Belfast were demonstrating against the Craigavon Government and its policies which denied them work or decent scales of welfare. Women and children joined with the men in the demonstration and from Dublin came Dan Layde, the leader of the Unemployed Workers' Movement. The R.U.C. attempted to arrest him but were foiled and he got overnight hospitality in a worker's home in the "loyalist" area of Belfast.

The unemployed leader, Tommy Geehan, was in prison at the time under sentence, having been dragged from a meeting he was addressing. The Labour Defence League carried through a public campaign against his jailing; the public support won for the campaign had some effect; on appeal, a fine of £10 was substituted for the jail sentence.

Towards the end of 1934, the C.P.I. pointed out that Lord Craigavon and his Government was more and more becoming a dictatorship of a privileged ascendancy. He was pushing forward measures of a fascist character and doing everything to foment sectarian strife. His efforts succeeded with the sectarian rioting in 1935, in which a number of people were killed and many working people had to leave their homes.

It was in the period leading up to yet another tragic occasion in the history of the Six Counties that Craigavon made his infamous sectarian statement: "Ours is a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people."

The C.P.I. pointed out: "This is a plain way of saying that for 34 per cent of the Six County population, the Government does not exist except to tax, provoke and oppress. In the main this population consists of workers and farmers, and Craigavon's statement is an open declaration of war on the working masses."

Preceding the July 12 celebrations in 1935 and the outbreak of sectarian clashes, there had been the visit of the Duke of Gloucester in connection with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of George V's presence on the British throne. The Republican movement and the C.P.I. held protest meetings in Dublin; there were clashes with the police. In Belfast, the Party public meetings were attacked by gangs; the Jubilee celebrations built up the climate that was to burst out in the pogrom of a couple of months later.

The C.P.I., despite the great difficulties at the time and the continued attacks of the Orange gangs, continued to hold public meetings. The Party made the call: "Have nothing to do with Craigavon's game. Stop all and any talk of reprisals. Stand firm as workers, fighting as workers against the Northern Government and its policy of wage cuts, and unemployment benefit cuts.

"Unity can defeat the pogrom. All together for a big struggle for better conditions and a powerful unity of the workers. Close the ranks against the splitters. Stand fast!"

The Party's statement was an effort to appeal primarily to the working class instincts of the Protestant workers. It did not succeed. The Orange Order was still able to straitjacket their minds and actions to serve the sectarian interests of the business classes.

The organisation styling itself the Ulster Protestant League was the driving force for the pogrom in 1935; the R.U.C. allowed free rein to the U.P.L. hoodlums to attack C.P. and Labour meetings. The Minister of Home Affairs (Sir Dawson Bates) received a deputation from the U.P.L. when they demanded that the Communist Party be banned. The Minister assured them the proposal would have his "sympathetic consideration".

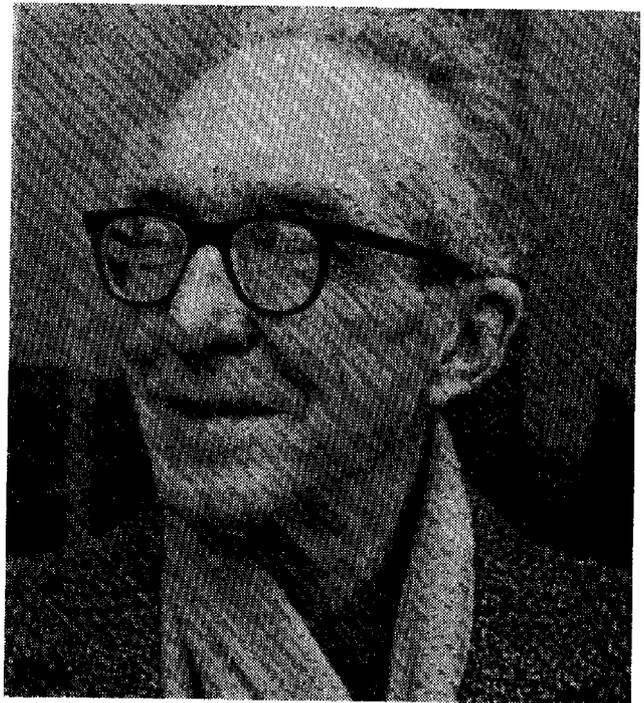
Following the 1935 pogrom, Sir Basil Brooke (later Lord Brookeborough) said: "I have purposely avoided using the words 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' as labels to the two sides, as they gave a false view to the situation. Our opponents have tried to suggest that the riots were caused by religious animosity on our side. It is a political and not a religious quarrel."

## 1935 Pogrom: N.C.C.L. Inquiry

Arising from the 1935 pogrom, the National Council of Civil Liberties in London held an inquiry into the anti-democratic policies and practices of the Northern Government, with particular reference to the Special Powers Act. The chairman of the inquiry was Mr. Aylmer Digby, K.C.; others taking part in the inquiry were Dr. Ivor Jennings, Reader in Constitutional Law at the London University; Miss Margery Fry, formerly Principal of Somerville College, Oxford; Mr. E. L. Mallalieu and Mr. William McKeag, both Liberal M.P.s. The chairman of the Belfast Committee was Mr. Sam Porter, K.C.

The findings of the inquiry when published were only a temporary embarrassment for the Northern Government, showing how little regard the Unionist overlords had for democracy of the British kind or any other blend for that matter. Serious though the inquiry's indictment was, the Unionist diehards did not change their ways and the British Government continued the policy of leaving matters involving law, courts, justice, prisons, etc., to be handled, without interference, by the Belfast Government. It took the mass demonstrations of the civil rights movement of 1968-69 to make London act and think differently.

Short Brothers opened the aircraft factory in Belfast in 1937 and gave much needed employment. Within a week of its opening, however, a fight was on for higher wages. The strike committee was led by a Party member. Betty Sinclair typed the notices and statements for the committee. Later in the war years, it was alleged by the Shorts' bosses that because of the high wages won by strike action, the aircraft from Shorts cost more than those built in Britain. The British Government responded by taking a majority shareholding in the company, which it still holds.



**TOM WATTERS**

Foundation member, C.P.I., 1933.

The Party, in the war years, in Belfast and other areas of the Six Counties developed many branches, but its main strength was confined to Belfast and largely based on the shipyards, the aircraft and other factories. The Party was also greatly involved in social struggles, and was to the fore in organising Parents' Associations and so forth. Mr. Eddie Menzies and Sadie Menzies were prominent in these social struggles, as were a great team of women Party members, to mention but a few, Betty Sinclair, Mrs. Sloan, Mrs. McInerney, Mrs. Early, Mrs. Celia Prendergast.

Jimmy Graham, Andy Barr and Hughie Moore as young men, new to the Party, were very active in their workplaces in support of Party policy and activity. Michael McInerney, a Party functionary at the time, was untiring in his efforts to bring success to the public work of the Party. Great public rallies, indoor and outdoor, were held in Belfast by the Party during the war years, at which Harry Pollitt, J. R. Campbell, Bill Rust, Bob Stewart and other prominents of the British Communist Party were the speakers, along with Seán Murray, W. H. McCullough, Betty Sinclair, Jim Prendergast and others.

## Aircraft Industry

The opening of the aircraft factory in Belfast was a new industry which was welcomed in a city of staggering unemployment. Some skilled Party members secured employment there and, without doubt, made a sizeable contribution to the building up of shop-floor organisation. A Party member became the first convenor.

The Belfast Trades Council, from the years before the war, was transformed from a rather hum-drum body, dominated by right-wing trade union officials, into a lively, active centre of activity on a wide variety of problems—particularly unemployment, on which there was close collaboration with the Unemployed Movement, led by Tommy Geehan. The work of the Party members on the Trades Council, particularly of Comrades W. H. McCullough, Jimmy Kater, Lofty Johnston and Betty Sinclair, played a large part in the subsequent development of the Council as an influential body in the affairs of Belfast and of Northern Ireland.

The Soviet-German Pact caused confusion for a time. For some,

it was not seen that the Pact gave the Soviet Union the only alternative to an isolated confrontation with Hitler Germany, which had been the dream and the aim of the British and French imperialists during the years since the emergence of Fascist Germany and which was revealed for all to see during the unsuccessful negotiations for a mutual assistance pact between Britain and the Soviet Union during 1938 and 1939.

Despite the difficulties created by this development, the Party membership in industry and in the unions held firm against the pressures of propaganda from the press, radio and right-wing Labour attitudes generally.

## Some Confusion

When the war between Germany and her allies on the one hand and Britain, France and their allies on the other was proclaimed in September 1939, the Party centre issued a manifesto which declared against the involvement of any part of Ireland in the war and described the war as a conflict between imperialist interests. The manifesto supported the neutrality position of the de Valera Government and called for the withdrawal of the Six Counties from being involved in Britain's war.

As might be expected there was some confusion among Party members in the North and it took much discussion to convince some members of the correctness of the Party's political position.

The Republican Movement which had been politically dormant for some years opened up a campaign of bombings in England. A consequence of this campaign was that two men—Barnes and McCormick—were arrested and put on trial in connection with a bombing incident in Coventry in which some people were killed. Both men at the end of their trial were sentenced to be hanged. The two men, during their trial, proclaimed their innocence, as did the Republican Movement. A campaign to save the men from the gallows was developed in the Falls Road area. The Party and the Socialist Party were invited to support the campaign. Steps were taken to organise a demonstration in Belfast's Smithfield Square. The meeting was banned but thousands turned up just the same. The discipline was very effective in avoiding a confrontation with the police who had appeared in large numbers, supported by armoured cars. The crowd was formed up for a march up the Falls Road which turned into Peel Street where an attempt was made to deliver a short address. A baton charge of great ferocity was made, the people retreating into the maze of side streets in the area, and pitched battles took place.

Subsequent to this event, an article was published in the Party paper presenting the Republican attitude to the war. The Minister for Home Affairs used this for an attack on the Party and its leadership. W. H. McCullough and Betty Sinclair were taken into custody and charged with distributing seditious literature. McCullough was involved as the nominal owner of "International Bookshop" and Betty Sinclair as the person in charge of the shop and distributor (or seller) of the paper. Outrageous sentences of two years were imposed on McCullough and one year on Betty Sinclair by the Magistrate, Mr. McCoy. The counsel for the accused described the sentences as "out-Hitlering Hitler".

## Sentences Appeal Wins

An appeal committee was formed, embracing a wide circle of people, mostly outside of the Party.

A fund was opened and collections in factories and private donations soon mounted to a figure more than adequate to cover the legal costs of an appeal. On the day of the hearing of the appeal many workers and sympathisers took the day off from work to be present in court. The appeal was successful. The sentence on

McCullough was reduced to four months and on Betty Sinclair to two months.

The court's decision was a blow to the political hack of a magistrate (McCoy) and it was a cheering result to all those who had helped in the appeal campaign. Soon afterwards there was the further outcome of the appeal decision with the release of Val Morahan. He had been sentenced to one year's imprisonment for a speech at an unemployed meeting.

The Party paper, "Irish Workers' Weekly", continued to be distributed widely. Leaflets were issued and meetings and lectures were held to explain the Party position to the people. The "Irish Workers' Weekly" was banned by the Minister for Home Affairs. This difficulty was circumvented by changing the name of the paper circulating in the Six Counties to "Red Hand". It continued to be printed in Dublin by the Party and carried a Belfast address as the centre for its publication.

## Second Front Campaign

The Party threw itself into the effort to mobilise the broadest possible campaign to help defeat Hitler Germany by all kinds of means. Mass meetings and demonstrations were organised in Belfast and other towns in the North. Party membership increased greatly, especially in the factories and workplaces. Committees were formed in the shipyards and factories to encourage the increased production of ships and planes and all other requirements of the war. Thousands attended Party meetings in Belfast's halls to listen to speakers such as Harry Pollitt, Bill Rust, Willie Gallacher, J. R. Campbell and others in the campaign for the opening of a Second Front to bring early defeat to Hitler.

The opening of a Second Front became the central feature of all the Party work during 1942 and up to the time of the landings in France in 1944. This central political aim guided Party activity inside and outside the factories and all work-places. Any action which tended to retard or hold up the realisation of this aim was opposed by the Party. Industrial action for the solution of grievances was one of these and the Party was soon faced with just this kind of a problem.

In one of the aircraft factories which had not long been established in the suburbs of Belfast, the Convener and Sub-Convener were sacked over a dispute about Sunday working. The Stewards had contended rightly that in the interests of production all workers should be employed and not only a selected number, which was the decision of the Management. The sacking of the Stewards was a stupid and provocative act and responsible for a mass walk-out. Very soon the strike was supported by the workers from practically all of the other factories and also by Shipyard workers.

The stubbornness of the Management in not settling the original dispute, in the first place, over the two Stewards, were now confronted not only with the demand for the reinstatement of the Stewards but with a demand from the entire engineering workers in Belfast for an increase in wages. Thus the situation became more complicated. But worse was to follow. Five of the leadership of the overall strike committee were arrested and sentenced to a month's imprisonment. This hamfisted action by the Government would seem unbelievable but here must be taken into account the character and history of the Northern Ireland Unionist Government over the years. With the arrests, no hope of a return to work was possible before the release of the prisoners. This became the main issue. Only on their release could negotiations be opened on the other issues. Subsequently, the intervention of the A.E.U. Executive brought about a return to work.

The Party leadership was faced with a difficult problem during this dispute. Some members who were shop stewards were only a short time in the Party and were faced with an agonising dilemma, with the Party policy of calling for a return to work and the pressures of their workmates in the factory to stay out. Party members were regarded as defecting from the traditional standpoint of supporting the workers at all times against the bosses.

The anger generated by the action of the Aircraft Management and the Unionist Government blurred the vision of the majority of the workers and Stewards and consequently the Party attitude to the dispute was more than a little unpopular. Those members in the factories who made attempts to get a return to work were unsuccessful. Towards the end of the dispute Party members were receiving more attention and support.

On the return to work the Party influence soon extended and wide recruitment took place among the aircraft and other sections of workers.

During the war, in 1944, a Party policy document was published in pamphlet form. It was called "For a Progressive Ulster" and stated: "The greatest obstacle to the unity of the people and the full mobilisation of the resources of Northern Ireland is the Unionist Party." It pointed out that under Unionist rule, the area had become known as a "distressed area". The policy statement was the first comprehensive plan put forward by the Party and was to be the basis for the Party's election programme in the 1945 Stormont elections, in which three candidates were nominated. The policy document covered proposals on shipbuilding, engineering, the aircraft and linen industries; on agriculture it called for the abolition of tied cottages among other proposals; it covered transport, building, housing, health services, electrification and tourism; the section on social insurance welcomed the Beveridge Plan as "a great social advance".

The elections for the Stormont Parliament were held a month after the end of the Second World War, on June 14, 1945, and before the British General Election, which resulted in the massive rejection of Churchill and the Tories and the return of the Labour Party with a big majority.

### Stormont Elections

In the Stormont elections, W. H. McCullough was the Communist candidate in the Bloomfield constituency of East Belfast. He got the impressive vote of 5,802, but the Unionist, Lord Glentoran, won with 9,995.

In the Cromac constituency, Betty Sinclair scored 4,130 votes and the Unionist, J. M. Sinclair, won with 8,407.

Outside of the Belfast area, in the West Down constituency, Syd Maitland was the candidate. He scored 2,524 votes and the Unionist, John E. Bailey, won with 8,197.

In the course of the campaign, with Maitland addressing a meeting, there was an attack from an Orange mob in Banbridge. The candidate had to take refuge in a Party member's house: he was a coalman. He put Maitland into one of his coal sacks and took him to safety in his coal cart. It was no small achievement to chalk up some 2,500 votes for a Communist candidate in that constituency.

The Party's achievement in winning a large membership in the war years was not maintained; a big decline was experienced in the early post-war years; a membership of 1,000 went down to a few hundred; unemployment rose and emigration took its toll of Party members.

In November 1947, Betty Sinclair contested and won the post of Secretary of the Belfast Trades Council, a position she still holds in 1974. It can be said that in the years she has been Secretary, the Council has exercised an important influence in the life of the Belfast Labour movement. It has not been for the want of her trying, that it has not been more successful in its efforts to be the instrument to bring together the maximum unity of the working people of the two communities.

The Party paper, "Unity," which had been published as a weekly during most of the war years, was suspended for financial reasons; it was replaced by a weekly Party Bulletin.

### 1949 "Ireland Act"

In 1949 there was the so-called Border election, arising from the Dublin Coalition's declaration of the Republic of Ireland, and the

reaction of the British Labour Government to pass the "Ireland Act", which copper-fastened the legal position of the Ulster Unionists to hold their grip on the Six Counties until a Parliamentary majority decided otherwise, a most unlikely event. The Unionists scored easily and the Dublin based Irish Labour Party helped by its intervention in the Nationalist areas to challenge the Nationalist Party and the Partitionist-based N.I.L.P. The Unionists could not help scoring from such divisions among its opponents. To add to the confusion and the madness of the Dublin Coalition's position, there were the church-gate collections, which only emphasised the sectarian approach to the Northern problem.

In the 1950s the Party in Belfast was to the fore in winning support for the Stockholm world peace appeal. A conference of supporters for the appeal was called by the Belfast Trades Council. The Northern Ireland Labour Party, echoing the position of British right-wing social democracy, openly opposed the Peace conference, describing it as a Communist plot. Andy Barr was a delegate to the World Peace Congress, held in Poland. This gathering was originally planned to be held in Birmingham. Before it was due to assemble, the British Labour Government, responding to the pressures of the Senator Joe McCarthy American imperialist cold war warriors, put a ban on the conference being held in Britain. Socialist Poland opened its frontiers to the fighters for world peace and at very short notice the conference was transferred to that country in November.

In the British General Election of November 1950, the Party decided to work for and support the candidature of Jack Beattie, contesting West Belfast on the Labour ticket. The Unionists tried hard to win but failed. Beattie got the seat by a small margin of votes.

In the May 1951 contests for the Belfast Corporation, the Party entered two candidates in the Pottinger Ward. Jimmy Graham got 715 votes and Eddie Menzies 482. The two winning Unionists had 4,487 and 4,273 votes.

In spite of the appalling housing shortage in 1956 and the terrible slums on the Shore Road, to mention only one area, the Stormont Unionists sought to push through a measure for further rent increases. Many houses in the Comber area were without flush toilets or running water.

The Belfast Trades Council set up a Tenants' Defence Association to fight the Stormont Rent Bill. The outcome of the struggle was successful, the Bill was changed to allow increases but only if these could be justified by repairs actually carried out; also, the right was won for tenants to pass on a tenancy to someone other than a spouse after his/her death. This was not to the liking or interest of the private landlord.

