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Red Banner

a magazine of socialist ideas



issue 2

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And the beat goes on

We open this second issue of *Red Banner* with a confession of our conservatism: our aim is exactly the same as it was before. We are still committed to spreading and developing the ideas of socialism, and thus strengthening the movement towards socialist revolution. The last six months have only piled up further reasons to send capitalism down the road: the racist persecution and deportation of refugees has escalated, politicians continue to line their already bulging pockets, and imperialism bent over backwards to pull us all to the brink of a third world war.

We have been genuinely heartened by the welcome *Red Banner* has received. We thank all those who have expressed their support in various ways for an unashamed magazine of socialist ideas. This support has not been uncritical—but nor would we wish it to be. We have stubbornly refused to claim a monopoly of socialist knowledge: we want other socialists to play a part in our work, to correct our mistakes, to improve and build on what we have done.

On the other hand, the reaction of some on the left to the appearance of *Red Banner* has been instructive, to say the least. Some have read us from the altar and warned their flocks against reading our immoral literature (which hasn't stopped those same flocks from hiding the magazine inside their hymn

books). Others have lamented that we haven't forsaken an absurdity which is logical and coherent to embrace one which is illogical and incoherent. Nowhere have we seen the leap of imagination necessary if the left is to grow out of its internal obsessions and play a constructive part in the movement of our class. What we have seen, however, are groups taking our opposition to sectarianism as an attack on themselves. Evidently, the cap fits: this is high praise indeed....

The reluctance of much of the left here is perhaps understandable. After all, the cry of anti-sectarianism has itself been pressed into service more than once to anoint all manner of sectarian manoeuvring. And many have a fear of freedom, a fear of expressing their own ideas, thinking for themselves without the safety blanket of a party line to cling to.

Nevertheless, this reluctance is without justification. Those who write for *Red Banner* stand on their own two feet. In contributing to this magazine, they subscribe to no line, buy in to no organisation, sign up to no lifetime plan. What unites them is a common commitment to the liberation of the working class, to widening the understanding needed to achieve it.

This issue, we feel, reflects our intention of providing socialist analysis that is honest, open, and challenging. The giant Larkin is compared and contrasted with the pygmies who claim his legacy today. On the drugs issue, the need for fundamental social change instead of state hypocrisy is outlined. Our study of European capitalism's headlong leap in the dark towards a single currency is the most serious examination yet on the Irish left of this new economic battlefield. Our article on the fight for abortion rights deals with a question still to be answered by the working class. We continue to unearth the forgotten theoretical heritage of James Connolly, while our Revolutionary Lives series looks at the work of Gramsci. The myth of the liberating capacities of capitalist technology is debunked—and as before, we believe in spreading socialism in *both* languages spoken

within the Irish working class. Again, we present original historical research into the lessons of Irish history, and a socialist perspective on culture.

Red Banner still needs your help, however, if it is to reach its potential. Write us articles and letters—taking up where we've left off, giving out to us, or preferably both—in time for the next issue, due in November. Get the magazine into as many hands as you can. Above all, every one of us has to play their part in the concrete struggles of the working class—fighting, thinking, hoping. It is only as a part of that process that *Red Banner* means anything.

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The taming of Jim Larkin

Des Derwin

Last year SIPTU celebrated the 50th anniversary of Jim Larkin's death with a year-long programme of exhibitions, plaques, publications, pageants, celebratory evenings, wreath-laying and an anniversary mass. (Ger O'Leary breathing fire from the Ennis Conference podium was truly surreal.) Larkin was not hidden away this time: Larkin was changed. The sting in the tail of the tale was the representation of his legacy to the unions today. The will was rewritten, the testament tampered with.

If Marx was claimed as the grandfather of the Soviet Union, and Connolly as a co-founder of the Irish state, there's nothing particularly outlandish about SIPTU and ICTU leaders and thinkers adopting Larkin for the partnership and consensus model of trade unionism.

Rubbish! No precedent of historical spin-doctoring takes the edge off the audacity and incongruity of bracketing Larkin with a brand of trade unionism, as espoused by the current leadership of the Irish unions (with a few exceptions), that he damned and denounced throughout his lifetime.

An anniversary supplement to *Newsline*, SIPTU's journal (February 1997), carried an article by Des Geraghty, now SIPTU Vice-President, entitled 'Larkin's legacy'. An edited version appeared in the *Irish Times*. The article claimed that when Larkin died in 1947 "in truth it was the end of his form of militancy". (The sixties, the 'decade of upheaval', was still thirteen years away.) Geraghty continued:

And he bequeathed that sense of vision to move beyond a defensive pay-bargaining agenda to seek a new role for workers in the twenty-first century workplace... Larkin organised labour and bargained for its price. Our labour movement now bargains for everything which determines the quality of that life. It is a qualitative change, a ripening of the seed sown by Larkin and his peers. The modern trade union movement uses collective intelligence rather than collective muscle but demands recognition of workers as full intelligent human beings.

Before proceeding further we must object to what can only be termed an insult to Larkin. Larkin, Connolly and their peers *did* use collective intelligence. Larkin, the voracious reader, editor of a proletarian newspaper of

unsurpassed circulation, *The Irish Worker*, was no musclebound dumbbo, despite his disregard for rigorous theory.

The taming of Larkin is an ideological seam running through labour studies for some time, meeting up latterly with the burgeoning literature underpinning partnership and the national Programmes since 1987. Dermot Keogh's *The Rise of the Irish Working Class* and Manus O'Riordan's pamphlet *Larkinism in Perspective: from Communism to Evolutionary Socialism* are previous contributions to the genre. Manus revamped the pamphlet in 1995 as *James Larkin Junior: the Voice of a Thinking Intelligent Movement* which was distributed at the Killarney SIPTU conference with a foreword from Billy Attley. In it a plausible case for Jim Larkin junior embracing a collaborative direction is made. 'Larkinism' evolves into moderate reformism only through the genes of the Larkin family.

At last year's AGM of the Irish Labour History Society, ICTU General Secretary Peter Cassells claimed that 'partnership' was in the tradition of Larkin.

A quick blast from Larkin himself might be the best thing at this point, before going on to challenge the above in more detail. On 22 November 1913, in the midst of the Lock-Out, the *Daily Herald* published a manifesto from him which said:

The British trade union leaders seem to think, speak and act as though trade unionism was meant to be used as a salve for the sore of poverty... They seem to think that round-table conferences, nice language, beautiful phrases that fall trippingly from the tongue, Conciliation Boards and agreements are the be-all and end-all of life... We say trade unionism is a root remedy and by industrial action we can accomplish great things. We are not willing to say that trade unionism shall be used either by industrial commissioners, Conciliation Boards or by Cabinets to chloroform the workers, to persuade them to remain as dumb, driven dogs.

A slight problem when discussing what Larkin did and would have done is that he did not disappear into thin air after 1913. The 'mythical' Larkin of the Lock-Out and all that may not have been the same man in later years. There is substance to that claim, but none at all to the implication that he might have sat comfortably at the table negotiating Partnership 2000. In fact during some periods subsequent to 1913/14 he aligned him-

self with a politics that put him outside conciliatory trade unionism in a more clear-cut way than during the 1907-1914 reign of 'Larkinism'.

However, for most, 'Larkin' means the period up to and including 1913, and indeed it is the popular Larkin, the Larkin of that period, that is hijacked with brazen cheek for social partnership. To counterpose the actual policies and methods of the Larkin of that time to those of the 'trade unionism' of our time merits a PhD in The Obvious.

In Belfast in 1907, 160 cross-channel dockers struck to impose a closed shop on the Belfast Steamship Company. Larkin, as organiser there for the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL), quickly brought out the other cross-channel dockers by demanding a general wage increase. About 1,000 carters were locked out for refusing to pass the pickets and soon the coal companies locked out another 1,000. (Eventually even the police went on strike.)