### Unity for Civil Rights

Over many years the Communist Party in the North consistently campaigned support for the policy points which were to be highlighted around the mass movement for civil rights that emerged in 1968. At all times, the Communist Party urged the need for unity of all the forces that were opposed to the Ulster Unionist monolith. In the days preceding the 1962 General Election for Stormont, it was pointed out in the Party paper, "Unity" (Jan. 20, 1962): "Each candidate elected as Labour, Nationalist, Independent, etc., represents thousands of people hostile to the policies of the Unionist Government. However, at present there is no coordinating link between these forces, but the basis for unity is here, as each represents a force hostile to the Stormont Tories . . . the working class, the small farmers, the small businessmen and the intellectuals."

Lord Brookeborough ousted the "old guard" Unionist, J. M. Andrews, as Prime Minister in the early 1940s. The higher echelons of the Unionist Party had come to regard the Andrews administration as clearly inept in coping with domestic problems in the war situation. A reflection of the disquiet among Unionist

supporters against the Andrews Government was shown by a defeat of Unionist candidates in Willowfield (Belfast) and in North Down.

## Lord Brookeborough

From the earliest days of his political career, from his infamous boast that he would employ no Catholic on his estate, Brookeborough pursued a calculated sectarian policy. He used the Special Powers Act and internment without trial, which appealed to the more backward elements of the population; he only retreated from the harsher application of the Act when forced to do so by a disgusted public opinion in the North and in Britain. His persistent refusal to recognise the Northern Ireland Committee of the all-Ireland Irish Congress of Trade Unions was consistent with his intense dislike of the workers being organised outside of the Orange Order. Brookeborough always showed reluctance to have an enterprise started in the North that would conflict with monopoly interest in Britain. That attitude would explain his failure to establish a dry dock, a steel mill or a sugar beet industry. During his retirement and until his death in 1973, Brookeborough remained fiercely hostile to the aspirations of Irish democracy and unity; for the North, his recipe was, Unionist rule along the old sectarian lines.

The Party in Belfast, if not elsewhere in the Six Counties, was developing new activities and winning members. There was a re-appearance of the Party's weekly paper, "Unity," as a duplicated eight-pager. Later, with the acquirement of a litho-offset machine, the paper was increased in size and was in printed form. As well as a few area branches, the Party had organisation in important work centres.

The Party in the North, as in the South, was to the fore in campaigning against the Common Market. Meetings were held at which speakers from Dublin spoke. With Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael being for the Common Market, most of the anti-Unionist forces were quiet about the matter and with Ted Heath's Tories, the Liberals and Labour for joining the N.I.L.P. and the trade union movement were not involved in the anti-E.E.C. campaign. In later years, Ian Paisley expressed his doubts about the Common Market. For his peculiar perverse reasons, he fears there would be enough "Romish" influences in the E.E.C. to support the Dublin "aim" to force Ulster into an all-Ireland State.

In December 1962 there was a by-election for Stormont in the Cromac constituency, the N.I.L.P. candidate, Cecil Allen, suffering a bad defeat. The Party paper, "Unity," pointed out that Mr. Allen's defeat was because of the policy of his party, which was trying to walk a tight-rope on the Constitutional position. What defeated Mr. Allen and would continue to defeat Northern Ireland Labour where they contested an area with a mixed population, was their policy which lacks any indication that they intend now or in the future to attack the primary cause of the economic and political problems in Northern Ireland.

Between 1956 and 1962 there had been the cross-Border raids organised by the I.R.A., in the course of which some I.R.A. men and R.U.C. constables were killed and wounded, as well, a number of Republicans were captured and got long terms of imprisonment. Both the C.P. in the North and the Irish Workers' Party expressed disagreement with the forms of struggle used by the I.R.A., stating that they would not bring nearer the aim of a united Ireland, but would, in fact, harden the support for the Ulster Unionist overlords. The I.R.A. leadership in Dublin called off the campaign in 1962 and in time it was acknowledged that the 1956-62 campaign had not been helpful in promoting success for the national aim.

The Coalition Government of Fine Gael, Labour and the Seán MacBride republicans, used the Offences Against the State Act to re-open the Curragh internment camp and jail a number of I.R.A. republicans. When the Coalition lost the March 1957

General Election and de Valera's Fianna Fáil came back, internment continued until after the I.R.A. cross-Border campaign ended in 1962.

In January 1963, on the initiative of the Communist Party, a majority vote was won among the delegates to the Belfast Trades Council in support of a call for an amnesty for all republican prisoners held in Northern jails. It was no small achievement to win a majority for the proposal, bearing in mind that the I.R.A. campaign had created much hostility among Protestant workers and a majority of delegates to the Council were from the Protestant divide.

Some two months later, in March, some of the republican prisoners were released from Crumlin Road. This step was welcomed in "Unity", the Party paper, and was hailed among all sections of the Nationalist population. It was the hope of the Communist Party that the results following the releases "can only be good ones".

A man who has played many roles in the affairs of Northern Ireland, Brian Faulkner, was the Minister for Home Affairs during the 1956-62 I.R.A. campaign. He was every bit as harsh and vindictive during his period in Home Affairs against all opponents of Ulster Unionism, as was William Craig in later years against the movement for civil rights.

## 1922 Constabulary Act

In early 1963, Brian Faulkner's concern was to get a Bill through Stormont giving him and the Government a blank cheque to increase the membership of the police force to any number they decided on. The Constabulary Act of 1922 limited its numbers to 7,000 persons, including all ranks. The Communist Party opposed the Stormont Bill and declared: "Considering that the police of Northern Ireland are an armed force, this will mean an increase in the power of the State. . . . To give such 'a blank cheque' to a person like Faulkner is asking for trouble."

Not all the republican prisoners were released. It was not in the nature of the Unionists to be either just or generous to political opponents, least of all to republicans. A Political Prisoners' Release Committee was established; some months later, when there had been a shuffle in Cabinet posts with Captain O'Neill becoming Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner went to the Commerce Ministry and William Craig took over Home Affairs. The Prisoners Committee requested permission to hold a march to Belfast city centre, to be followed by a meeting. This was turned down and the Committee was told they could hold the meeting in what the police authorities termed a Nationalist area. Mr. Craig was not long in office until he showed that the Croppies would be kept in their ghettos.

Later, in November, Mr. Craig pressed on with his sectarian rule, when he banned a public meeting of the Prisoners Committee, announced for Lurgan. To ensure that his decree was observed, there was a massive display of R.U.C. power on that day.

## N. I. L. P.

On the Northern Ireland Labour Party annual conference of 1963, the Party paper, "Unity," put an opinion which holds good to the present time in 1974: "There are some inside the Labour Party who think they can beat the Unionists at their own game. They are more loyal than the Unionists. They are prepared to do anything to uphold the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. They allow the Unionists to push them into a corner on the big issues, and instead of increasing their attack on the Unionists, they turn and attack those in the movement who want to further progressive policies." ("Unity," April 27, 1963.)

In the great shake-up that overtook Northern Ireland in the years since 1968, the N.I.L.P. leadership has learned nothing, if anything it is more divorced that ever from the realities of the

situation in that area of the country. It has not shifted from its old position that Labour's future for Northern Ireland is to compete with the Unionists to win support among the Protestant workers for policies based on loyalism and the link with Britain, which means support for Britain's imperialist relations with Ireland as a whole and no struggle against the monopolies.

The October 5, 1968, civil rights march in Derry and the brutality of the R.U.C. on the occasion focussed world-wide attention on the new, militant, fighting spirit that was emerging among the people in support of demands for civil rights and simple justice from the Unionist oligarchy.

A number of Derry militants were inspired by an earlier march in Dungannon, which was organised by the Belfast-based Civil Rights movement, and they asked the Belfast organisation to sponsor a march in Derry.

## Dungannon Women's Protest

In many forms, in earlier years, but on a smaller scale, there had been demands and actions in support of civil rights. For example, some five years earlier, in May 1963, there was a demonstration by some 30 young married women at the Dungannon Urban Council. They were protesting against religious discrimination in the allocation of council houses. The posters they carried underlined the results of the segregationist policies of Unionist-controlled councils: "Racial Discrimination in Alabama hits Dungannon"; "If our Religion is against us—ship us to Little Rock".

The Party paper, "Unity," supporting the Dungannon women's protest, pointed out: "The Unionist Party, the Government and local councils have discriminated against the Catholic population in Northern Ireland since Partition. Through this policy they have curtailed basic democratic rights and stultified progress. The organised Labour movement must give its full support to all groups of people who fight for democratic rights."

Statistics published in May showed that in the ten years 1952-62 manufacturing industry in Northern Ireland increased by 50 per cent, and in the U.K. it rose only by 40 per cent. In the same period, output per worker increased by as much as 40 per cent in Northern Ireland, and in Britain the increase was half, at 20 per cent. Despite the higher contribution of the Northern workers, their wages and living standards were well below those obtaining in the U.K. Down the years, this position has remained. So much for the equality of "the link".

At the time, the Northern Committee of the I.C.T.U. was pressing for recognition by the Stormont Government, and a number of unions were pressing claims to improve their members' wages and living standards. The Minister for Home Affairs, William Craig, in crude terms expressed his hatred for workers and their unions, and in a speech he told the unions to "jump off a high place". It is unfortunately a measure of the political backwardness that has to be overcome that the same William Craig, in February 1974, having failed to get a Unionist nomination for the Armagh constituency, was able to transfer to the heavily Protestant working class constituency of East Belfast and win a seat in the Westminster Parliament. He got 27,000 votes, with the Labour vote dropping from 18,000 to 8,000.

## Memorial Stone to Sean Murray

1963 was a year of significant anniversaries. It was the bicentenary of the birth of Wolfe Tone, the founder of the United Irishmen and father of Irish Republicanism. It marked the 50th year since the great struggles started by Jim Larkin in Belfast to organise the unskilled, which spread to Cork and found its highest expression in the Dublin lock-out of 1913. Also, it marked the 30th anniversary of the re-formation of the Communist Party of Ireland, on June 3 and 4, 1933, and the second

anniversary of the death of Seán Murray, the Party's General Secretary.

The occasion of the anniversaries was marked by gatherings in Belfast of members of the Belfast Party and of the Irish Workers' Party from Dublin. A memorial stone over Seán Murray's grave in Dundonald was unveiled by William Gallacher, former Communist M.P. for West Fife. Later in the day, a meeting was held to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the re-formation of the Party. W. H. McCullough gave a resume of the work and struggles of the Party over the years and outlined the programmes, which had resulted from the work of the Joint Council, which had been initiated by Seán Murray. Those were "Ireland's Path to Socialism" and "Ireland Her Own". They remain the basic documents of the united Irish Communist movement.

There was a long disruption in relations between the Communists of Ireland and the International movement since the Seventh (and last Congress of the Communist International in 1935), when Seán Murray attended as the delegate of the C.P.I. It was not resumed until November 1957, when the 40th anniversary of the October 1917 Revolution was celebrated in Moscow. Delegates were invited from Ireland. From Belfast went Andrew Barr for the C.P.N.I. and from Dublin, Seán Nolan for the Irish Workers' League. During their stay in Moscow, the first international meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties since 1935 was held. Some 57 parties participated; it was the forerunner of the more significant and more widely-attended meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, held in November and December 1960, when some 81 parties attended. Seán Murray and Hugh Moore attended from Belfast and from Dublin there were Seán Nolan and George Jeffares.

## Sean Murray's Moscow Speech

At this meeting the deep differences which had developed between the Soviet and Chinese Parties surfaced fully and became issues between all the parties at the conference. The delegates from our two parties had an agreed position and this was put forward in the statement made to the conference by Seán Murray on behalf of the C.P.N.I. and the Irish Workers' League. His statement was as follows:

"I speak on behalf of the Irish Workers' League, which functions in the Republic of Ireland, and on behalf of the Communist Party, which functions in Northern Ireland.

"The existence of our two Marxist organisations arises from the partition of Ireland into two States.

"Guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism, we elect to make a joint statement on the important questions with which this great gathering of Communists from all parts of the world is concerned.

"We welcome the Draft Declaration\*. In our view it is fundamentally a sound, correct estimate of the situation, based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

"It gives a correct characterisation of the epoch in which we live. The years since the Moscow Declaration—1957/1960—have been a period of rapid advance of the world socialist system—economically, technically and in political and moral influence. It has also been a period of corresponding weakening of imperialism and capitalism, marked by an unheard-of upsurge of the national liberation movements, and increasing sharpness of class battles in many important capitalist countries.

"This is the reality of the world to-day, and from it derives the prime task of the international Communist movement—the uniting of all those peace-loving forces that can compel imperialism to accept this reality and abandon its plans to reverse the march of history by means of a third world war.

"Imperialism has not changed its spots, it has not become more humane; it is no more pretty in appearance or substance than it was forty years ago, when it was actively engaged in armed conflict

\* Published as pamphlet "36 Million Communists Say".

with the Irish people, fighting for their national independence, and with the young Soviet Republic.

"Imperialism has not changed its spots, but there has been a serious decline in its power, while the forces of Socialism, headed by the Soviet Union, are constantly increasing their strength. Together with this goes the mounting movement of the peoples for peace, for a world without war and arms, which is shown in the ever-increasing mass support accorded the demand for the abolition of the means of nuclear warfare and for disarmament in general.

**"These factors, we say, make possible the safeguarding of world peace, the prevention of war, local and international.**

**"Mankind can, and must, be saved from such horrors.**

"We believe that peaceful co-existence is possible of achievement and wholeheartedly endorse the Draft Declaration in this regard.

"On this question we find ourselves in disagreement with our comrades of the Chinese Communist Party. It appears to us that our Chinese Comrades are committed to a pre-destination theory that one way or another, war is inevitable.

"Endorsement of our Chinese comrades' viewpoint would, in our opinion, paralyse the great movement for peace in every country. For, though the Chinese delegation say we should mobilise the masses to fight for peace, they put forward policies that would split the peace movement and drive out of it non-Communist allies who are making valuable contributions to the world-wide fight for peace.

"Who can deny, from their own experiences, in recent years, the invaluable contribution made by the leadership of the C.P.S.U. in the United Nations and by all aspects of Soviet foreign policy, in mobilising mass support and sympathy for the cause of world peace?

### **Leadership of C.P.S.U.**

"We take the liberty of saying, our Chinese comrades notwithstanding, that the leadership of the C.P.S.U. by its struggle in the United Nations, has played no small part in assisting our struggles to mobilise the mass of the Irish people for peace.

"We know the difficulties we experienced in Dublin and Belfast in the campaign around the Stockholm Peace Appeal. The situation is not the same today. The reactionary and clerical forces are no longer able to silence the Irish people in voicing their aspirations for peace.

"Today, the United Irish Trades Union Congress is on record for peace, for the abolition of nuclear weapons and disarmament.

"Of course, what I am saying here are not world-shaking events, but we could not have got such developments even three years ago.

"For these reasons, we regret the theories put forward by our Chinese comrades which would paralyse action at the top and at the diplomatic level, while professing concern for a broad-based mass peace movement.

"About the question of the transition to Socialism. On the basis of the whole experience of Irish history, we would be the last to say that the only way to change society in all countries, and in all circumstances, is by peaceful means. We would be the last to say that the only way to national independence is by peaceful means. After all, we belong to a country that has seldom been allowed to find a peaceful way to the solution of any of our main problems.

"We know that British and Irish democracy was raped on the question of Irish self-government on the eve of the first world war by the British Army generals in the famous Curragh Mutiny, the forerunner of the fascist movement.

"Nevertheless, British Imperialism has declined sufficiently and the movement for Irish National Independence had grown sufficiently by the year 1938 that it was possible, in the now free part of Ireland, to liquidate all political vestiges of imperialistic control, in a peaceful way.

"Therefore, we are prepared to take the stand that even in Ireland it is possible for the working class and peasantry to come to power by peaceful means. This is the standpoint we have taken in the draft programme of our parties, setting out the Irish way to Socialism.

### **Inspired by Lenin**

"In all these questions of peace and war, of peaceful co-existence, of disarmament and the possibilities of the peaceful transition to socialism, we are imbued by the letter and spirit of Lenin and the great Bolshevik Party during the October Revolution.

"Was it not under the watchword of 'PEACE — LAND — BREAD' that the working class and peasants of Czarist Russia marched to power in 1917?

"In our country we make it our special objective to defeat the American imperialist and clerical reactionary pressure on the Government of the Republic of Ireland to drag it into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and thereby abandon the present policy of military neutrality.

"This policy of non-military alignment is dictated by Irish national interests and conforms to the anti-imperialist opinions and sentiments of the mass of the Irish people, who want no nuclear war bases in the country.

"We are fighting to rouse public opinion at all levels to push the Irish Government to an unconditional policy of neutrality, politically and militarily, to a thorough-going Irish national policy for peace and independence.

"Imperialist-clerical reaction is certainly strong in Ireland, but the strength of the anti-imperialist forces in the country and the desire of the people for peace is strong enough to ensure that the present Government will not join N.A.T.O. or associate with the imperialist brigands in their nuclear war schemes.

"The partition of our country is the means by which British Imperialism dominates our economy and retards its economic development.

"It is British Imperialism's way of preventing the full national, democratic aims of the Irish people being achieved.

"The imperialist domination, through the monopolies and the banks of both parts of Ireland, results in mass unemployment and emigration on a staggering scale.

"Against this there are mass struggles of the workers developing and our Parties are playing a leading role in these battles.

"The movement for the restoration of civil and democratic rights in Northern Ireland is attracting increasing support in Britain as well as in Ireland.

"In Northern Ireland, anti-democratic laws are still in operation which permit of citizens being held in jail for years without charge or trial.

### **Sectarian Policies**

"As well, the franchise for local Government elections is in favour of the rich, the vote being confined to property owners and heads of households.

"It is to put an end to this state of affairs that our Parties are directing their efforts to mobilise the Irish workers and toilers generally to break the power of imperialism in all its forms in Ireland, and to achieve full national liberation, democracy and socialism. . . ."

Over the years of Unionist rule, the Communist Party constantly pinpointed their sectarian, undemocratic policies and practices and demanded the implementation of democratic reforms. The Unionist Party monolith paid no heed to any demands that did not emanate from within its own sectarian-based ranks. In this position it had the confidence that it had and always would be fully backed by the British Government. For 50 years all Westminster Governments used the 1920 Government of Ireland Act to evade responsibility for the sectarian and anti-democratic

rule of the Ulster Unionists. This position only changed after the 1969 riots situation with the decision of the Labour Government to bring in troops to halt the Orange mobs and R.U.C. attacks on the Catholic areas in Belfast and Derry.

## Constituency Boundaries

In 1964 the Stormont Government and Parliament were discussing proposals for a re-distribution of the constituency boundaries. As might be expected, these were designed to serve the interests of the Unionist Party.

This was some five years before 1969 and the emergence of the mass movement around the demand for civil rights. The Communist Party in a statement sent to the British Prime Minister, the Stormont Prime Minister, the newspapers and all the members of the Stormont Parliament and also the Northern M.P.s at Westminster, called for —

- “(a) The immediate abolition of the four University seats.
- “(b) The ending of plural voting and the establishment of the principle ‘one man, one vote’.
- “(c) Any re-alignment of constituencies calls for an equitable distribution of population per constituency in logical geographical entities.
- “(d) All elections to be conducted in a fair and democratic manner, using as an example the Representation of the People Act, and that pertaining to the Irish Republic.”

In 1964, the 12th Congress of the Communist Party was held in Belfast, with fraternal delegates being present from the Irish Workers' Party. At regular intervals the Communist Party (Belfast based) held congresses, and decided on policy questions and elected an executive; when, in 1970, the Unity Congress was convened, this was designated as the 15th Congress. There had been continuous observance of the democratic process begun in 1933, with the re-formation of the C.P.I., which had been first initiated in 1921 and continued to function until the autumn of 1923.

## New Premises

In February 1968, the Belfast Party acquired new premises at 323 Albertbridge Road, in the east part of the city. A house, with many rooms, it was a big improvement on the shoddy rooms at Adelaide Street. A litho printing machine was installed and the Party paper took on an improved appearance and size. Literature distribution was organised and new forms of Party activity were undertaken. It was not to last and in 1972 the Party premises were fire-bombed by the Paisley mobsters. For a short time Party H.Q. work was disrupted until alternative, but much smaller, accommodation was found. However, it was to be a much longer time before the printing plant was again got into action. A duplicated edition of the weekly “Unity” substituted.

In 1964 the Belfast Party paid tribute to Comrade Hugh Hunter on the occasion of his 65th birthday. A long-serving member of the Party, he had fought in Spain with the International Brigade and was engaged in the famous crossing of the Ebro. After a long illness Hugh Hunter died in 1972.

In 1964 there was the death of Tommy Geehan, the great fighter and leader of the October 1932 unemployed struggles. In the Party paper, W. H. McCullough, the Party Secretary, paid tribute to his work and struggles to advance the cause of the people and socialism.

Captain Terence O'Neill had succeeded Lord Brookeborough on his retirement as Prime Minister in 1963. In the General Election of May 1964, the C.P.N.I. pointed out that the Unionist Party, despite the change-over to O'Neill, had failed to produce any different policies to those under Brookeborough or his predecessors.

In the year following Captain Terence O'Neill replacing Lord Brookeborough, there developed rifts and shifts in the Unionist Party, more in fear of O'Neill's “liberal” noises rather than of any action that he had actually taken to tilt Unionist rule even slightly in a democratic direction. A voice in the Brookeborough tradition, that of Senator J. E. N. Barnhill, speaking at the Londonderry Upper Liberties Unionist Association, said: “Charity begins at home, and if we are going to employ people we should employ Unionists.” (Senator Barnhill was shot dead when he offered resistance during a raid on his home by the Official I.R.A.)

The Rev. Ian Paisley became active in his gutter politics at the time, organising demonstrations and arousing the worst forms of sectarian hate. During the British General Elections, by his demagoguery and blackmail he forced Captain O'Neill to have the police remove the Tricolour from the Republican election rooms in Divis Street, Belfast. O'Neill used the Stormont legislation, the Flags and Emblems Act, although all candidates for the Westminster Parliament were supposed to have the protection of the British Parliament's Representation of the People's Act, which puts no bar on the display of party banners, flags or emblems.

## Opposition to O'Neill

Open opposition to O'Neill within the Unionist ranks, resulting in his downfall and the fracturing of the 50-year-old monolith, came fully into the open after the 1969 Derry and Belfast riots and the intervention of the British Army on the initiative of the British Labour Government.

The civil rights struggles of 1968 and '69 succeeded in focussing world attention on the disgraceful record of the Unionist Government for some 50 years and the responsibility the British Government had in regard to Northern Ireland and its persistent refusal to compel the observance of equal democratic rights for all citizens.

Some five years earlier, “Support Civil Rights demands in Northern Ireland” was the call of the Party paper, “Unity”: “The gerrymander ghost won't lie down. It keeps constantly bobbing up, at times in a big way like the current campaign led by the Nationalist M.P.s to Westminster.” The civil rights struggles in the forms and dimensions of 1968-69 were not on call, and every action, gesture and development focussing attention on the demand for civil rights deserved support.

The Party supported the Nationalist M.P.s lobbying at Westminster, but made the criticism that its demands did not go far enough. It pointed out that the demand should be made for universal franchise for all persons 21 years and over, without property qualifications, in local elections.

In furtherance of support for civil rights and to expose the Unionist Government's policies of discrimination, the Party supported a proposal put forward in Stormont by the N.I.L.P. to make it an offence to discriminate against people on grounds of colour, race or religion.

## Employment Discrimination

At the time, the Party paper put the question, “Who says there is no discrimination in Northern Ireland?” (“Unity,” Feb. 8, 1964). It proceeded:

“An official form of application for employment to Belfast Cables Ltd. has just come to hand. After the usual questions relating to name and address, etc., the applicant is asked to state his . . . religion! Further down the form the question is asked: ‘Are you a member or have you been a member of any Trade Union, if so, state name of Union or Unions.’ If you are in any doubt as to how loaded this question really is, just read the following statement printed above the place where the applicant signs his name: ‘This factory is worked on an open shop principle and membership or otherwise of a trade union is a matter for the individual. Completion of this form signifies your willingness to accept our conditions of employment.’ We can be

forgiven if we interpret all this to mean that trade unionists and those who 'dig with the wrong foot' are not acceptable to the management of Belfast Cables Limited."

As could be expected, the N.I.L.P. Bill to ban bigotry got nowhere in Stormont; as an exercise to expose the Unionists it was worth while. The Home Affairs Minister, William Craig, said that discrimination could not be solved by legislation; outside the House he continued his ranting against the Catholic people and their lack of family planning. Also, that he was in favour of what remained of a transport system, after the Benson report had been implemented, should be handed over to private enterprise.

In the local elections, the Party issued a call for the maximum unity of all parties and groups opposed to the Unionist Party to unite around a programme "For Democracy". The Party statement said, "For far too long the Belfast Corporation and other local councils have been dominated by the business and property-owning people who can influence policy to their own advantage".

In the Pottinger Ward of Belfast, the Communist Party nominated three candidates; the main features of their campaign were on job discrimination, denial of full civil rights, and the housing problem.

The outcome of the election showed that almost 80,000 people out of the 180,000 who voted were against the Unionist Party. The N.I.L.P. and Republican Labour increased their representation and the total anti-Unionist seats rose to 18. The anti-Unionist trend of the 1962 Stormont election was continued when, in Belfast, more people voted against the Unionist Party than for it.

The Communist Party candidates did not secure seats, but scored impressive votes: Jimmy Graham got 1,651 votes; Seán Morrissey, 1,145, and Hugh Moore, 1,139.

An election for the Westminster Parliament was held in October. The Party called for a single anti-Unionist candidate in each of the twelve constituencies. Divisions among the anti-Unionist forces gave the Unionists all of the 12 seats. Labour in Britain was again in office. But the old policy remained as far as Northern Ireland was concerned. Questions and discussion were only allowed on rare occasions and then only within limits.

Among the many events associated with 1964, it should not be omitted that Andy Barr scored success in being elected as President of his Union, the 50,000 member strong National Union of Sheet Metal Workers and Coppersmiths. He was the first Irishman to be elected to the post and also the first Communist. Ten years later, in 1974, at the age of 60 years, Andy Barr was elected to the post of President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It was a tribute to his long years of service as a militant trade unionist. He is Chairman of the Communist Party of Ireland, and the first member of the Party to hold this important trade union post.

The Party actively engaged in a series of campaigns against the U.S. War in Vietnam. In March 1966 the Executive Committee delivered a statement to the United States Consulate in Belfast condemning the bombing of North Vietnam. A car cavalcade in Belfast was organised by the Party against the U.S. War of Aggression in Vietnam. In 1967 the Party continued with these types of protest. By 1968 a "Northern Ireland Committee for Peace in Vietnam" came into existence, and included Communists, Socialists, trade unionists and Quakers. Marches, pickets and meetings were held.

## The Fight for "Shorts"!

1966 can be described as the year when the "Fight for Shorts" was at its height. On January 1st the B.B.C. disclosed that 4,000 jobs would be lost unless more orders were received within a few weeks. Members of the Communist Party, such as Jimmy Graham and Hugh Murphy, played a leading role in what was to prove a successful struggle to maintain the aircraft industry in

Belfast. On January 27th the entire work-force of Shorts marched to Stormont. After lobbying M.P.s the workers held a meeting on Stormont steps which was addressed by Jimmy Graham as Chairman of the Works Committee.

1966 was also the year of the 50th Anniversary of the Easter Rising. Belfast celebrated the occasion with a 20,000-strong march on April 15th. The Communist Party and the Belfast Trades Council participated. On May Day 1966, "Unity," the weekly journal of the Party, featured Connolly's life and teachings. It was during this period also that the bigoted sectarianism of Paisleyism reared its ugly head.

The July 2nd issue of "Unity" in response to the politico-sectarian policies and actions of Paisley, plus the Malvern Street murders, carried out by members of the U.V.F., led with a front page which stated: "BAN THE PREACHING OF SECTARIAN HATE BY AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT NOW!" "GIVE OUR YOUTH A SECURE FUTURE THROUGH FREEDOM FROM HATE. DEMAND AN END TO DISCRIMINATION NOW. UNIONIST GOVERNMENT MUST ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY. DEMOCRACY FOR ALL. ONE PERSON, ONE VOTE."

In June 1966 Jimmy Graham, Vice-Chairman of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Works Committee of Short Brothers and Harland Aircraft Factory, was elected Belfast District Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union by 2,082 votes to Right-Winger Billy Hull's 1,069. (Hull was leader of the now defunct Loyalist Association of Workers.)

In May 1967 the Communist Party contested the Belfast Municipal Elections in the Pottinger Ward with Sean Morrissey as candidate, polling 729 votes. The Party contested the election on demands for better health services, recreational facilities, transport to be treated as a social service, and public housing to be brought under direct labour schemes. On the question of democratic rights the call was made for "One Person—One Vote".

## W. H. McCullough Dies

On December 17, 1967, William H. McCullough, a veteran leader of the Communist Party and trade union movement, died at the age of 66. He played a leading role in the unemployed workers' struggles of the 1930s.

At the time of his death, Bill was a member of the Political and Executive Committees of the Communist Party (N. Ireland) and a member of the Joint National Council of the Communist Party (N. Ireland) and the Irish Workers' Party. During World War II he was the Party's General Secretary, and in 1940 was imprisoned for his political beliefs. In 1945 he stood as a candidate for Bloomfield in the Stormont Elections and registered 5,800 votes—the highest ever opposition vote recorded in that constituency.

Bill McCullough played his part in the international working-class movement, organising recruits for the North Irish contingent of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-38. He was a foundation member of the Friends of Russia in the 1930's. Also, he was a delegate from Ireland to the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Throughout his political life he understood the need to link the labour and national movements in the fight against imperialism. He was elected from his branch of the National Union of Railwaymen as their delegate to the famous 1934 Republican Congress at Rathmines, Dublin.

His activities in the organised trade union movement were considerable: A former Branch Secretary of the N.U.R., he later organised the Cinema Workers and became their first full-time Secretary, a position he retired from 18 months before his death. He was Chairman of the Belfast Branch of the A.E.U. for many years and was a leading member of the Belfast and District Trades Council. He was on a number of occasions a delegate to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

## Derry: October 5, 1968

On October 5th, 1968, in the streets of Derry City, under the batons of the Unionist-controlled R.U.C. Special Force, the Civil Rights Movement in "Northern Ireland" was propelled into the mass force which was to split the Unionist Party and bring the Stormont edifice crashing around their ears. In many circles it is believed that this was the starting point of the movement for democracy in "Northern Ireland". However, the Civil Rights Movement was no spontaneous outburst of the working people. It has its roots in the anti-democratic nature of the Unionist-controlled "Northern Ireland" statelet, and the fact that amongst the anti-Unionist, anti-imperialist forces, Communists, trade unionists, Republicans and Socialists had struggled for decades to expose the anti-democratic features and essence of Unionist rule and its ideology. For decades the Communist Party had worked through its own organisation, its journals, and its influence in the mass organisations of the working people to expose the Special Powers Act, Gerrymandering, Plural Voting, disfranchisement in Local Government Elections, and discrimination in jobs and housing. The mass movement which was to develop under the banner of the "Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association" in the latter part of 1968 was not the result of a spontaneous upsurge, but the result of years of work by Communists, Socialists and trade unionists in "Northern Ireland" and by the Connolly Association (Britain), the British Communist Party, Socialists and progressive trade unionists in Britain.

As early as May 1965 a significant Conference on democratic rights in Northern Ireland was held in Transport House, Belfast, under the auspices of the Belfast Trades Council. Amongst the leading organisers of this conference were the veteran Communists Betty Sinclair and Billy McCullough. The success of this conference was that it brought together delegates from the trade union movement, the Communist Party, the Northern Ireland Labour Party, Liberals and Republicans.

### N.C.C.L. Conference

This was followed by the April 13th Conference (1965), held in Britain by the National Council of Civil Liberties. At this Conference Betty Sinclair again played a significant role.

By February 1967 it was evident that basic unity of Communists, Socialists, Liberals, Republicans and Independents could be found around a programme of basic demands for Civil Rights in "Northern Ireland", such as:

- (1) One Man, One Vote in local government elections.
- (2) An end to Plural Voting.
- (3) An end to gerrymandering of boundaries.
- (4) Removal of the "Special Powers Act" from the Statute Book.
- (5) End discrimination in jobs and housing.

Reaching agreement, these forces formed the "Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association". Betty Sinclair, a member of the Political and Executive Committees of the Communist Party, was elected to its Executive and became Chairman of the Association.

On September 30th, 1967, Communist Party representatives led by Hugh Moore, General Secretary, together with Nationalists, National Democrats, Northern Ireland Labour Party, Republican Labour and Liberals, defeated an attempt by the Unionist Party at the meeting of the Interim Boundary Commission to bury anti-Unionist Andersonstown in a new seat which would be dominated by the Unionist dominated area of Carrick.

On October 7 and 8, 1967, the 13th Congress of the Communist Party took place in Belfast. At this Congress the General Secretary, Hugh Moore, stressed the need to conduct the battle for democratic rights. In his report on the Party Programme, "IRELAND'S PATH TO SOCIALISM," James Stewart, Assistant General Secretary, reiterated this demand and underlined the importance of creating a united popular alliance around this question.



**ANDY BARR**

National Chairman of the Communist Party of Ireland; Irish District Secretary, Sheet Metal Workers' Union; he was elected, unopposed as President, I.C.T.U. for 1974-75.

### C.P.I. Position

From the inception of the "Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association" in February 1967, the Communist Party worked to strengthen the unity and breadth of the organisation. The Party threw itself solidly behind the programme and activity of the organisation. At the same time Communists in the Civil Rights Association and the Party through its journals and work in the general political arena not only conducted an uncompromising battle against Unionist sectarianism and coercion, but also fought against the adventurist policies of the ultra-Left and the "Catholic Rights" mentality of sections of the middle class within and outside the Association.

In April 1969, Edwina Stewart, Executive Member of the Communist Party and present Secretary of the "Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association", was elected to its Executive Committee.

During this period the Communist Party in all its activities stressed the objective fact that the demand for civil rights in Northern Ireland was in the interests of the entire working people, and that the Unionist Administration's denial of the basic demands of the NICRA resulted not only in restrictions and suffering being placed on the Catholic section of the working people, but also upon the Protestant section.

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# CONNOLLY HOUSE . . .

It was not a lordly mansion  
With tessellated floors,  
Marble pillars at the entrance,  
And heavy oaken doors,  
But only an unused factory,  
In a little side-way street  
That echoed night and morning  
To the tread of the workers' feet.  
Connolly House we called it  
In honour to the name  
Of the worker who fought and gave his life  
To save his land from shame.  
There a band of men and women  
With a noble creed to spread,  
And in kinship close with all of those  
Who toil for their daily bread  
Gathered themselves together,  
To bring the people light,  
To make them see, and know, and feel  
Their miserable plight.  
Simple it seemed, but rumour travelled  
Of things that happened there.  
The clerics scented danger  
And rank poison in the air.  
Suddenly, in a moment  
A wild affray began,  
Trampling, yelling, cursing, singing,  
Fierce men and women ran  
"Communists! Hunt them! Burn them!"  
Came in howls from the crowd.  
"They have stamped on our sacred symbols,  
They would rob us of our God."  
Four days the gallant little band,  
Were beleaguered by their foes,  
As higher still and higher  
The wild confusion rose.  
One by one, by ways of peril,  
Some hit by missiles hurled

From the fooled and blinded victims  
Of this passion-driven world.  
Escaping notice, lay concealed  
Till the storm had swept away.  
Their home was wrecked and looted  
Were they then disheartened? Nay!  
For their eyes beheld the dawning  
Of a brighter, happier day.  
In that hour of joy and triumph  
On the house of Connolly's name  
Shall be raised a people's temple  
Where the workers will proclaim  
That those who sow, and reap, and weave,  
Who delve, and dig, and mine,  
Who make this earth our dwelling place  
Productive, rich and fine  
Shall reap the harvest—call the tune,  
Shall live as free men ought,  
Enjoying the abundance  
That they themselves have wrought.  
Enough! Dark lords of exploitation,  
We have found a better way,  
Life, sweet life, is calling us—  
We cannot but obey.  
We have worked and you have idled.  
We have pinched and you're well fed.  
We have been beasts of burden,  
In bitter bondage led.  
But now the chain is broken,  
We have learned a better way  
For ourselves and for our children  
We work gladly day by day.  
Can these, indeed, be Communists?  
By all that's just 'tis true!  
Wild people, cease from cursing—  
We build that world for you.

CHARLOTTE DESPARD.



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### HARRY POLLITT

Was General Secretary of the British Communist Party, 1929-56. He spoke at public meetings in Dublin in the 1920's and 1930's, and in Belfast during the war years. Died June 1960.

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## O'DUFFY OFF TO SALAMANCA

"My name is Owen O'Duffy,  
And I'm rather vain and huffy,  
The side of every Bolshie I'm a thorn in,  
But before the break of day,  
I'll be marching right away,  
For I'm off to Salamanca in the morning."

### Chorus :

With the gold supplied by Vickers,  
We can buy Blueshirts and knickers,  
Let the Barcelona Bolshies take a warning,  
For we lately took the notion  
To cross the briny ocean  
And we start for Salamanca in the morning.