Larkin's instinct to escalate the strike, to 'put 'em under pressure', could not be further removed from the conduct of the Ryanair dispute for union recognition. SIPTU have played it as a textbook exercise in non-adversarial industrial methods. The action has been kept to a minimum: confined to the company, to short, intermittent periods, without a direct call for blacking, or even a picket line!

When the Ryanair strike did escalate, closing Dublin Airport on 7 March, SIPTU demobilised everything without making any gains as soon as the genie of trade union power had materialised. In a similar vein, in Belfast 1907 the negotiations were taken out of Larkin's hands by the NUDL's general secretary James Sexton. The coal companies had already settled and Sexton negotiated a (favourable) return to work for the carters, leaving the original dockers to go back without achieving their aims.

Larkin then won three disputes in Dublin during 1908 in the face of, among other things, "a hostile union executive", according to his biographer Emmet Larkin.

John Newsinger says: "Larkin's success in no way improved his standing with the NUDL leadership which was completely opposed to his militant methods, preferring instead the path of moderation, conciliation and collaboration... In essence, the ITGWU was established as a rank and file revolt against the NUDL leadership."

Newsinger captures Larkin's industrial methods succinctly: "...the principle of working class solidarity. This was the central ethic of the ITGWU, the core around which everything else revolved. Any section of workers in dispute could rely on the active support of the rest of the union. Picket lines were scrupulously respected and 'tainted' goods were never

touched. The sympathy strike was a crucial instrument for breaking employer resistance so that no group of workers was ever allowed to be defeated in isolation."

These tactics are specifically ruled out by modern Irish trade union officialdom. The 1990 Industrial Relations Act has put iron into previous self-limitation. Hence the freedom for Nolan's Transport to load at union jobs and for Ryanair to be loaded by union oildrivers. It is not uncommon for one SIPTU branch to work on while another conducts a strike in the same company. Unions will not (and legally cannot) issue a leaflet calling for a boycott of 'tainted' goods.

Larkin had a different response to the law than today's response to court injunctions (Building Workers Against the Black Economy being a modern *unofficial* exception). An ITGWU demonstration called for Sunday 31 August 1913 was banned. Larkin, just out on bail from a previous arrest, defied the ban (even after his deputy William O'Brien had decided to comply) and spoke from the balcony of the Imperial Hotel.

Almost immediately Larkin sought to spread the 1913 dispute to Britain by seeking industrial action (not collections alone). On 16 September Liverpool railworkers began to black all Dublin traffic and soon over 13,000 were locked out throughout England. The action was unofficial and organised by local rank and file committees. What latterday claimant to Larkin's legacy sought the blacking of Liverpool traffic through Dublin in support of the Liverpool dockers' recent marathon struggle?

In November Larkin launched his 'fiery cross' crusade for more solidarity support in Britain. "A second wave of unofficial action spread across the country", as Newsinger relates. "In South Wales two ASLEF drivers were sacked and 30,000 railwaymen struck in support of them. Once again [rail union leader J H] Thomas was instrumental in smashing the strike, getting his members back to work."

A Special Conference of the TUC on 9 December voted against sympathetic action and, in Connolly's words, "the leaders of the British labour movement proceeded calmly to isolate the working class of Dublin.... And so we Irish workers must go down into Hell".

The notion that only the "modern" trade union movement could go beyond "a defensive pay-bargaining agenda" stems from the conceit that, before the Programme for National Recovery dumped every facet of social life into the verbal embrace of 'partnership', the unions were concerned with wages alone. Larkin declared in the first issue of *The Irish Worker* (27 May 1911) that the working class was determined on freedom "from military and political slavery such as we suffer under at present, but also from a

more degraded slavery, economic or wage slavery". This meant "we must have our own party".

"Our labour movement now bargains about everything which determines the quality of that life", writes Des Geraghty in *Newsline*. Everything? What about house prices, rising at ten times the rate of wages? James Plunkett tells us: "When Larkin's aggressive methods of protest expanded to include an attack on the housing conditions it resulted in the setting up of a Housing Inquiry in 1913".

Larkin, co-founder of the Labour Party and the Irish Citizen Army; Larkin, virulent opponent of partition and the Great War; Larkin the syndicalist. Larkin confined to wages?

While in the US Larkin spent three years—*three years*—in Sing Sing prison for sedition. He was a co-founder of the American Communist Party, he was elected to the Moscow City Soviet in 1922 and to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1924! The Larkin of this period was a Bolshevik. In the recent SIPTU elections would he not have supported Carolann Duggan?

What of the later Larkin? In his biography, Emmet Larkin characterises the years 1928-1947 as "twenty years of decline" and devotes only ten pages to them. In his *The Republic of Ireland* Raynor Lysaght says that Larkin in 1933 "was himself starting to take up a more moderate attitude". As far as I'm aware none of those who write and speak of the later Larkin (E Larkin, Nevin, de Courcy Ireland, O'Riordan or, forthcoming, Swift jnr) produce any *positive* evidence that Larkin (senior, that is) would have gone along with 'social partnership'.

What there is data for is Larkin's continued commitment to class struggle and left wing politics in the face of clericalism, conservative nationalism and McCarthyism among the mainstream union leadership. Larkin led the fight against the 1940 Standstill Order on Wages. The Trade Union Act of 1941 led to "a storm of protest from trade unions but notably not from the ITGWU" (as Donal Nevin writes). On 22 June 20,000 workers demonstrated against it in Dublin and (as Mike Millotte describes) "Larkin senior defiantly burned a copy of the Bill on the platform". Throughout these years Larkin continued political activity, being elected to the Dáil three times and to Dublin City Council five times for the Irish Workers League, his own organisation, and then the Labour Party. In 1941 ITGWU leader O'Brien condemned Larkin's 'Communism'. Around the same time O'Brien was appointed a director of the Central Bank.

From whose legacy does partnership spring? A topical slice of social partnership to put beside Larkin's legacy: in April 1998 the Communica-

tions Workers Union agreed a deal with Telecom Éireann giving employees 14.9% of the shares of the company in return for a raft of concessions including yet another tranche of job losses (2,500 this time). Peter Cassells of the ICTU called it "a watershed for industrial relations in this country... a new model for partnership in the workplace, which has the potential to change our industrial relations system for all time from conflict to co-operation". Fourteen point nine percent. Now *there's* power!

Drugs: Criminalise or legalise?

Eve Morrison

The use and misuse of illegal drugs by a significant percentage of the population is one of the most controversial and emotive issues in Irish society today. Despite the massive funds that have been pumped into efforts to stop their distribution, nationally and internationally, the use of unlawful substances increases every year. The so-called 'war on drugs' is not only failing to combat the situation competently, but is actually causing more problems than it is curing. The social costs of the present policy are huge. Millions of pounds are spent every year in enforcing prohibition, yet the guards concede that they can prevent just 10 per cent of drugs smuggled into this country from hitting the streets. As the free availability of them in prisons shows, the state is unable to keep drugs out of even the most controlled environments. Basic civil liberties have been seriously eroded under the cover of anti-drug legislation which allows for seven day detention of 'suspected' drug dealers.

Drugs are a complex issue for which there is no simple answer. Yet an increasing number of people, and a significant percentage of those engaged in drug and crime related research, support some form of legalisation. Their arguments are often grossly misrepresented and little understood. Indeed, there is a significant lack of rational debate on how best to deal with the drugs problem in general. The response at government level and in the media to calls for decriminalisation or legalisation could be best described as lacking in understanding and bordering on hysterical.

A particularly telling example was the popular reaction to an editorial by Niall Stokes in *Hot Press* in 1996, after the deaths of two heroin addicts: Carol-Anne Daly, who hanged herself in Mountjoy prison and Josie Dwyer, who was beaten to death in Dolphin's Barn by unknown assailants. It is worth quoting the controversial passage in full—

It seems blindingly obvious to me that the best way to beat the drug barons is to take their market away from them. This can be done in two ways: by education and rehabilitation; and by supplying heroin—not methadone—cheaply, to registered addicts. And if, to do this, it is necessary to legalise heroin and create a legitimate trade in the drug under state supervision, then that is the route to go.