There's a boy called Paddy Belton,  
With a heart that's soft and meltin',  
Yet the first to face the foemen, danger scorning,  
Tho' his feet are full of bunions,  
Yet he knows his Spanish onions  
And he's off to Salamanca in the morning.

Now the "Irish Christian Front",  
Is a LOMBARD-MURPHY stunt,  
(Hark! the ghostly voice of Connolly gives warning)  
And Professor Hogan's pals  
Can don their fal-de-lals  
And start for Salamanca in the morning.

When they get kicked out of Spain,  
And they travel home again,  
Let them hearken in good time to this, our warning.  
If they try their Fascist game,  
They'll be sorry that they came  
Back from Salamanca in the morning.

—(Reprinted from "The Worker", September 12, 1936)

## BALLYSEEDY BEFRIENDS BADAJOS

O'Duffy's dupes are killing as their Fascist masters bid,  
Gas bombs are falling on the mothers of Madrid.  
(The birds at Ballyseedy picked flesh from off the stones,  
And Spanish sun at Badajoz are bleaching baby bones.)  
God, they claim, is Fascist, the Voice that Pilate feared,  
Is spitting streams of hellish hate from a Moorish soldier's beard;  
They use the Cross of Calvary to veil their foul designs,  
"Viva Hispania" the voice of Hitler whines.  
Defend the Republic, cries out the sturdy Basque,  
'Tis the Crescent, not the Sickle, is looming over Spain,  
But the servants of Mohammed will sate their lust in vain.  
The hireling hordes of Italy that come with eve'ry tide  
Will conquer proud Iberia when all her sons have died.  
O'Duffy calls his "godly band" and leads them to the fray,  
(They murdered Liam Mellows upon Our Lady's Day).  
God help you, Spanish 'Connollys' if Lombard Murphy's crew  
Should blood their drunken hellhounds and send them after you.  
Our lanes are marked with crosses to trace their bloody trail,  
While others lie in quicklime pit in every Irish gaol.  
They cant of Salamanca, our Irish Pharisees,  
'Tis the flag of black reaction they flaunt upon the breeze.  
They hope to lure our Irish youth to learn their murder trade  
And bring them back to Ireland as a Fascist Shock Brigade.  
They talk of Hearth and Altar as the things that they defend,  
(Which means in Fascist lingo the sweater's dividend).  
O'Duffy's crowned Dictator 'midst the rolling of the drums  
And the dupes that listened to him are rotting in the slums.

SOMHAIRLE MacALASTAIR

—(Reprinted from "The Worker", October 17, 1936.)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**M**OST of this Outline History has been written by Sean Nolan and all of it edited by him. Acknowledgements and thanks go to Tom Redmond for the Introduction. The section on the 1932 unemployed struggles in Belfast is based on an edited version of a tape-recorded lecture delivered by Betty Sinclair in the early 1950's. Tom Watters, now living in Manchester, contributed the part dealing with the Party in Belfast during the War years. George Jeffares has written the section dealing with the Party and the struggle for peace. Michael O'Riordan has covered the period 1948 to 1970, with the difficulties that were encountered and the emergence again of an all-Ireland Communist Party in March 1970.

The section of the Spanish Civil War is also a contribution from Michael O'Riordan. The story of the Ballyfermot Co-Op is recorded by Joe Deasy. Sam Nolan, a participant, writes of the 1957 unemployed struggles which was highlighted by the election of an unemployed representative to Dáil Eireann. Jimmy Stewart finishes off with the concluding section of the Party in the North, covering the period of the rise of the Civil Rights struggle to the present time.

This is the first effort, even of an Outline History, to record the efforts and difficulties of building the Communist movement in Ireland. Apart from the files, at times incomplete, of the Party papers, very few other records were available.

The Outline History makes an effort to record the struggles and the difficulties encountered by the men and women who endeavoured to build the Communist movement in the 1930's, the 40's and 50's; full acknowledgement goes also to those who made the effort in the 1920's.

It is to be hoped that in the years ahead there will be greater resources and ability for research to produce a more complete history of the Communist movement in Ireland.

The cover design is by Charlie Cullen, Dublin, and the pen sketches are the work of Billie Kirk, of Belfast. To both we express sincere thanks.

Page Forty-seven

## SEAN MURRAY

SEAN MURRAY was born in 1898 in Co. Antrim; from an early age he was identified with the Republican movement, holding the rank of Commandant in the I.R.A.; he was imprisoned during 1920-21. He was a delegate to the famous I.R.A. convention in 1922; he supported the Republican side in the Civil War.

He went to work in London in the early 1920s and there came under the influence of Socialist ideas, being attracted by the writings of James Connolly. He was for a time secretary of the London branch of the "Irish Worker League", an organisation founded by the late Jim Larkin, whom Sean visited in Dublin many times in those years. He was a delegate to the London Trades Council.

In 1928 he went to Moscow and studied at the Lenin School, remaining there until 1931, when he came to live in Dublin. He joined the Revolutionary Workers' Groups, which in 1933 transformed into the Communist Party of Ireland, becoming its first General Secretary. The Party programme, "Ireland's Path to Freedom," adopted by the Inaugural Congress of the C.P.I., was compiled by Sean.

He was also the author of the booklet, "Communism in Ireland," published in 1933 and for the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the 1916 Uprising (1936) he wrote the pamphlet, "The Irish Revolt".

### Most Prominent Communist

He was supervisory editor of the Party's weekly paper, "Irish Workers' Voice," during the years 1932-36.

As the most publicly identified person in the Communist movement, his services as a public speaker and lecturer were often in demand. For the Party, he was a speaker at a monster Republican anti-imperialist demonstration and meeting in College Green on the eve of the annual British Legion, November 11, 1931, parade and Union Jack display.

In 1931 he was a delegate to the Saor Eire Congress and his opinion was consulted in the drafting of its programme which was largely the work of the late David Fitzgerald. He was a participant in the Republican Congress of 1934. His speech at the Congress is reported in this publication.

Sean was banned from visiting the Six Counties; he defied the ban and attempted to speak at a public meeting; he was arrested and imprisoned for a

month; the man who sheltered him, the late Jimmy Kater, of Belfast, was also jailed.

In the years 1931-41 he was a full-time Party worker in Dublin. He helped on several occasions in the organisation of the unemployed and his opinion and advice was often sought by active workers in the Labour and trade union movement. He was associated with the late Frank Ryan in the organisation of the Irish Section of the International Brigade, which went to Spain to oppose Franco fascism in 1936-8.

He was widely read in the basic teachings of Marxism-Leninism and had a profound knowledge of Irish and European history. A good conversationalist, his cheerful manner made him a good companion and he was popular with a very large circle of people

### War Years in Belfast

In 1941 he left Dublin for Belfast, the ban against his residence there having been lifted. For a time he worked in the shipyards. Later he took up work for the Party and at the time of his death he held the post of National Chairman. In Belfast, as in Dublin, he built a wide circle of friends and became widely known and respected in all sections of the Labour movement. He maintained and developed close relations with the various sections of the republican and nationalist movement, North and South.

Up to the time he took ill, in March 1961, he was engaged in completing a new draft programme for the Northern Ireland Communist Party, entitled "The Irish Road to Socialism". It was published and adopted by the Annual Congress of the Party in 1962. Sean died on May 25, 1961.

He was present, in 1935, at the last and famous 7th Congress of the Communist International, the one at which Georgi Dimitrov put forward proposals for united action to defeat the rising power of international fascism. In 1959 he attended the 21st Congress of the C.P.S.U. and was present in December 1960 at the world meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, held in Moscow.

"A Marxist scholar," said his old comrade, the late Billy McCullough, of Belfast, "Sean's life was an example for all those who hate colonialism and oppression, who want to see the end of imperialism, who want to see world peace firmly established and Socialism victorious."

SEAN NOLAN.

## JIM GRALTON DEPORTED

AMONG the most dastardly acts of the early days of the Fianna Fáil regime was the decision to deport back to America Jim Gralton, of Co. Leitrim. The order was issued on February 3, 1933 and Gralton was to be out of the country by March 4. His 74-year-old father had died the day before the deportation order was served.

The "Irish Workers' Voice" (February 18, 1933) pointed out that the Gralton case was no isolated one and cited the attacks on the Castlecomer miners and their trade union, "the murderous thuggery at Cork, directed by the priests against the unemployed; the hounding and persecution of members of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups in Longford, Kilkenny, Waterford and scores of other places throughout the country". There were the persistent pressures and hounding of printers to prevent the publication of the "Irish Workers' Voice", which was forced to go to a printer in Glasgow.

In condoning all these actions against the militant working class movement, the "Irish Workers' Voice" pointed out that the de Valera Government was showing itself in its true colours—"the agents of some of the blackest reactionary forces in the country".

### Emigrated to U.S.A.

Jim Gralton, like so many sons of small farmers, in his youth, had to go abroad to earn a living. He went to the U.S.A. and was there for over twenty years. He took out citizenship papers. However, he came back during the War of Independence, joined the I.R.A. and played his part in the struggle against the Black and Tans. In the Civil War of 1922-23 he was on the Republican side. He was also a leading figure in the social struggles of his locality, an example of which was the reinstatement of tenants in a holding from which they had been evicted 30 years before. His involvement in these social struggles made him anything but popular among the gombeen and propertied elements.

Gralton returned to America in the early 1920s; he came back in 1932 to look after the small farm, his father and mother being then over 70 years old. His brother who had worked the farm had died.

Gralton, along with a number of other Irishmen, played a part in the formation of the powerful International Transport Workers' Union, initially based in New York, among them being Michael Quill, of Co. Kerry and Austin Hogan, of Cork; they were members of the Communist Party of the United States. On his return to Ireland, Gralton transferred to membership of the Revolution-

ary Workers' Groups.

Back in Leitrim, Gralton again became involved in the workers' and small farmers' struggles. The Pearse-Connolly Hall, which had been built by the efforts of the small farmers' sons to replace a hall burnt down by the Black and Tans, had remained closed and unused for years. On Gralton's initiative it was reopened and became a centre for social and cultural activities, among these being readings from the writings of James Connolly.

The area became alive again, the young people using the hall for dancing and social enjoyment.

The Parish Priest, Father O'Dowd, was not at all pleased, he was furious and moved into action. He thundered from the pulpit about "the Communist menace" and warned all and sundry to keep out of the hall.

The local hall committee offered to allow the priest membership of the committee. He refused and demanded that the entire committee be his own nominees. The hall committee agreed to this also. Emboldened at his success, the priest then demanded that the ownership of the hall be transferred to him. This the hall committee refused, and all negotiations broke off.

## Father O'Dowd

Father O'Dowd drew upon the action of the Northern Ireland Unionist regime, which had, in the 1932 unemployed riots, used an old British Act of Parliament to deport back to Britain the veteran working-class fighter, Tom Mann, who had gone to Belfast to help the unemployed struggle. Father O'Dowd demanded that "all communists" should be deported and claimed there were 14 of them in his parish.

He also stated that "those attending the hall do so at their own risk", and warned the parish not to blame him for "what might happen". Those looking for relief work might not look to him to help them get it unless they quit attending the hall. And, to rub it in thoroughly, he demanded that everyone of the "offenders" apologise to him for having flouted his authority.

The labouring boys and girls of the place apparently chose to judge for themselves on the issue, and continued to meet and dance in the hall.

Father O'Dowd's thunderings, rantings and warnings from the pulpit did lead to action, whether he was directly responsible or involved is not important. During a Ceilidhe in December 1932 some 25 revolver shots and 15 from a shotgun were fired into the hall. Fortunately, no one was injured. The C.I.D. who had been active on the roads during this period were conspicuously missing

on the night the shots were fired. Some days later, a land mine was placed near the hall, but it failed to do much damage.

Then, on Xmas Eve, 1932, the hall, situated at Gowel, Co. Leitrim, was burnt down.

The rantings of Fr. O'Dowd had mobilised the local Free Staters, the gommeen men's sons for his crusade, but, as well, some republicans fell for the anti-Communist bait and were involved in Fr. O'Dowd's fiendish anti-working class, imperialist actions.

A protest meeting against the deportation order on Gralton was held in Dublin's historic Rotunda (now the Ambassador Cinema) at which a Gralton Defence Committee was formed. His Leitrim neighbours rallied in his support and undertook work to keep the farm in shape. Jim Gralton had decided he would not be put out of his native country without a struggle and had "gone on the run". The neighbours rallied to his aged mother, now alone on the farm. Peadar O'Donnell, who was secretary of the Working Farmers' Committee Movement, issued a statement denouncing the deportation order against Gralton.



JIM GRALTON  
(a pen sketch).

A number of trade union branches, some Fianna Fáil cumainn, Cumann na mBan, Labour Party branches and others joined in support of the movement against Gralton's deportation. The Army Council of the I.R.A. informed the Gralton Defence Committee that it would not send representatives to the public meeting, but had "taken the matter up with the Army unit in Leitrim, and have urged that everything possible be done to organise protests against the proposed eviction of Gralton from his native land".

The I.R.A. Army Council indicated it was "taking steps, independently, to organise opinion against Gralton's expulsion. . . ."

The Right Wing of the I.R.A. leadership of the time had no enthusiasm for the Gralton case, and the promise of "taking steps, independently, to organise opinion against Gralton's expulsion", was not honoured, and was never intended to be.

The "Irish Workers' Voice" (March 4, 1933) stated: "The Right Wing of the Republican leadership has no enthusiasm for the fight on Gralton. This is clearly shown in the columns of 'An Phoblacht'. The first week of the struggle it was silent. Perhaps there is here the justification that the full facts had to be verified on the spot. But last week's article approached the question in literal fear and trembling. Gralton is introduced to Republican readers as a good, harmless boy whom any respectable country lady or gentleman need have no fear of supporting.

## "Subversive Doctrines"

"It is now alleged by a Fianna Fáil T.D. that Gralton taught subversive doctrines. We have made careful inquiries. There is no evidence that the hall was used to preach such doctrines. Gralton has been condemned without being given a hearing.' So runs 'An Phoblacht's' story.

"Which may be true or false, but suppose he was guilty of doctrines subversive to capitalism and imperialism, suppose it 'leaks out', as it must do (for it is a fact!) that Gralton is a Communist. What then? Is the deportation justified? What revolutionary Irishman is not guilty of subversive doctrines?

"Such an attitude to the question simply strips the Gralton fight of all political meaning, representing Gralton as a political nonentity, and the Government as stupid fools making trouble for themselves and everybody else over nothing.

**"But the Gralton case is the very essence of the battle now raging between the worker and farmer masses and the capitalists, of whom the Fianna Fáil Government is the representative.**

"Is this at the root of the hesitation with which the Republican leadership approaches the Gralton fight?"

The local Leitrim Gralton Defence Committee advertised a public meeting to be held on Sunday, March 3, after Mass, at Drumiskin. On the following day, March 4, the deportation order was to come into effect and Gralton was to be out of the country.

Peadar O'Donnell, Seán Murray, Donal O'Reilly and others went from Dublin to

speak at the meeting. Father Cosgrave announced from the Altar that an anti-God meeting was to take place outside and warned the people to have nothing to do with it. He left the chapel ahead of the congregation and attempted to get the people not to attend the meeting.

Peadar O'Donnell started the meeting and said he was there to put the case of Gralton and all the issues it raised for the working people of Ireland, and if there was anyone who would stand over the shooting into and burning of the Pearse-Connolly Hall and the deportation order he would be glad if he came forward and took up that position.

At that point bedlam broke out. Father Cosgrave screamed, "Take them down". A howl went up from the priest's supporters and a lump of muck was fired at the speaker. Father Cosgrave, seeing that a good number in the crowd wanted to hear O'Donnell, Murray and the other speakers, himself hurled a fistful of the clobber toward the speakers. This started a general melee, with the speakers being attacked and defended and clobber bullets flying in all directions, the priest not escaping, his face being covered with muck as much as anybody else involved in the melee. The meeting was abandoned.

## O'Donnell Speaks

However, later in the day, at the Effernagh cross-roads the farmer neighbours of Gralton gathered and gave the speakers a great reception. O'Donnell pointed out: "We would make a mistake if we only saw the clobber throwers and their leader, Father Cosgrave. These are the instruments behind whom stand the gombeen man, the rancher and all the enemies of Ireland and the working farmers. It was not for the fun of it that the Pearse-Connolly Hall was burned, that Gralton was driven from the home of his father, amid scenes of blackguardism enacted at Drumiskin. These things are done to stifle the fight of the landless for the land, to crush the movement of the Irish workers and farmers against poverty and home-wrecking. The fight will go on till the final victory of the Irish people over their enemies. . . ."

That was the confident and clear-cut position of all who actively supported the Gralton campaign. They saw the case as part of the whole struggle to carry forward the fight for victory for the people over all the forces of reaction.

On the week-end's events in Leitrim, the editorial of the "Irish Workers' Voice" (March 11, 1933) commented:

"What are they afraid of?" This apt question was put by Peadar O'Donnell to the cross-roads meeting in Leitrim last Sunday, alluding to the meeting smashers outside the church gate. It is a question

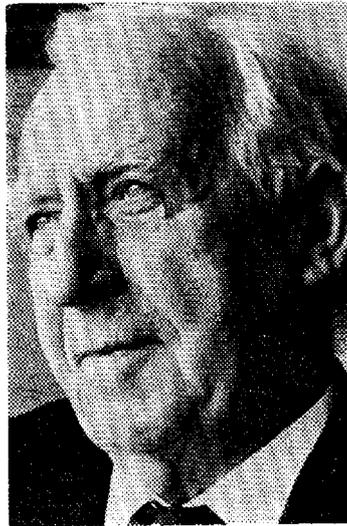
which provides its own answer: 'They' are afraid to allow the working people to hear the case against their oppressors—the imperialists and capitalists.

"A padlock is to be riveted on the brain of every working man and working farmer with the key locked in the parochial house. By such means is capitalism to be saved and Communism destroyed.

"Texts from the Scripture and ex-communication decrees are already obsolete weapons. The crisis is too deep, ferment among the masses too great for these to be effective. Cudgels in Cork and clobber and paving stone in Leitrim are the more modern weapons of capitalist warfare against the workers. But these weapons will in turn grow obsolete.

"Dr. Cullen, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, comes out for a stern struggle 'by every means at our disposal' and appeals direct to the employers and the police. He says:

"There is no reason why anyone who undertakes to propagate Communism should be allowed to do so with impunity. The employer who allows his employees to do so will have reason to regret it; the State that tolerates it has an enemy within its own citadel. When a pest makes its appearance in the material world, all the resources of science are called upon to contribute to its eradication."



PEADAR O'DONNELL

He has stood up to reaction wherever and whenever it showed its ugly head.