RTÉ and the *Irish Independent* carried condemnations of the editorial from Fianna Fáil TDs like Seán Haughey and Noel Ahern, then Labour's Joe Costello and Independent Tony Gregory joined in the fray. Later, in an interview with *Hot Press*, both Haughey and Costello admitted that they hadn't read the article but were reacting to the press coverage alone. Tony Gregory wrote in the *Sunday World* that Stokes' article "contributed nothing to the debate about the drugs crisis".

But the condemnation, though widely publicised, was not uniform. Father Seán Cassin of the Merchant's Quay project, who works with heroin addicts on a daily basis, and Paul O'Mahony, a leading criminologist and psychologist, publicly defended the sentiments expressed in the editorial.

In January of this year, MEPs from across the political spectrum shouted down recommendations by the European Parliament's Committee for Civil Liberties to decriminalise the use of illegal drugs and regulate trade in cannabis. More recently, the World Health Organisation suppressed a report they commissioned on the use of cannabis because it stated that long term use of cannabis was significantly less harmful than either alcohol or tobacco.

Firstly, it is important to stress what exactly is being debated. No-one is denying that we are, at present, faced with a very serious situation. It is certainly a reality that the heroin problem continues to ravage the already impoverished areas in Dublin's inner city. Nor is anyone disputing that the misuse of most drugs (alcohol and tobacco included) leads to a range of social and medical ills.

What is open to question is whether or not these problems are caused by the inherent evil of the drugs themselves, or by the failure of society to legislate for drug use in a safe and effective manner.

UCC law lecturer Tim Murphy has stated in his pamphlet *Re-thinking the War on Drugs* that

...the problems associated with drugs, when closely examined, only serve to highlight more serious ills in contemporary society. These problems have much deeper roots than the effects of any chemical: the fixation with these effects and the 'moral standards' which their enforcement are said to violate obscure not only the harmlessness of much illicit drug use, but also the complex of social, economic, cultural and psychological factors which contribute to addictive and destructive behaviours of all kinds—those related to social organisation generally as well as to drug misuse.

Legalisation is not, nor could it be, a *solution* to drug misuse. But it is the most effective way to deal with the immediate situation.

The present policy on hard drugs like heroin is fundamentally misguided because it doesn't address the key problem of why people come to abuse them in the first place. The unpublished report of the Special Governmental Task Force on Drug Abuse (set up in 1983) has been described by Trinity lecturer Shane Butler as the "clearest... acknowledgement ever made by Irish policy makers that drug problems in Dublin were largely explicable in terms of the poverty and powerlessness of a small number of working-class neighbourhoods." International studies reach the same conclusion—serious drug misuse is more a product of bad social conditions than anything else. Yet community groups in Dublin's inner city have had to fight tooth and nail to get even the most basic amenities in their neighbourhoods, drug programmes remain chronically under-funded and local campaigners are often subject to harassment by the authorities. It is a class issue—rich people with drug problems do not have to turn to crime to support their habit.

It is important to stress that, despite popular belief, legalisation does not mean an absence of legislation but a change in the law. It does *not* mean that drugs would be freely available, 'bottling heroin and giving it out to all comers'. Heroin is far more dangerous than cannabis so the restrictions on the use of the former would necessarily be that much more stringent. Neither would legalisation promote drug use. It would seek to provide a reasoned response to drug abuse that would try to reduce injury, both to the problem users themselves and to society at large, as opposed to the moral condemnation and punishment meted out by the prohibitionists. *All* drugs are dangerous to differing degrees, legal or illegal, if used improperly. Making some of them illegal, when large numbers of people are taking them, in reality simply guarantees that users will use them dangerously and, worse, drives them into the arms of criminals and criminal activity.

A policy of 'harm reduction' would seek to minimise the damage that is being done to the misusers themselves and the community at large. It would allow doctors to legally prescribe medically regulated doses of drugs like heroin to addicts. This would remove the addicts from the criminal community in which their habit forces them to exist and allow them to deal with their misuse in relative safety. With a whopping 80 per cent of all street crime in Dublin related to drug use, the immediate benefit that such a policy would be to the general public, as well as to the addict, is obvious. It would also mean that the medical profession would be able to explore other ways to minimise the damage that improper use of opiates can cause.

Legalisation would also destroy the criminal dealers by denying them the massive profits currently on offer from the illegal drug trade. Dr. John Marks, a psychiatrist and member of the Addiction Executive Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and a long-standing campaigner for the legalisation of drugs, explains that

In order to control drugs, the State must actually have a lawful supply of drugs. If it is too lax with the supply, we obtain the problems now seen with alcohol. If it is too strict with the supply, criminals meet the demand. If the State is so restrictive as to deny itself a lawful supply altogether, it does not get rid of the supply—it simply hands it over, by abdication, to the gangsters. And the drug market is the second largest in the world, after weapons. Hence gangsters have a vested interest in the return of prohibitionist governments. And although free markets promote consumption, black markets peddle consumption under prohibition. Only regulation controls consumption.

By refusing to regulate the supply of these drugs, the state is, in effect, endangering people's lives. Under prohibition, the quality control of illicit substances is also in the hands of the gangsters. It creates a situation where people have no idea what they are taking, and no way of finding out without facing criminal prosecution themselves.

The role of the state as moral guardian, protecting the public from the evils of drugs, does not stand up to scrutiny, even by its own standards. The banning of these substances is a 20th century phenomenon, and had to do with economic competition and social control: the moral condemnation was the justification, not the cause. Cannabis is a good case in point.

What may come as a surprise to many is that up until the beginning of the twentieth century, the hemp (cannabis) plant was one of the most widely used natural resources on the planet. In fact, the amount of uses for the cannabis plant is staggering.

Until 1883, 75-90 per cent of all the world's paper was made from cannabis hemp, paper that is better and cheaper than that made from wood fibre. The American Declaration of Independence was written on hemp paper. Levi's jeans were originally made from hemp fibres, as was ninety per cent of the world's rope, cord and thread. Its oil can be burnt to produce energy or used to mix paints and dyes. Cannabis pulp can be made into a cheap, durable and fire resistant building material. The list goes on and on.

The banning of cannabis in the United States in 1937 was largely promoted by business interests. Pharmaceutical, petrochemical, alcohol, tobacco and paper companies combined to prevent cannabis being cultivated because they could not compete with it.

In today's world of scant natural resources and environmental crisis, the continued suppression of a self-renewing and easily cultivated resource such as cannabis is farcical and irresponsible.

As far as recreational use goes, there are a number of reasons to consider legalising cannabis. It is far less toxic than either tobacco or alcohol, although—like any drug—prolonged and heavy use can have some side-effects, albeit relatively mild. The dominant argument against cannabis is that it is a 'slippery slope' leading to the use of more dangerous drugs like heroin. In reality, there seems to be a correlation between alcoholism and heroin addiction, but not between cannabis and heroin addiction. The majority of cannabis smokers are not harmed by their use.

A recent report by the London Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence found that unlike opiates, tobacco and alcohol, cannabis cannot be linked to any deaths. Despite this and the recognised health benefits of the drug to patients suffering from cancer, aids, glaucoma and multiple sclerosis, it remains banned.

Hundreds of thousands of people the world over—the great majority of whom are normally law-abiding—regularly engage in criminal behaviour by smoking cannabis. The failure of government policy to deter people from using drugs is clearest in relation to this substance. Most of the drug market and drug prosecutions in Ireland are in relation to the use and possession of cannabis.