Gralton's aged mother took the fight against the deportation of her son to the Leitrim County Council where she appeared and demanded that Jim be given a trial in order to expose the conspiracy that was working against him. Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal (now Fine Gael) united against Gralton. On the occasion, there was a road workers' march to the County Council to demand a wage increase. The Councillors op-

posed to Gralton were also opposed to a wage increase.

It was six months after the deportation order had been made against Gralton that the police caught up with him and put him on the boat back to the U.S.A. In those months he had been sheltered and protected in the small-farmer homesteads around Co. Leitrim.

It was in the home of a small farmer, Frank Byrne, of Breandrum, between Mohill and Ballinamore, that Gralton was captured in the early hours of Sunday, August 20, 1933.

When word got around about his capture, posters protesting were put up in many parts of Leitrim. The Fascist Blueshirts organised gangs to tear them down. A police officer informed his mother of her son's arrest and that he would be deported next morning. She asked to be allowed to visit him, but this was refused. Further, she was told that her only living son would never be allowed to return to the country of his birth. She told the police officer what she thought of Father O'Dowd and the Blueshirt gang.

## Arrested

Gralton was taken to Cobh and the money he had in his possession was taken from him and used to purchase the ticket to take him to the U.S. The Gralton case, from start to finish, was a most shameful act, carried out in the very early days of the Fianna Fáil regime. They bowed to the clamours of the most reactionary anti-national and anti-progressive forces, the gombeens, the ranchers and their clerical front-men in Leitrim. Gralton was among the first, possibly the first, of the victims of the Fianna Fáil regime.

Gralton was a republican, a democrat, a Communist; the Ireland he wanted was the one that James Connolly wanted. That was not in the order of things desired by the propertied people of Leitrim—or anywhere else in Ireland. So, with the technicality that we was a citizen of the U.S., he was sent a-packing at his own cost back to the U.S. in 1933.

His hope, in his lifetime, which he stated in a letter to the "Irish Workers' Voice" (October 14, 1933) was not to be fulfilled, when he said, "I expect to return to the Workers' Republic of all Ireland and I don't think I will have to live as long as my father did in order to do it".

Gralton back in America was nominated as a candidate for Alderman in the 13th district of Manhattan on the Communist Party ticket. In the years after his deportation to America, he played his part as a Communist in the workers' struggles in New York. He died a few years later.

# ONSLAUGHT ON CASTLECOMER MINERS

**T**HE Castlecómer (County Kilkenny) anthracite mines are no longer in operation. They were closed down in 1969, when the Prior-Wansforde family could get no further subventions from public moneys to boost their level of profit. This planter family over many generations had exploited the labour of some hundreds of workers to hew the rich anthracite deposit in the South Leinster area.

For all the generations they had operated the mine, it was the claim of this planter family that they had never yielded to any demands of the workers, and that wages and conditions were of the order they laid down.

That position was challenged and changed in the years 1930-33. The miners were members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, but despite its 1913 militant tradition, the Union leadership would not take on the Prior-Wansforde family. So the wages of the miners remained a mere pittance, with all sorts of penalties and reductions being imposed to further cut-back the amount a miner would take home. Working conditions were, to say the least, primitive; baths and any such facilities necessary for mine workers were not provided.

## R.W. Group Formed

The miners were disappointed men with the I.T.G.W.U. Among them were a number who had been involved in the War of Independence and who later in the Civil War (1922-23) fought for the Republic against the British-imposed Free State. As workers these men saw the planter Prior-Wansforde family and their power of life and death over the miners as the failure of the Republican forces to uproot the British conquest. For them the battle for wages and working conditions was a tussle with overtones both economic and political.

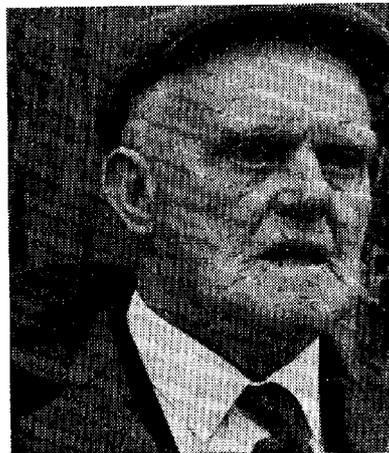
The "Irish Workers' Voice" was launched as the weekly paper of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups in April 1930. This was an event that, in the three years that followed and in subsequent years, was to create no small stir and to change many things for the better in the lives of the Castlecómer miners and the people in the area generally.

A Branch of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups was formed in Castlecómer, the members being miners. Sales of the "Irish Workers' Voice" were developed. The bad pay and working conditions in the mines were publicised in the paper and soon aroused interest in the

area. The local hangers-on of the Prior-Wansforde family were worried, but among the miners there was a mood for fight to improve at least the appalling conditions being imposed on them, with their Union (I.T.G.W.U.) failing to do anything to improve them.

After a number of meetings and discussions, it was decided to found a Union to cater for the miners, quarrymen and road workers, the idea being after consolidating the position in the South Leinster area to move out and organise these categories of workers in the other parts of the country. The name chosen for the new Union was the Miners, Quarrymen and Allied Workers' Union.

An early success for the new Union was the election of Nicholas Boran as



**JIMMY WALSHÉ**

Still around in 1974 and as confirmed as ever in his Socialist Republican convictions.

Checkweighman. There were three candidates, all of them well known and with good records. It was a great tribute to the new Union and the militant policy he stood for that its secretary won.

The miners active in the development of the new Union were constantly harassed by the Free State police. An example of this was a raid on the Walshe family, in which seven of the sons were miners. The father was a tailor and his measurement books were suspected by the guards of being codes!

A statement of the Union's struggles was put in the "Irish Workers' Voice", December 20, 1930:

"We are fighting a combination of the boss, the police and the priest. Father Kavanagh leads the attack from the pulpit each Sunday. 'The Workers' Voice' is the Devil's voice and Comrade Boran is little better. He talks endlessly

about Russian gold and then denies he means Comrade Boran. At present the Castlecómer miners are being organised as far as finance is concerned, from the self-same source as Father Kavanagh and the Coal Company receive their finances—from the contributions of the exploited miners."

Jimmy Walshe, now a retired miner, who has remained loyal to his revolutionary principles all down the years, protested to Father Kavanagh that he was entitled to have his own opinions. To this the Reverend Father replied: "You are too ignorant to have any opinions."

Father Kavanagh and his kind have gone and good riddance. Jimmy Walshe and all that he stands for is the future for the working people of Ireland. Jimmy Walshe, now over 70 years old, is alive and as good a Socialist Republican as ever. Long may he live!

The Castlecómer miners received an invitation to send a delegate to the Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions which was convened to meet in Moscow in August 1930. The miners accepted the invitation, elected Nicholas Boran to be their delegate and raised the money to finance his trip. He was refused a passport by the Cosgrave Free State Government. However, he left Ireland and got to Soviet Russia, where he stayed for three months.

## Boran Taken Off Bus

On his return, in November, Boran was taken off the bus from Dublin at Crettyard by the Gardai and taken to the barracks at Massford. A large number of miners and relatives had gathered to greet Boran and he was given a great ovation when he finally emerged from the Garda barracks. Boran told his audience of the difficulties he had encountered, without a passport, of getting across Europe, into Soviet Russia; he said that on his return to Ireland the lackeys of the Free State Government were trying to intimidate him and prevent him from telling the truth about Soviet Russia.

During his absence the campaign of intimidation continued amongst the miners. Father Kavanagh in his sermons insinuated that it was not the moneys of the miners which had financed Boran's visit to Russia, and hinted about "Russian Gold".

In answer to the sneers, taunts and attacks in the "Kilkenny Journal" against the new union, Nicholas Boran, as secretary, replied in a letter dated March 23, 1931, part of which stated:

"Owing to gross misrepresentation and the slanders levelled at our newly organised Union, we find it necessary to point out its objects and principles. After experience of different unions our members came to the conclusion that a union catering for the Irish Mine, Quarry and Allied Workers was long overdue. After organising and forming such a union it is astonishing to find in the heart of the mining area that there is a man claiming to be a workers' representative who does not know the name of our new Union, and accepting the taunt that it was under Soviet control.

"I think the real trouble is because it is solely and wholly under the workers' control. We cannot understand what the object is of confusing our Union with the Irish Workers' Union — Larkin's Union—when it is neither attached nor affiliated to it or to any other body governing it.

### R.I.L.U. Affiliate

"The Irish Mine, Quarry and Allied Workers' Union intends to affiliate only with the Red International of Labour Unions, which is the only international organisation, we feel sure, that will not betray the interests of the workers. Its principles are class against class—workers versus capitalism—and its objects being the ultimate overthrow of the capitalistic system, which we believe will be the only genuine cure for the evils and miseries which the workers of Ireland are subjected to. We will co-operate with any union or revolutionary organisation which is fighting sincerely in the interests of the workers in any crisis, being assured that they are out against the bosses and that the workers' cause will not be betrayed."

The new Union made a series of demands on the mine-owners for improved wages and working conditions. The reply of the Prior-Wansforde family was to describe the men's claims as "so unreasonable that they cannot even be considered".

By present-day standards their demands were very modest; the most hard-pressed and exploited section of the miners, the trammers, put in a claim for an extra 1½ new pence per hour (3d. old money).

Strike action was taken in support of the modest claim, the Union had no funds to pay strike pay. The "Irish Workers' Voice" pointed out that the Castlecomer miners were fighting in their bare feet. They were without funds, without publicity or the means of securing it. It was the boast of the Prior-Wansforde family that they had beaten every strike. That hunger would make the miners yield. It was a tough, uphill

fight for the Castlecomer workers. The big people in the movement, at the time, the I.T.G.W.U., were against them and had their influence among other sections in the trade union movement.

Spokesmen of the miners came to Dublin to seek aid for their fight. The "Irish Workers' Voice" sponsored a meeting of support for the 400 Castlecomer miners at Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin, on October 28, 1932, to which Trade Union, Labour and National speakers were invited. The miners' strike committee launched a campaign of seeking support in Kilkenny and the surrounding counties from both merchants and farmers for food and money, as well as organising workers collections and support which came from some trade unions.

The six weeks strike ended with the miners securing two-thirds of their demands; this was considered a real victory against a family-owned concern which had boasted they never had and never would lose a strike by their workers; starvation would, they believed, always come to their aid.

### Miners Win

On this occasion, the miners, organised with militant leadership, were capable of winning practical support from fellow-workers, farmers and others which enabled them to fight on to victory. It was the Communist-inspired militant trade union of the Castlecomer miners that brought the planter Prior-Wansforde family to account and in the years which followed they had to negotiate on the wages and conditions of the workers through the trade union organisation. The family dynasty position was over.

The victory of the miners and their militant Union was not to be allowed to survive. The Prior-Wansfordes and all of local reaction were to hit back. To quote from the "Irish Workers' Voice", January 7, 1933 :

"Prior-Wansforde, the British planter and coal-owner, has replied to the Kilkenny miners who a few weeks ago defeated him—the first defeat he has experienced at the hands of Irish workers within living memory. And he has replied through the mouth of the Most Rev. Dr. Collier, Bishop of Ossory.

"Yesterday the Bishop's New Year pastoral was read in all the chapels in his diocese. The Bishop proclaims 'the whole Communistic organisation and programme in the diocese to be under the ban of the Church'. The blow is directed not only at the Revolutionary Workers Groups in the county, but at all unemployed organisations, and, most important of all, at the Irish Mine and Quarry Workers' Union which led the Comer miners to victory.

"Said Dr. Collier :

"Those who are in a position to know, who have first-hand information, tell us to beware. We in Kilkenny have reason to know how true this warning is. We have the only coal-mining area in the country employing hundreds of workers. Such a centre is always the hope of the Communist agitator. A few weeks ago our city and the industrial areas of the county shared in a Communist push organised practically in every country. It was on a small scale, but it was real, and had the marks of the beast.

**"We had the secret inspiration from headquarters, the paid agitator, the preaching of labour unrest, the veiled incitement to looting and rioting. We also had the irreligious part of the Communist programme, which denied the divinity of Christ.**

"'Communists,' continued his Lordship, 'linked up their programme with national efforts, thus deceiving and imposing on the generous instincts of the young.

"They posed as Labour leaders; as apostles of the working classes. Poisoned lies and libels were whispered into the ears of workers, especially in times of idleness. Their object was achieved when these efforts disrupted the lawful trade unions of the country and threw Labour back one hundred years. It was only when the lawful trade union was broken that Labour could be formed in the Communistic mould. Wise Labour leaders who were Catholic and Christian were now alive to this grave danger to their movement.'

### Excommunication

**"Excommunication, therefore, is decreed against all miners who dare to remain loyal to the Union that has won them such a fine victory."**

"The planter could never have broken the power that had defeated him—the organised strength of the Irish Mine and Quarry Workers' Union," wrote the "Irish Workers' Voice" (Jan. 28, 1933). "But he had one card up his sleeve, the card that has never failed, the card that was played in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The planter saw his friend, the parish priest. The parish priest saw the bishop. The bishop came to the mining village. And he brought with him an awesome piseóg. Man, woman, child, fool or four-footed animal that had truck or treatings with the accursed Miners' Union was placed under the ban of the Church: bell, book and candle would succeed where six weeks' hunger had failed—the Miners' Union was to be stamped out."

In the weeks and months that followed the intervention of Bishop Collier, all sorts of intimidations were used to frighten and split the miners. The Catholic religion of the miners was used most unscrupulously to serve the interests of the Protestant planter family and their anti-working class bias, not to mention their notorious hostility to the cause of Ireland's independence.

By this time, the de Valera Government was in power, but the miners' interests fared no better. The planter mine-owner had the full backing of the de Valera police in their onslaught against the miners, the same as in the time when the Free Staters were in power.

Against the full blast of the Bishop's "order" of excommunication, the tirades on Sunday mornings from the pulpits, the newspapers' campaign and all that went with a full-blooded anti-Communist onslaught in the early 1930s, it was not possible to maintain the Irish Miners, Quarrymen's and Allied Workers Union. At all costs, trade union organisation had to be maintained and never again would the Prior Wansfordes be allowed to refuse any rights to their workers.

## Union Saved

Negotiations were concluded with the I.T.G.W.U. whereby the members of the Irish Miners, Quarrymen's and Allied Workers' Union became a branch and the personnel of the local Union's committee took over the running of the I.T.G.W.U. branch and with that body the Prior-Wansfordes would have to negotiate and conclude all further agreements about wages and agreements.

It was a set-back for the revolutionary advance which appeared so promising in the early 1930s. But it was not by any means defeat for the workers. Union organisation was maintained. The mine-owner family would no longer be a law unto themselves. Also, the I.T.G.W.U. would serve the miners' interests.

In the years that followed, thanks to the militant spirit and leadership which their own union had inspired, wages and working conditions were greatly improved. Baths and other amenities became commonplace. Improvement after improvement was achieved, down the years, until in 1969, when the mines were closed down.

FOOTNOTE — Nicholas Boran who played a prominent part in the struggle of the Castlecomer miners in the early 1930s, discontinued to be identified with the Communist movement in the

mid-1930s. He became a member of the National Executive of the I.T.G.W.U., a position he held for many years. He was prominent in the effort in 1969 to keep the mine in operation, to save the jobs of the 400-odd workers who were employed. Boran died in November 1971.

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## The Party and Struggle for Peace

In 1970, nearly 40,000 Dublin people signed the appeal calling on the U.S. to end the bombing of North Vietnam. And when Nixon came to Dublin, 4,000 marched in protest to the American Embassy behind the banner of the Irish Voice on Vietnam, which was set up in 1966 by Dan Breen and Peadar O'Donnell. Among those who marched that day were the fourteen men and women who had made up the small, lonely anti-war picket placed on the same embassy by the Irish Workers' Party nearly ten years before.

The fourteen Communists who registered that first public protest over Vietnam were acting in a tradition of which the Party has reason to be proud: its pioneering role in the peace movement in Ireland.

It wasn't always an easy role. In the late 40's and early 50's Peace was indeed a "dirty word" in this country, where the icy blasts of the cold war merged with fulminations from press and pulpit to produce an atmosphere which did not exactly encourage public peace activity. Nevertheless, it was essential to brave the prevailing hostility and hysteria so that there should be an Irish contribution, however modest, to the great, world-wide movement against the mounting danger of atomic war.

## Irish Peace Campaign

Members of our Party were prominent among those people who came together to set up the Irish Peace Campaign. A tiny office was acquired in Camden Street—in those days a feat in itself. The years of the Campaign were stormy at times. It was pretty well impossible to secure a hall for a public meeting—on one occasion when the old Engineers' Hall in Dawson Street had been booked, posters went up around Dublin inciting an attack on the meeting. Even after the hall had been withdrawn, it was still protected by a police cordon, but it was possible to transfer the audience by word of mouth to another venue without the opposition

finding out in time to do any damage. Of course it wasn't as difficult a task as it sounds—almost everybody who attended peace meetings during that period were known by sight to the organisers!

During the door-to-door campaign to collect signatures to the Stockholm Appeal to ban the atomic bomb, one group of canvassers was set upon by the incensed residents of a north city estate—who had heard a none too peaceful sermon the previous Sunday—and was driven to take refuge in a cinema, with the Gardai firing shots in the air to protect them (or was it the cinema?).

In the subsequent campaign in support of the Appeal for a 5-Power Peace Pact, another group was attacked by a mob which was under the impression that what was being collected was the addresses of Irish people who refused to sign the Appeal—so that Stalin would know precisely which houses to drop the bomb on.

Nor was the hounding of peace workers simply a matter of the spontaneous reaction of right-wing elements or misguided people. One Party-member on his return from a meeting of the World Peace Council, found his notice waiting for him on his desk in the E.S.B.

## Rev. Harry Armstrong

Of course it wasn't only Communists who were prepared to stand up and be counted on the side of World Peace in those early post-war years. The record of the times would be incomplete without mention of the brave stand taken by such people as Peadar O'Donnell, who presided over many a peace meeting in Dublin and Belfast, the Rev. Harry Armstrong, Rector of Howth, who attended the Warsaw Peace Congress; Mai Keating and Rose Jacob, two of the founders of the Irish Peace Campaign; Louie Bennett and Helen Chenevix of the Irish Women Workers' Union, who lent their prestige—and on one occasion their union premises—to the peace movement.

While unrelenting in its efforts to help build a broadly-based anti-War movement in Ireland, the Party was not lacking in its own individual initiatives when the occasion demanded. When the U.S. puppet regime in South Korea launched its attack on the North in 1950, Dublin was covered with whitewashed slogans in protest. And on one occasion during the period when extreme pressure was being put on Ireland to join N.A.T.O., thousands of people going to the All-Ireland Final were greeted with the words painted over the entrances to Croke Park—"No war bases for the U.S."

# BALLYFERMOT CO-OP FALLS FOUL OF REACTION

**W**HAT follows is an edited version of an article by Joe Deasy which was published in the Nov.-Dec. 1952 edition of the "Irish Workers' Voice":

In September 1952, Ballyfermot and Inchicore witnessed one of the most scandalous and unscrupulous campaigns ever waged against a people's movement—the Inchicore-Ballyfermot Co-operative Society, Dublin.

This Society was founded in 1946 and was based on the democratic principles of all co-operative movements. It was legally registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts early in 1947. It was non-political and non-sectarian and included among its members and committee persons of different political and religious beliefs.

After a short time in existence the Society purchased a small shop in Inchicore. During two trading years of this shop's history dividends were distributed among the members on the usual co-op. basis, the amount purchased by each member. In 1951, through hard work and initiative, the allocation of one of the rented shops in Ballyfermot was secured from the Housing Committee of the Dublin Corporation. The membership had in the meantime increased considerably and reached a figure approaching 400 paid-up members and 300 partially paid-up.

## First Blow

The Ballyfermot shop was a splendid, first-class grocery and provision stores. By careful and conscientious management it was well on the high road to success and promised to be a real asset to the people of the area. Then, after 12 months of such progress, reactionary forces, led by the local clergy, launched a campaign to wreck the Society.

The first blow was the disruption of a public open-air meeting, the sole purpose of which was the propagation of the co-operative idea. The attempted justification for this disruption was that some members of the Society's management committee were associated with the Irish Workers' League. It has never been explained why such a dangerous and inflammable means of starting the attack was resorted to. If exception was taken to certain committee members there were surely more just and mannerly means of indicating it. So outrageous was the tactic that even one of the three members of the management committee who later

played a treacherous part in the attack, expressed his indignation at the procedure.

As chairman of that public meeting I adopted the only attitude which could be correct. I declared that the Co-op. was non-sectarian and non-political and consequently refused to discuss the political beliefs of myself or any member of my committee. This attitude was the subject of a poisonous leaflet distributed in the area. Though printed, it did not bear the name of a printer.

## Business Affected

Up to this point the attack had not adversely affected business, which, on the contrary, had somewhat increased. However, there were indications that powerful forces in the area threatened the very existence of the Society. At this stage we were led to believe that the clergy were prepared to withdraw their objections to the Society if the I.W.L. members resigned their official positions. In spite of the injustice involved and of the years of toil and effort we had contributed to the Society, myself and the few other League members offered to resign.

To the astonishment of the management committee, it was then learned that the resignation of League members was not enough. The objective had now become nothing less than the ruthless destruction of the Society. Another blow was then delivered. Denunciations were issued from the pulpits of the churches in Inchicore and Ballyfermot.

By now three members of the management committee had been prevailed upon to resign. The remaining members decided that an early general meeting was necessary at which the problems besetting the Society could be openly and frankly discussed, and a new committee elected.

After some very significant failures to secure a satisfactory hall in the area, a members' meeting was convened in a trade union hall in the city. It had been expected that those who were attacking the Society would welcome the holding of a members' meeting, at which they could either state their case or, if not members themselves, have it put forward for them. Instead, the area was widely canvassed and members were told they should not attend the general meeting. In spite of the boycott, a good number of members did attend. There can be

little doubt that many members were influenced to stay away from the meeting. A really hypocritical feature of the affair was the actual presence of some of the inspired leaders of the boycott.

From this meeting a new committee was elected, which excluded members of the I.W.L. who declined nomination in order to remove all justification for the introduction of red herrings by those threatening the Society. In spite of these efforts to render the constitution of the management committee acceptable to the clergy, the attack continued and the new committee was also denounced from the pulpits.

As earlier indicated, this campaign produced a goodly crop of lies, slanders, and half-truths. Newspapers like the "Sunday Express", "Sunday Independent," "Sunday Press" and "Catholic Standard" enlisted in the cause of the great smear. The latter paper indulged in the grossest and vilest distortion.

The principal lie was the presentation of the Co-operative Society as a "Communist plot", a "cover" for other activities. Not a scrap of evidence was produced to support that slander. The mere presence of I.W.L. members on the management committee was considered sufficient reason for broadcasting this poison.

## Forced Close-down

Another part of the smear technique was the attempt to present the sale of papers in Ballyfermot as having a sinister connection with the Co-op. The fact that papers like the "Irish Workers' Voice" were sold all over Dublin and to argue that the inclusion of Ballyfermot involved the Co-op. was sheer falsehood.

The Inchicore-Ballyfermot Co-op. shops had to close down in face of the fierce hostility which was worked up by a combination of the local clerical reaction and shopkeeper vested interests.

It should be understood that such a campaign had as its first objective the uprooting of the local co-op. movement, which many people had come to realise its good purpose and value in their desire for good service and reasonably-priced essential food items. Further, the campaign was intended to stifle initiative among the people, to curb and hem in their democratic and civil liberties and to warn all and sundry not to press too far in support of radical ideas or policies.

# BELFAST'S OCTOBER, 1932

**T**HE great struggles that took place in Belfast against unemployment in the years 1930 to 1934 were not isolated events. They were part of the world-wide consequences of the crisis of capitalism, which emerged from the World War of 1914-18.

The unemployment benefit paid at the time was 25s. (£1.25) a week. I can remember, although I was not very old, the popular song, "Twenty-five bob and nothing to do, now I'm on the labour bureau". The 25 shillings was given in order to stave off the widespread indignation developing into open revolt.

Unemployment was high, upwards of 100,000 were without jobs. In the Twenty-Six Counties there were even more without jobs and except for those with insurance stamps, there was no assistance from public funds.

I became unemployed at that time, the textile trade, like all other trades, being hit by the crisis situation.

In 1931 there was a demonstration about unemployment at Templemore Avenue, in Belfast, and among the speakers were Captain Jack White, Bob Stewart and Tommy Watters. The demonstration was broken up by the R.U.C. who behaved brutally and badly manhandled Jack White.

## Captain Jack White

Captain Jack White had a distinguished career in the British Army, his father was involved in and decorated for his part in the defence of Ladysmith in the South African War. Captain Jack was the person who put the idea to Jim Larkin for the formation of a Citizen Army in the height of the police brutalities during the Dublin 1913 lock-out.

In 1932, elections were pending for the publicly-elected bodies, such as the Poor Law Guardians and other municipal authorities. Discontent was mounting among the workers who were involved in relief work. Their scale of pay was disgraceful.

At the time these workers had sought the support of the trade unions and the Labour Party. For the Labour Party, the sights were fixed on the outcome of the municipal elections and all urgent problems should wait and be settled by the support recorded for the party.

I remember attending a conference under the auspices of the Labour Party and the trade unions. Present were Jimmy Kater; he was a stalwart of the trade union and Communist movements. He proposed a resolution of support for the relief workers. I immediately got up

and seconded Kater's proposal. Harry Midgely said, "I thought you would do that".

The Revolutionary Workers' Groups at the time were in existence in Belfast following the Dublin foundation conference in March 1930. The R.W.G. had branches in Belfast, in the south, the east, the north and in the west areas of the city. Each group of the R.W.G. was given the responsibility of assisting and encouraging the relief workers in their areas.

The relief workers decided on strike action for October 3, 1932.

Now I always remember it very, very vividly because my father was unemployed at the time and I also was unemployed. When I was going out of the house that morning to speak at my first public meeting on the relief workers' issue in Library Street, I said to my father. "I don't know what will happen, whether I'll come home tonight or not, or whether it will be jail". My father said, "Remember, the door is always open".



**TOMMY GEEHAN**

A forceful speaker, he played a leading role in the unemployed struggles in Belfast in the 1930's.

The leader of the Unemployed Movement and of the relief workers' strike was Tommy Geehan. His health was never robust; he was a popular and forceful speaker at the great meetings that were held in the 1930's. He died in the early 1960's.

Wal Hannington was the leader of the British Unemployed Workers' Movement. He wrote a book, "Ten Lean Years," in which he records a very good account of the Belfast 1932 events, based on information he got from a number of people who were actively involved.

Hannington relates: ". . . It started over a strike of 2,000 Belfast unemployed who were being compelled to do relief work in exchange for a Poor Relief pittance. The maximum outdoor relief, even for a man, wife and family, had been fixed at 24s., and single men and women had been completely refused relief. Negotiations took place between the Irish unemployed movement and the Mayor of Belfast who offered some concessions with the object of dividing the strikers and the mass movement. These were defeated by the unanimous vote of the strikers; then commenced mass marches and demonstrations and collisions occurred with the police on several occasions."

## Great Demonstration

The biggest demonstration that we had was about half-way through the strike and we had eight thousand people at the Custom House steps. They marched from Derry and Coleraine. They marched from every part of Belfast, the men from the Falls and the men from the Shankill coming over Smithfield and they in turn met the men from Crumlin Road. I was marching with the Crumlin people. The Short Strand men met the men from Ballymacarat and they marched in unison. There was absolute unity of the working people. The shopkeepers, though they were suffering terribly from the depression themselves, contributed food and money. They set up kitchens for relief. We organised collections and everything of this nature was done in order to try and get over the difficult period these men were facing.

"The movement spread to Derry," Hannington tells, "where there were over one thousand families starving. The strike of the task workers in Belfast met with a wide response from the workers in employment. In a few days a relief fund of over three hundred pounds was raised and large supplies of food and clothing began to pour into the strike centre."

We also got a lot of assistance from the South. I myself went with Bob Stewart to Dublin where we met Larkin, Peadar O'Donnell and other leaders of the trade union and national movements. Peadar O'Donnell arranged a meeting in his house in Eccles Street to hear the

story of what was happening in Belfast. I always chuckled afterwards because Peadar asked Bob Stewart, "What would happen if the police batoned the workers in Belfast?" Up to this time there had been no real viciousness on the part of the police and Bob said, "Oh, they wouldn't baton the workers on the Newtownards Road". But they did.

Hannington resumes: "The struggle was gaining momentum hour by hour. Then on Monday, October 10, the relief workers' committee called for a rent strike and a school strike, and demanded from the authorities an increase in the scales of relief. Bonfires were lit in the workers' quarters and round them gathered thousands of workers who were addressed by the unemployed leaders. The city of Belfast became an armed camp. Thousands of police being imported." Heavily armed, they dashed through the streets in armoured cars. At several points the bonfires were extinguished but the workers re-lit them. A special mass demonstration of women was held in St. Mary's Hall. They pledged themselves to stand shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk in the fight. Then on the following day, Tuesday, October 11, workers were assembling everywhere in groups to discuss the events of the previous night and expressing determination to stand out solid against their starving conditions.

"The police began to charge the crowds as they gathered. But after the first shot was fired the workers met them with a hail of stones and when the police got within striking distance of any body of workers a series of fierce battles broke out. Then armoured cars were called out and drove into the crowds wherever they assembled. Squads of workers rushed to the sites of the relief-work jobs and seized the tools with which they had been compelled to slave for a starvation pittance; armed with these they returned to the demonstrations and fought desperately against the police.

## Barricades Go Up

"In the Falls and Shankill districts very fierce hand-to-hand battles ensued; while the police used their batons the workers used pick shafts and other weapons. Failing to intimidate and defeat the workers, the police opened fire with rifles and revolvers. Now workers fell to the ground, so badly wounded that they had to be removed to hospital; whilst others with lesser wounds were treated in the homes of comrades.

"Then the workers threw up barricades against the mounted police and the armoured cars, bravely fighting behind these barricades, repeatedly repulsed the attacks of the police. . . .

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"On Wednesday, October 12, fighting continued. One of the workers shot down the previous day had died in hospital; British troops now came into action against the unemployed and the workers. Seven lorry loads of Royal Enniskillen Fusiliers equipped with machine guns were drafted into the city. Two more workers who had been shot down on the Tuesday lay in a critical condition. But in spite of this tremendous display of armed force and brutality, the surging mass movement of the hungry Belfast workers could not be quelled. Despite martial law a mighty demonstration of the unemployed took place in the main street.

"A police attack was made and an attempt to prevent the demonstration reaching Balaclava Road was repulsed by the workers with volleys of stones, and again the police opened fire with rifles. In Albert Street workers were shot down and had to be removed to hospital. In Osmond Street the workers beat back the police and chased them; the police were stoned as they ran and only when further reinforcements were brought up and opened fire did the police hold their ground.



BETTY SINCLAIR

Still fighting and leading. Member of N.E.C. of the Communist Party of Ireland and Secretary of the Belfast Trades Council.

"Barricades appeared in the working-class quarters and lorries conveyed forces of police into the storm areas. In some streets, where the police got the upper hand, they compelled the workers at the point of the bayonet to remove the barricades. In the Falls area workers actually tore up the flagstones and dug trenches across the streets. Before the day was over, fifty workers were suffering severe injuries from gunshot wounds and hundreds of others had been injured by clubs and other weapons used by the police.

"The Lord Mayor of Belfast and representatives of the Ulster Government called a hurried meeting with trade union representatives to discuss whether anything could be done about the relief rates. The demands of the unemployed were for full trade union rates of wages for all those on relief work, for workers to be employed on alternate weeks, for out door relief on the same scale as in England. The battle cry of the starving Belfast workers was: 'We want bread!'

"Support for the unemployed in their struggle came from the employed workers in all parts of Ireland, irrespective of whether they were Catholic or Protestant. A mass meeting of three thousand workers in the linen mills in Belfast declared for strike action in sympathy with the unemployed. On the Wednesday night the Belfast Trades Council passed a resolution in favour of a general strike and called upon the unions to take up the issue immediately.

"During the night of Wednesday another worker who had been shot down by the police died in hospital. The fighting continued through the night and into Thursday. Then the second battalion of the King's Royal Rifles arrived from Tidworth. During the day conferences were resumed between the Belfast authorities and the Northern Ireland Government. The Falls Road district was an extraordinary storm centre. Barricades were everywhere on the streets. In an effort to smash the resistance of the workers in this district the police stopped the delivery of food there by any tradesman. It meant that they were going to try and starve the workers out completely. By Thursday night hundreds of workers were under arrest.

"The funeral of the workers killed in the struggle took place on Friday October 14. Thousands of unemployed workers marched in the funeral cortege to Milltown Cemetery and thousands lined the route to pay their last tribute to their dead comrades."

## Tom Mann

Tom Mann, the veteran British workers' leader, who had come to attend the funeral and show his solidarity with the workers' struggle, was put on the boat back to Britain that night. An old Act of Parliament, passed in the 15th century to give legal status for this action of excluding a British citizen from the Six Counties was resurrected. Harry Pollitt, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain, was also to be excluded from Northern Ireland under the same ancient and long-forgotten law.

The great struggles of the workers in Belfast forced the Stormont Government to yield in large measure to the demands

of the relief workers whose strike had precipitated the mass demonstrations and protest actions.

The Government concessions provided that the scale of relief for man and wife was to be raised from 8s. to 20s. a week. A man, wife and child would go up from 12s. to 24s. A man, wife and 2 children from 16s. to 26s. A man, wife and 3 children from 20s. to 28s.

Beyond that number of children, up to a maximum of 32s. a week, as against a previous maximum of 24s.

Payments on relief work schemes were also greatly increased.

The Revolutionary Workers' Groups, the forerunner of the Communist Party of Ireland, played the leading role in the 1932 unemployed struggles.

For me, it was the first strike in which I had been involved. I went through the exciting days and became more and more involved in the militant actions, with not much time to take off and think out on the issues that required serious political analysis and examination.

Very often, we were on the go till 6 o'clock in the morning, with little time for sleep.

Tommy Geehan, for a time was in hiding, the police wanted him. This involved moving him from one place to another. But we succeeded in saving Tommy Geehan from arrest.

Seán Murray, General Secretary of the R.W.G., summed up the lessons of the

great October 1932 days in Belfast in the weekly "Irish Workers' Voice" (October 1932):

"The Belfast relief workers' struggle is the model for the Irish working class, whether in the fight against cuts and dismissals or in that against the means test and for adequate scales of relief. The relief workers went into the fight for more money and got more money. That is the first consideration. Two thousand men on relief jobs remained solid and this in a city hitherto rent with divisions among the working class. The theory that the workers won't unite, won't fight — the favourite argument of Labour leaders against the Communists — was shattered in the baton charges and barricades of Ballymacarrett, Shankill Road, Falls Road, and in the monster demonstration through the centre of the town and the marches to the workhouse.

"The lesson here is clear. The workers will fight, given a militant leadership, and the workers will unite precisely around a fight for food and wages. The leaders of the Relief Workers' Committee saw this clearly when they declined the line of the clergymen, who at the meeting which decided for action, argued that 'a fight would result in a split, in defeat, and what not'.

"The relief workers' struggle is a triumph for rank-and-file independent leadership by the workers themselves. The relief workers rejected the Labour Reformists policy of wait for the June

elections. Mass action has here exposed the shameful propaganda of the Labour Reformists about capturing the Guardians through the ballot box nine months hence.

"The struggle has made clear the need for a closer fighting unity between employed and unemployed under rank and file leadership. The absence of effective rank and file leadership among the employed workers was one of the chief weaknesses of the situation. The union leadership was able to prevent any considerable extension of the fight to the factories in the form of a cessation of work. The Trades Council resolution could only remain a resolution while it depended on the reformists to operate it.

"But the fact that a large number of textile workers was actually led from the factories to the demonstration on Tuesday shows what can be done where rank and file leadership exists.

"In the struggle the Revolutionary Workers' Groups have shown that Communist policy is the only way to win bread and butter, and lead the workers to social and national emancipation. None other but Communist leadership brought the victory to the relief workers. No party but the Communist Party of Ireland will bring victory to the Irish working class and poor farmers in the fight for the Workers' and Farmers' Republic. The building of this party of the Irish workers is now the job of all class-conscious workers."

## UNEMPLOYED STRUGGLES: 1920's to 1950's

**I**n the ten years of the Cumann na nGael Government in the Free State (1922-32) unemployment ran high; it was not a time of wage increases, but actually of workers being forced to accept wage reductions, even after strikes and other militant actions. A limited tariff system left the Irish market open to British manufactured goods, causing much unemployment for Irish workers. The heavy export of cattle to Britain favoured the ranchers and associated interests. There was the world economic crisis that hit Britain, America and the capitalist world generally.

"The crisis deepens in Ireland" was the heading of an editorial in the "Irish Workers' Voice", October 25, 1930: "The picture is the same both North and South; a steady decline in the basic industries, textiles, shipbuilding, rail transport and agriculture, a tremendous drop in wholesale prices; and a steady growth in the army of unemployed workers; while the balance of trade grows worse. Unemployment in the North has grown to over 70,000 and this does not include those struck off the

register . . . Nor does it include unemployed agricultural labourers. In the Free State the Government does not publish the real figures on unemployment, but not even a Government Minister will contradict the statement that over 130,000 workers are unemployed.

"The farmers have especially suffered owing to the fall in wholesale prices, because, while they are receiving greatly reduced prices for their commodities the fall in wholesale prices is not reflected in retail prices." The editorial pointed out that the farmers were getting less for what they sold and paying higher prices for what they bought. This made possible a narrowing of the gap between exports and imports. A falling purchasing power among the mass of the people brought about a lowering of imports."

In the 'twenties, unemployed agitations were a constant form of working class struggle. A feature of all unemployed struggles were demonstrations and then there would be a lull, sometimes arising from a partial victory; other times a failure to win any success.

The Irish National Unemployed

Movement came into existence in 1926. Some of the activists associated with the leadership were formerly employed in the Inchicore works and had been victimised in a strike.

When the "Irish Workers' Voice" and the Revolutionary Workers' Groups were launched in April, 1930, the I.N.U.M. published a message of greeting. For the unemployed workers of the time conditions were grim. The payments for those with stamps were low enough, and for those without stamps it was just awful. There was no legislation entitling people out of work to any rights; they depended on local relief and private charity activities.

Many of the demonstrations in Dublin went to the James's Street Workhouse to protest against the system that an unemployed person had to enter into the Workhouse and be subject to its rules and regulations, which included a form of labour (chopping wood and such like) to become eligible for a night's shelter. Where a family was compelled to enter, the wife and children went to one section and the husband to another. Unemploy-

ment assistance, miserably inadequate as it is today, was totally non-existent at the time.

The I.N.U.M. was not confined to Dublin or the 26 Counties. It had branches in Belfast; in Coleraine the late Jimmy Murphy was leader. He was to be in later years prominent in many other aspects of the workers' struggle.

The May Day demonstration in 1930, in Dublin, was an occasion for an impressive participation by an unemployed contingent, and at the public meeting the secretary of the I.N.U.M., Mr. Christy Ferguson, was a speaker. In later years Mr. Ferguson, a boilermaker by trade, became the Industrial Secretary of the Workers' Union of Ireland. He died young in 1957, a little over 50 years old. His death was the reason used by Jim Larkin, Jun., to retire from membership of Dáil Eireann as a Labour Deputy, so as to devote his full time to the affairs of the W.U.I., of which he became General Secretary after the death of Larkin, Sen., in 1947.

The standpoint of the Free State Government (1922-32) in regard to the unemployed was bluntly stated by one of its Ministers, Mr. Patrick McGilligan, when he said it was not the responsibility of governments to provide employment. He went further, to underline the reactionary social philosophy of his Government, when, speaking in the Seanad in December 1930 on an Unemployment Insurance Bill, the purpose of which was to cut down the State's contributions to the Unemployed Fund, he said:

### McGilligan's Way

"... it was not true to say that benefits to unemployed persons had been worsened. The reverse was the fact. The situation of the unemployed had worsened to the extent that the Free State Government were not giving the 'dole' in this country. They had done so for a short period, during a bad winter, when men released from the Army had been thrown on the unemployment market. Apart from that, they had not given the 'dole' in this country and they did not intend to do so."

This was McGilligan's way of saying that unemployed people who had not the necessary qualifying employment stamps could not expect any assistance from the State. It was a brutal and callous policy and it won the support of the propertied classes. This support was expressed in the Senate debate by a Government supporter, a Governor of the Bank of Ireland, Sir John Keane, who said: "This was not a class matter: it was a collective matter, and the employers and the State were entitled to recognition as well as the employees. I

congratulate the Government on the firm stand they have taken and the example they have shown is one that many countries envy."

Such were the hard-faced, socially reactionary spokesmen of property, finance and business that the unemployed and the whole Labour movement had to battle with in the 1930's.

In the Free State at the time unemployment insurance was a farce, four-fifths of those out of work were receiving no benefit at all. The Free State Government's claim at the time that it was the envy of all capitalist Governments was not exaggerated, for none of them had succeeded, as did the Dublin Government, to make the unemployment fund a source of excess income. The fact was the Free State Exchequer benefited annually by over £300,000 from the contributions to the unemployment insurance fund.

At the Labour Exchanges and throughout Dublin meetings under the auspices of the I.N.U.M. were held; Sean Murray, Jim Larkin, Jun., and other Revolutionary Workers' Groups spokesmen were constantly on call to support the unemployed workers. On occasions of marches to the James's Street Workhouse, to Leinster House and to the other places to demand redress for their grievances, there were many instances of baton charges, unemployed workers being injured, arrested and court proceedings followed.

As part of his duty as the Revolutionary Workers' Groups representative in the City Council in support of the struggle of the unemployed, at the April 1931 meeting of the Corporation, Larkin Jun. proposed:



**WILLIE WATSON**

He was Secretary of the Irish National Unemployed Movement in the years before the Second World War.

"That having regard to the rigid restraints of unemployment insurance in the Irish Free State, the growing number of unemployed workers thrown off the Labour Exchange, and the consequent growth of the demand for poor relief by the local authorities at the expense of local ratepayers, this Council condemns the Free State Government for the callous attitude towards the unemployed, particularly in regard to unemployment benefits, and in denying relief to starving workers, while the Fund shows a large credit balance, and calls upon that Government to grant to all unemployed workers unemployment benefits at rates not less than those at present found in Great Britain and Northern Ireland."

Larkin Jun. spoke at length in support of the motion. It was seconded by Larkin Sen. and while he was speaking in support the closure was moved by Sir Thomas Robinson (a businessman) and seconded by Mrs. Maud Walsh, a lady of property. The closure was carried with the support of Mr. Martin O'Sullivan, a Labour member and Mrs. Mary Kettle, the widow of Tom Kettle, an aunt of Conor Cruise-O'Brien.

The change of Government in early 1932 did not mean an end of the unemployed struggles. Between the promises of the de Valera Party in the election and the practices there was a very wide gap, and the numbers of out-of-work and many of the grievances they had under the Cosgrave regime remained. The months went by before legislation was enacted to alter in what can only be described as a miserly way the position of the unemployed.

### Longford Demonstration

The Dublin unemployed demonstrated in marches to the Dáil in support of their demands. The Longford unemployed were also in action at the time and a demonstration of some 1,000 was held at which Jim Galton, of Leitrim, and Dan Layde, Dublin Organiser of the I.N.U.M., were the speakers.

Arising from the struggle of the unemployed in many parts of the country, the proposal was put in the "Irish Workers' Voice" of October 24, 1932, for the convening of a national convention of unemployed groups covering all the 32 counties.

The immediate demands of the Dublin unemployed at the time put to the de Valera Government were as follows:

- (1) Abolition of food tickets; payment of relief in cash.
- (2) Relief to be paid at Labour Exchange rates.
- (3) Single men and women to get immediate relief.

- (4) A week's benefit, instead of a day, for each stamp at the Labour Exchange.
- (5) A proper place to be provided where relief would be paid out.

As well as Dublin, the unemployed of Leitrim, of Roscommon, of Nenagh and other areas were marching to or sending deputations to the Local Councils demanding action about their plight.

Arising from the public meetings, the marches and deputations, the unemployed scored notable achievements; in November 1932, they held a big meeting in College Green to celebrate the victory they had won from the Dublin Board of Assistance, which included :

- (1) Abolition of the food tickets, payment to be made in cash.
- (2) Increase of 25% in relief rates.
- (3) Single men and women in lodgings to be paid full scale.

The campaign for a national convention of the unemployed went forward and around the country support was won. At the time, the unemployed demands were modest enough, but were not to be won easily. These were :

Married men should be	given	75p per week
	a wife	25p "
	each child	10p "
Single men over 18 years	75p	"
Single women over 18 years	37½p	"

The national conference of the unemployed took place in December 1932, some ten months after the de Valera Government had taken over. This indicated that, as in the days of the Free State, unemployment remained a big problem.

In the mid-1930s, emigration developed much to the relief of the de Valera Government in the period before the Second World War; emigration removed the danger of serious social unrest for the Fianna Fáil Government then and for years later.

### Register Not Correct

Under the Cosgrave Government the real extent of unemployment was not to be found in official figures. The unemployed with stamps benefit were only calculated as the number unemployed. An early decision of the Fianna Fáil Government was to have all unemployed, including those in rural areas, to register. This produced the result that whereas in March 1933, 31,000 were listed as unemployed and on the 17th December of the same year those registering at Labour Exchanges went up to 102,000, but of that number only 26,000 were qualified to draw unemployment insurance. The Unemployment Assistance Act was an early piece of legislation under Fianna Fáil. This provided for



**DAN LAYDE**  
Chairman of the I.N.U.W. in the 1930's.

small weekly payments to those no longer qualified for unemployment insurance.

The public agitations of the unemployed for work and improved welfare benefits went on; Fianna Fáil was soon to learn that the terms of the Unemployment Assistance Act and other measures they had passed were inadequate to the needs of those out of work. The protest movement continued on into the early war years when there were sit-downs in Dublin's O'Connell Street, resulting in baton charges, arrests and jailings.

Emigration to Britain on a large scale in the 1940's halted the unemployed campaign but it emerged again in the 1950's and in the period of the second Coalition Government (1954-57) it reached new heights.

In the years 1953-54 the unemployed in Dublin organised protest actions and they led to the jailing of some of the leaders. Among those prominently identified with the struggle were Sean Furlong, Dominic Behan, Mick Kearney and Tom Pearle, to mention only a few.

The economy, at the time, was suffering from a so-called balance of payments problem, and during 1956 the Coalition Government introduced a credit-squeeze; also, it imposed import levies and a cut-back on the building programme. In consequence, unemployment in Dublin alone rose from 14,000 to 20,000 during 1956. Most of the men out of work were in the building trades.

Early in 1957 a group of building workers came together at the Werburgh Street (Dublin) Labour Exchange and discussed the prospects of finding employment. They decided that the only hope was to organise the unemployed to demand work. They borrowed a chair from a nearby shop and began a public meeting. From that meeting an Unemployed Protest Committee was formed which included such persons as Liam O'Meara, Jack Murphy, Sam Nolan, Packey Early, Steve Mooney and Johnny Mooney.

They secured a committee room in the premises of the Dublin Trade Union Council. From there they planned and carried out a series of public meetings and marches. Soon the support was numbered in thousands. They carried black coffins which had been a symbol of unemployed marches for many years.

In April 1957, a General Election was announced and the U.P.C. decided to contest the election as a means of focusing attention on the plight of the unemployed and make jobs the central issue in the election. The problem of an unemployed organisation fighting an election was considerable. The first problem was finance. An appeal was sent to the trade unions and to individual trade unionists. This was more successful than expected. Subscriptions were received from such unions as the National Woodworkers, Operative Plasterers, Bricklayers, Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, House and Ship Painters, Dublin Typographical Society and the Belfast and Derry Trades Councils.

### Election Deposit Gift

The committee sought the help and advice from the veteran left-Republican, Peadar O'Donnell. He secured through personal contacts a guarantee of the £100 election deposit. The committee was fortunate in securing an election headquarters opposite Werburgh Street Labour Exchange. Within days a well-organised election machine had been knocked together and hand-made posters and leaflets were available outlining the demands of the unemployed in the Dublin South Central Constituency which was the area it was decided to contest.

The committee had to take a very important decision in the selection of a candidate. Two names were considered, those of Jack Murphy and Sam Nolan. Jack Murphy had a background of struggle in the Building industry as a militant Shop Steward and his political beliefs could be described as Republican-Socialist. He had been interned during the war years.

Sam Nolan had a similar background in the Building industry; he was publicly known as a leading Communist and a member of the Irish Workers' League. The country was still in the grip of the Cold War hysteria, the Hungarian events had taken place in October 1956 and Ireland had taken in hundreds of so-called refugees from that country. An indication of the political atmosphere prevailing at the time can be gauged from the fact that some thousands of students, many from the technical schools, had paraded in support of the Hungarian counter-revolution, and had attacked the progressive, Socialist bookshop, New Books, in Pearse Street.

Members of the committee, including Sam Nolan, argued that his candidature would have left the Unemployed Movement open to accusations of being a Communist front; unemployment, as an issue, would have been pushed into the background.

Jack Murphy was finally the choice as the candidate. The response to the unemployed election campaign was very good and Jack Murphy secured 3,036 first preference votes which resulted in his election. He gained the Labour seat which had been vacated by Jim Larkin, Jun., and which was contested for the Labour Party by Roddy Connolly.

The overall result of the election was the return of a Fianna Fáil majority. The Labour Party as the junior partner of the Coalition dropped over 50,000 votes. Sinn Féin won four seats but did not take their seats in Dáil Eireann.

Jack Murphy's election enhanced the growth of the Unemployed Movement and large rallies in Cork and Waterford resulted in the creation of unemployed organisations in these cities. The Unemployed Movement became the rallying point for all the radical and left-wing forces in the country. The combining of Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary agitation were the correct tactics in the situation.

Reactionary forces, both lay and clerical, realised this better than most, and these forces worked to disrupt the growth of the Unemployed Movement. Jack Murphy experienced personal pressure from both these sources. This pressure took the form of persuading him that he was being used as a pawn by the Communists.

### Food Subsidies Off

The Budget introduced by the Fianna Fáil Government provided for the removal of subsidies on food which cost about £7 million per year. The unemployed suffered most from this step. Jack Murphy, together with two other members of the committee, Jimmy Byrne



**SAM NOLAN**

**Member of the N.E.C. of the Communist Party of Ireland, delegate to the Dublin Council of Trade Unions on behalf of U.C.A.T.T., he was prominently identified with the unemployed struggles in 1957.**

and Tommy Kavanagh, decided to go on hunger strike in protest. This hunger strike lasted four days and each night thousands of workers assembled at Dublin's Abbey St. Corner to listen to speakers from the U.P.C. On the fourth day of the strike a deputation from the committee met the officers of the Trade Union Congress. A statement was issued from the trade unions which appealed for an end to the hunger strike. The statement read in part: "The officers have appealed to the three members of the Unemployed Protest Committee who have been on hunger strike since Monday to end their strike and avoid further suffering to themselves and anxiety to their families, so they can rally the unemployed in support of the trade union movement in its efforts to secure employment for all our people and improve social welfare benefits."

A rally of about 5,000 people assembled at Christchurch Place and endorsed the appeal and thus ended the hunger strike.

The U.P.C. decided, as part of the campaign against the removal of food subsidies, to seek a meeting with Dr. McQuaid, the Archbishop of Dublin. Instead, the Archbishop sent for Jack Murphy and a discussion took place. Jack Murphy later informed the commit-

tee that the Archbishop had made three main points. Firstly, that, as Archbishop, he could not interfere in political decisions made by the Government. Secondly, that he had authorised work on Church property to help create employment. Thirdly, he warned Jack Murphy of the danger of associating with Communists, who were trying to use him.

There was much speculation later that the Archbishop had bribed Jack Murphy, but there was no foundation for that. What can be said, however, is that the interview was one step in a campaign of pressure against Jack Murphy for him to break with the Unemployed struggle.

The last big demonstration of the campaign was a march of about 2,000 people from the Corporation Buildings and the Sean MacDermott Street area to the Dáil. Jack Murphy opposed the demonstration and from then on argued that he needed a period free from public agitation in order to settle down to Dáil work. The U.P.C. opposed this policy, pointing out that the combination of both forms of struggle was the only basis for the existence of an Unemployed Movement. In August, 1957, he broke with the U.P.C. without any discussion, and later formed an alternative committee which was completely unrepresentative of the unemployed.

The next move was that Jack Murphy, for whom the Dublin unemployed and workers generally had campaigned to have elected, announced his resignation as a member of Dáil Eireann. He consulted none of the persons who had worked so hard to secure his election. He resigned from the Dáil in 1958 and in the by-election Fianna Fáil gained the seat.

The Communists had played an outstanding part in the struggles; they were honourable and unselfish in their actions, concerned only with promoting the cause of the unemployed and the working-class generally. Jack Murphy unfortunately did not show the same single-minded devotion to the cause of the unemployed and the working-class movement as a whole. His performance was a set-back for the movement.

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# Sean Murray Jailed

IN 1933, as in all the years since 1920 when it was set up by the British Parliament, the Stormont regime was constantly in conflict with the working class and Republican Movement. Always harsh in its treatment of Republicans, it was every bit as rough when it had to deal with militant working-class activists. Only a year after the great unemployed struggles of 1932, the Craigavon police were again active against the unemployed, the Communists, the Republicans and all who stood in their way.

The "Irish Workers' Voice" of October 21, 1933, reported: "Pogroms and Fascist terror to destroy even the elementary rights of the workers—this is now the policy of the Craigavon Government in answer to the growing unity and working-class revolt against unemployment and want in the Six Counties.

## Pollitt Put Out

"Arthur Griffin, an unemployed leader, has been sentenced to three months. Arthur Thornbury and James Connolly, two Republican fighters, have been re-arrested after serving long terms in jail, and along with sixty other Republicans were pulled from their beds in the middle of the night and bundled into armoured cars, to be held without trial. Sean Murray, leader of the Irish Communist Party, and Harry Pollitt, the British workers' leader, have been deported out of the Six Counties.

"Harry Pollitt was met at the boat with an expulsion order. Sean Murray, slipping through the police net, last Sunday, entered the I.L.P. Hall, Belfast, where a big Communist Rally was being held, and appeared on the platform.

"Immediately two C.I.D. stepped forward to arrest him. The workers immediately surged forward to protect Comrade Murray, and the detectives drew their revolvers. Sean Murray continued to speak, and was dragged from the platform with a gun at his head, the armed detectives holding back the workers.

"One of the detectives shouted to the workers who were trying to free Comrade Murray: 'There are men here (meaning the B Specials outside) who'll commit murder if you ask for it!'

"On Tuesday police raided the hall of the Belfast East Unit of the Communist Party of Ireland, and smashed up the place after dragging the caretaker from bed. Workers coming to the hall on Wednesday morning found portraits of

Lenin and Connolly destroyed, while on a blackboard the police had written: 'We will return. God save the king.'

Sean Murray was brought before the Craigavon Courts and was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for refusing to obey an Order excluding him from Northern Ireland. A large force of the R.U.C. prevented a number of workers from entering the Court.

"Comrade Murray gave the police witnesses a gruelling time, the Inspector frequently telling the witnesses not to answer embarrassing questions. Among the questions were:

"Do you think this Order was made against me because my presence might lead to a breach of the peace? Did you see any breach of the peace?"

"No," said the sergeant.

"You heard me speak at meetings, and did you hear me urge the people to fight against each other, like Sir Basil Brooke in Co. Fermanagh? Is there any precedent for this deportation? Has ever a supporter of the Northern Government been deported for conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace?"

In a vigorous speech from the dock, Comrade Murray said the deportation Order was a violation of the right of free speech for the working class, on whose behalf he was fighting.

"I am a citizen of Northern Ireland, and this deportation Order is a violation of my citizen rights," he said. "I do not intend to abandon my fight against this Government, which is anti-working class, or against all the apparatus of the courts of justice, which is against the rights of the working people.

"These laws are framed in an anti-working class spirit and against the majority of the people, and I intend to exercise my citizenship rights. I intend to fight for free speech and for a free country and a free working class."

## Release Meeting

Having completed his time in prison, Sean Murray on his release came to Dublin to be greeted at a public meeting at the Foresters' Hall at 41 Parnell Square. The speakers were Mrs. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington (herself had only recently been jailed and deported from the Six Counties), Mrs. Connery, the veteran suffragette and champion of Republican prisoners; Jim Larkin, Jr. (Communist Party), Jack Carney of the Workers' Union of Ireland; Rosamund Jacob, writer and pacifist, and Mr. Leo Gallagher, the American lawyer who had

defended Tom Mooney, the American Labour leader who had been railroaded to a long prison sentence by the corrupt U.S. system. Mr. Gallagher had come to Dublin from Germany where he had been attending the famous Reichstag trial.

The Sean Murray welcome-home meeting responded to the call for expressions of sympathy for the Reichstag frame-up trial against Dimitrov and his co-defendants, Torgler, Popov and Tanner.

## Kater Arrested

WITH Sean Murray in jail the Craigavon Government moved further and instituted proceedings against James Kater, the Belfast worker who had provided Murray with the shelter of his home.

Jim Kater, a prominent member of the Belfast District Committee of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, was arrested and charged that he had harboured Sean Murray who had refused to obey an Order excluding him from the Six Counties.

Many sections of the trade union movement strongly protested against the action against Mr. Kater.

In his speech from the dock, Comrade Kater made a trenchant attack on Craigavon's attempt to deprive the Belfast workers of the right of free speech. Sean Murray was an Antrim man, the leader of the revolutionary Irish Workers and he had committed no crime. As a trade unionist of 30 years' standing and a lifelong fighter on behalf of the workers, he stood by Sean Murray and gave him shelter when the police were searching for him.

## Murray No Criminal

"I protest against your treatment of Sean Murray as a criminal," said Jimmy Kater.

"He and I have good characters that will bear investigation to any extent. Whatever this court does, I will continue my fight for my class."

The Magistrate said that there could be no mistake about Kater's attitude. He practically said that he considered Murray justified. These Exclusion Orders were made because the Government thought it necessary to exclude certain people. Kater seemed to have ignored and defied the Order. It was their duty as Magistrates to make sure that neither Kater nor anyone else ignored it.

Jimmy Kater was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. He was released in March 1934. In the blitz on Belfast in 1940, Jimmy Kater, Communist and

(Concluded on next page)

# SPANISH CIVIL WAR — 1936-1938

WITH the rise of Fascism in Europe in the 1930s, the defeated Cumann na nGaedheal Party joined with the Dillon-MacDermott Centre Party, assumed the new name of Fine Gael and took on as its Leader, the Police Chief who had been dismissed by the de Valera Government, General O'Duffy; he also became the Leader of the Blueshirts. O'Duffy established contact with international fascist circles and incorporated in the objectives of the Blueshirts the aim of an "Irish Corporative State".

The fascist Blueshirt threat was met by the fighting, united effort of Republicans, Trade Unionists and Communists.

The Blueshirts in particular and Irish reaction in general sought to camouflage their real ideology with the cloak of religion. They concentrated on exploiting the genuine religious feelings of the people. In this respect the "Irish Independent" newspaper, which had always played a reactionary role in national and social struggles of the people, took a leading part. In a two-pronged attack on radical and progressive ideas in Ireland and on the developing international

working class struggles, it particularly aimed its propaganda against the Soviet Union and the international revolutionary movement. This campaign, relentless and scurrilous, reached a new crescendo in and after February 1936, when the Spanish Popular Front Government was elected.

This Government was presented to the Irish people as a "group of blood-thirsty bolsheviks, persecutors of Catholic nuns and priests". The revolt of the Franco generals on July 18, 1936, was presented in a new pitch of hysterical propaganda. The all-out distortion of this event, with its wholesale slander of the Spanish Republican Government, confused many workers, even in the Labour and Republican organisations.



**MICHAEL O'RIORDAN**

**General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland. He fought with the Irish section of the International Brigades.**

On July 27th, 1936, "The Worker," the weekly bulletin of the Communist Party of Ireland, came out with the clear exposition of the real issues: "In Spain, as we write, a new and immortal page of working class history is being inscribed. The reports published by the capitalist press are like a dust cloud obscuring the fighters as they strain in combat, but from the glimpses of the truth we can picture the rest; and the heart of working class Ireland goes out to our Spanish brothers and sisters in their life and death struggle with Fascism."

O'Duffy, the discredited leader of the "Blueshirts", saw the opportunity to pose as a "saviour of religion" and announced his intention to form an Irish Brigade to "fight for Christianity in Spain". Reaction fattened in such an atmosphere. An "Irish Christian Front" was formed

which held huge rallies, graced by clerical and lay dignitaries who, with religious slogans, campaigned for Irish support for Franco.

Under the auspices of the "Front", £44,000 was collected at the Church doors. This money was supposed to be used for the reconstruction of the Churches damaged or destroyed in the fighting; some of it, however, found its way to help the Franco forces and the rest disappeared, a fact that was completely played down.

In the conditions of a hate campaign against Republican Spain, the Irish anti-fascists stood firm. They were helped in this by the clear and consistent analysis given by Sean Murray, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland, in his weekly articles on Spain in the pages of "The Worker". They stimulated the clarity and courage of many in the Irish Labour and Republican movements.

There was no clear call from either the Irish Trade Union Congress or the Irish Labour Party on the Spain issue.

## Intimidation

A Committee was formed in Dublin and Belfast to organise an Irish Ambulance Corps for the Spanish Republican forces. An All-Ireland Spanish Aid Committee was formed with leading members like Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, Dorothy MacArdle, author of "The Irish Republic"; Nora Connolly-O'Brien, R. N. Tweedy, Mrs. Mai Keating, Bobbie Edwards and others.

Despite a campaign of intimidation against them, the delegates to the Irish Conference of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union, in September 1936, unanimously declared their approval of their Union Executive's decision in granting £1,000 for humanitarian aid to the Spanish Government.

The Irish Catholic Church was violently pro-Franco, with many of its priests playing a most vociferous part in the campaign of hysteria and intimidation. There was one outstanding priest, the Reverend Michael O'Flanagan, who fearlessly and heroically championed the cause of Republican Spain. A distinguished patriot, he played a leading part in the Republican movement in the war of independence. When the Irish Catholic Hierarchy had condemned the Republican anti-Treatyites in the Civil War he was one of the few priests who defied them and openly declared against the Treaty.

(Continued from page 61)

outstanding worker who in those early and difficult days took a stand against the dictatorship and anti-democratic regime of Carson and Craig and British imperialism, died. In the bomb blast that swept his neighbourhood no trace was ever found of his body or that of his wife.

Jimmy Kater was a working-class man of East Belfast, of Protestant background, who when it demanded stood the test, and did not flinch to face the consequences of a challenge to the Orange-Unionist dominated Establishment.

In those days, it took a real man, a Communist, living in East Belfast, to publicly take a stand in defence of Sean Murray, the leader of the Communist Party, with his I.R.A. and Republican background. Such a man was Jimmy Kater. He deserves a very honoured place in our Party history.

Typical of the man, on his release from jail, at a public meeting, Jimmy Kater emphasised that in jail at the time was Val Morahan, a tireless worker for the unemployed workers and a number of Republicans held for their opposition to the Unionist regime. He urged for a campaign for their release.

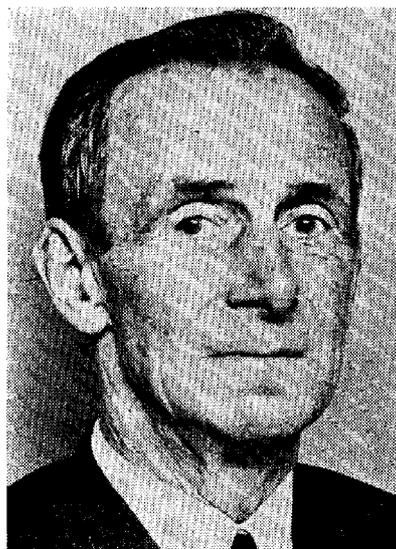
Speaking at a meeting of solidarity with Republican Spain in the Engineers' Hall, Dublin, on December 3rd, 1936, Father O'Flanagan said: "The fight in Spain is a fight between the rich, privileged classes as against the rank and file of the poor oppressed people of Spain. The cause being fought for in Spain was nearer to us than was realised. The Foreign Legion and Moorish troops were to Spain what the 'Black and Tans' were to Ireland." And then in a reference to the activities of the Irish Christian Front and the recruitment of an Irish Brigade for Franco, he said: "The Spaniards didn't send any people to join the 'Black and Tans' here and they didn't make any collections in their churches to help the 'Black and Tans' in Ireland."

The work of the solidarity movement developed to such an extent that it was able to hold a meeting on Sunday, January 17th, 1937, in Dublin's Gaiety Theatre. The main speaker was Father Ramon Laborda, a Basque priest who had been in Dublin previously for the 1932 International Eucharistic Congress. He dealt at length with the falseness of the Franco claim to be defending Christianity. In dealing with the Irish reaction to the struggle, he said: "When I read recently that the Catholics of Ireland were offering men and money to Fascist Franco, the personification of the most brutal imperialism, I exclaimed indignantly: 'It is impossible! Ireland could not do that unless she has been miserably deceived.'"

## Irish Participation

The news of the formation of the International Brigades raised the question of Irish participation in the defence of Republican Spain, which had become the cockpit in the struggle against Fascism. There was the added reason that since O'Duffy had organised some 700 Irish volunteers for Franco, the good name of Republican and democratic Ireland had to be redeemed.

In September 1936 the decision was taken to form an Irish Unit of the International Brigade. The Communist Party of Ireland gave the task of recruitment and organisation to Bill Gannon, a member of the Party, who had considerable experience as a soldier in the Irish Republican Army's fight in the Black and Tan and Civil War periods. Already, by early September, the first Irishman had arrived in Spain. He was Bill Scott, a member of the C.P.I. and formerly of the Irish Republican Army. A bricklayer, an active trade unionist, he was a son of a veteran of the Irish Citizen Army who fought in the 1916 uprising. Arriving in Barcelona, Bill Scott linked up with a group of French, German, Italian



**BILL SCOTT**

**The first Irishman to go to Spain and fight with the Republican forces.**

and English anti-Fascists who formed an International Centuria, which later took the name of Thaelmann.

The Fascists had, at this stage, advanced to the very gates of Madrid. They had halted in the Casa Del Campo in preparation for a triumphal march into the streets of the capital. In the defence of Madrid, Bill Scott fought with the "Thaelmanns" and later with the famous "Fifth Regiment".

In December 1936, at the defence of Madrid, the first two Irish anti-Fascists fell in action. They were Tommy Patton, of Achill, Co. Mayo, and William Barry, of Dublin, who came all the way from Melbourne, in Australia, to Madrid.

In the same month the first organised Irish group left Dublin for Spain. They were led by Frank Ryan. Prior to their departure, a press statement declared: "The Irish contingent is a demonstration of revolutionary Ireland's solidarity with the gallant Spanish workers and peasants in their fight for freedom against Fascism. It aims to redeem Irish honour besmirched by the intervention of Irish Fascist rebels. It is to aid the revolutionary movement in Ireland to defeat the Fascist menace at home and, finally, and not the least, to establish the closest fraternal bonds of kinship between the Republican democracies of Ireland and Spain."

Thus was declared the credo, the motive, and the reason for all the Irish anti-Fascists who went to fight in the ranks of the International Brigades in 1936, 1937 and 1938. Frank Ryan, the spokesman and commander of the Irish in the Brigades, personified the best militant and revolutionary traditions of the

Irish people. At the age of 18 years he had taken part in the war against the "Black and Tans" and subsequently against the pro-Treaty forces in the Civil War. A journalist, he was for some years the editor of "An Phoblacht" (the I.R.A. journal). In the late 1920s and the early 1930s he was prominent in the I.R.A.; a founder of the Irish Republican Congress in 1934, he was one of its Joint Secretaries. With him in the first organised group were men prominent in the Republican, Communist and working class movement, such as Kit Conway, of Tipperary; Jack Nalty, Donal O'Reilly, Joe Monks, Jim Prendergast and Paddy Duff of Dublin; Frank Edwards, of Waterford, to mention but a few. The first group went to Madrigueras to be shaped into a military unit. The ranks of the Irish in Madrigueras were augmented by new arrivals from Ireland as well as by Irishmen who had come from Britain and the U.S.A.

Because of the pogrom atmosphere against the defenders of Republican Spain, many who went to join the International Brigade had to leave Ireland quietly. Not so "Kit" Conway. An active member of the Building Workers' Section of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, he mounted an oil-barrel on the building site where he worked, and explained to his fellow-workers what was happening in Spain, and why he was going: "Sooner than Fascism should win there, I would leave my body in Spain to manure the fields," he declared.

## First Battle

In their first battle, in Cordova, December 1936, eight Irishmen were killed: John Meehan (Galway), Frank Conroy (Kildare), and six from Dublin—Tony Fox, Mick May, Henry Bonar, Jim Foley, Leo Green, and seventeen-year-old Tommy Woods. A month later, Denis Coady (son of a Dublin 1913 docker) fell at Las Rosas.

In February 1937, they participated in the famous battle of Jarama. There, Conway, who had distinguished himself in leadership, died in action along with the Rev. R. M. Hilliard (Church of Ireland), Eamon McGrotty (Derry), four from Belfast—Dick O'Neill, Bill Henry, Danny Boyle, Liam Tumilison—and Hugh Bonar (Donegal), Maurice Quinlan (Waterford), Michael Russell (Clare) and nine others, including the poet, Charlie Donnelly.

Those who were not wounded remained with the 15th International Brigade in holding the Jarama front for a period of seventy-three days until they were relieved.

In March, many of those who had been wounded, like Peter Daly of Wexford, formed another unit. This was the Anglo-American Company, with its Number One Section composed of Irish and British and two other Sections of Americans and Latin-Americans. Paddy O'Daire (Donegal) and Peter Daly were Lieutenants in that Company, which took part in fighting on the Southern front.

From July 6th-26th, 1937, Irish comrades took part in the battle of Brunete where they were to lose Thomas Morris (Boston), two from Belfast—William Laughran and William Beattie; the Dubliner, William Davis, and Michael Kelly from Ballinasloe.

In August, Peter Daly, who had then been appointed Commander of the British Battalion, was leading the advance at Quinto when he was seriously wounded, dying a short time afterwards in Benicasen Hospital.

In January 1938, at Teruel, three more laid down their lives: Peter Glacken (Westmeath), Francis O'Brien and David Walshe from Ballina. Ben Murray, of Belfast, died a hero's death trying to stop the oncoming Franco troops at the Aragon front. On the same front, in March, Frank Ryan, now Adjutant of the 15th Brigade, with the rank of Major, was taken prisoner by one of the regular Italian Fascist army units. They did not kill him because they considered him a prize that could be exchanged for one of their officers in Republican hands.

### Frank Ryan Captured

Frank Ryan was taken to Burgos Central Prison. There the Franco authorities court-martialed him and sentenced him to death. The news of his capture led to the formation of a broad committee in Ireland which campaigned for his release. In this they did not succeed, but the effect of the committee's campaign did force Franco to commute the death sentence to 30 years imprisonment. On June 10th, 1944, whilst an "involuntary guest" in Nazi Germany, he died from the ill-effects of the Franco imprisonment.

The Irish contingent that had set out in December 1936 had suffered great losses through deaths and wounds in the various battles in which they had participated. However, in 1937 and 1938, new volunteers came from Ireland, climbing over the Pyrenees mountains, to fill the gaps in the ranks. With the Irish who were already there they were integrated in the British Battalion.

The new and veteran Irish fought alongside the British, American, Canadian, Cypriot and others who made up

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**JIM PRENDERGAST**

He was one of the first group to go with Frank Ryan in December 1936 to fight for the Spanish Republican cause. He died in June 1974 in London.

the XV Brigade, in the crossing of the Ebro River and in the subsequent battles on the Sierra Pandols. There the Irish anti-Fascist Roll of Honour gained new names: Jimmy Straney, Maurice Ryan and Paddy O'Sullivan; the latter had developed into a foremost officer in No. 1 Company of the British Battalion.

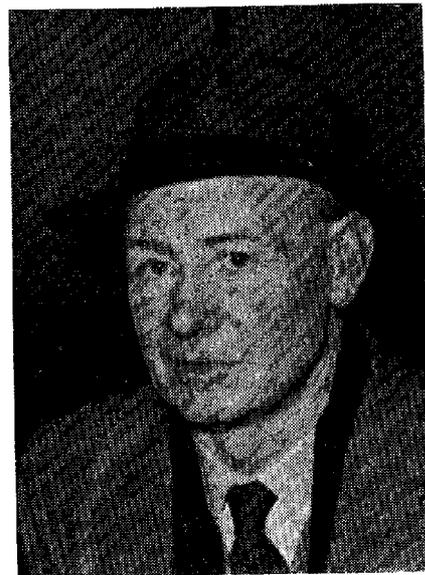
On September 22, 1938, two years after the first Irish anti-Fascist had come to Madrid, the last two Irish deaths in action took place. They were Liam McGregor, a young Political Commissar, leading figure in the Communist Party of Ireland, a graduate of the Lenin School at Moscow. His comrade in death for freedom was Jack Nalty, officer of the Machine-Gun Company, who had come in the first group with Frank Ryan. The fascist bullets ended a life that had been spent in intense political activity, imprisonment and active endeavour in the Irish Republican, Trade Union and Communist movements.

The withdrawal of the International Brigades ended the period of service of the Irish anti-Fascists in the ranks of the Spanish People's Army. In December 1938 they set out for home. The Irish section had fulfilled the pledge of solidarity—and had redeemed the name of the Irish people, the name of a people who have long struggled for our own freedom, a name that had been besmirched by the Irish Blueshirt and Irish Christian Front intervention of aid for the fascist attack on the Spanish Republic.

Even if the "O'Duffy Irish Brigade" had not enlisted for Franco, the Irish Unit of the International Brigade would have still have been a necessity, giving

expression to the traditional links between the Irish national liberation movement and the cause of international solidarity.

Compared numerically with the contribution of other countries to the International Brigades, that of Ireland was a small one, but one that was made under the most difficult of internal political circumstances. The total number of Irish volunteers was 133. Of that number, 63 gave their lives.



**BILL GANNON**

Served with Active Service Unit, I.R.A., in War of Independence; foundation member C.P.I., 1933; chief recruiting officer of volunteers to Spain, 1936-38.

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