While legalisation is a reform that would drastically improve the situation, it would not end substance abuse. Such misuse is caused by more general social ills and a fundamentally discriminatory and unjust society. To blame the chemicals lets the capitalist system off the hook. Tim Murphy rightly observes that the only permanent solution to the drug problem is "social policies motivated by socialist redistribution". In other words, only a society that invests in all its members equally can overcome all the social complexities of poverty, unemployment and social alienation that are the primary cause of drug misuse.

Bosses, workers and the Euro

Antóin Ó Muircheartaigh

Virtually all Irish politicians, employers and trade union leaders are enthusiastic supporters of the single currency. Do any of them understand what is really going on? The project for a single currency is part of a process. That process is the guided evolution of European capitalism from the early 1950s to the present day and into the next century. The ultimate objective of that process is to create a political and economic framework within which European capital can develop unhindered by historical baggage and compete with contending centres of politico-economic power, principally North America, Japan and, in the next century, China.

When the project is complete it will be a United States of Europe—the largest economic power bloc in the world with the political superstructure to enable it to develop the political and military power to match its economic power. Every major development of the European Community since 1958 has been a staging post on the road to that objective. There was first a Customs Union, then a Common Market, followed by Common Policies in Agriculture and Fisheries, the European Monetary System, and the Completion of the Single Market in 1992. There will be a Single Currency, a common approach to foreign and security policy, and eventually a European Military Industrial Complex and institutional reform culminating in a European government of some kind. The Single Currency is one of the most important and long-delayed stops along this route and should be regarded as a political objective as much as an economic one.

The Werner Report in 1970 was the first bite at the cherry. Werner, then the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, proposed the creation of a single currency among the then six members of the club, the original founders of Germany, France, Benelux and Italy. It was hoped to create Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) by the mid to late 1970s. Werner was premature. The Vietnam war had already begun to throw international currency markets into turbulence. When the Oil Crisis caused by the OPEC quadrupling of oil prices occurred in 1973, turbulence turned to chaos for much of the 1970s. The Werner report was quietly shelved but not forgotten.

By 1979, another attempt was made to pave the way for EMU but this time it was a much more modest project. The European Monetary System or EMS was formed in order to reduce fluctuations between the currencies

of member states within a range which would be manageable and help to create stability and business confidence. The exact mechanism for ensuring this was called the Exchange Rate Mechanism or ERM.

A notional currency called the ECU was created under the ERM. It was hoped that this would become the prototype for a real Euro currency eventually.

The next stage was the creation of the Single Market, agreed in 1985 and to be implemented by 1992. The Single Market was designed to remove all the internal frontiers and internal barriers to trade within the EC. It was believed that the creation of a single market would dynamise the EU economy, enabling it to grow as fast if not faster than their American and Japanese rivals and to end what became known as Eurosclerosis, a kind of sluggishness which meant that European capital was falling behind its main rivals in economic growth rates, investment, research and development (R&D), technological advances and employment creation.

Once the Single Market was in place, it was believed that then would be the right time to introduce the Single Currency programme. The logic would have been inescapable. Having created a single market by abolishing 12 national markets and integrating them into one huge dynamic, successful European economy creating millions of jobs and rising living standards, why not take the obvious next step and abolish the 12 separate currencies with one currency for the one market?

A popular analogy was that completing the Single Market was like building a house: a Single Currency would put the roof on the house. You can't have a house without a roof: it would just fall apart.

And so no sooner was the Single Market Programme in place than the process leading to EMU and a Single Currency was set in train, a process which was given legal expression in the Maastricht Treaty.

Two things happened to throw a spanner in the works of the Single Currency project. The first was that the Single Market Programme did not deliver the goods. The EU economy did not become more dynamic. In fact it fell into recession and unemployment began to grow inexorably towards the 20 million mark. The claims that the Single Market would create some kind of economic miracle were based on faulty research and Euro-federal idealism rather than any rigorous analysis. The main report was compiled by a team led by Italian economist Paolo Cecchini, which is now widely discredited among academic economists.

In a time of rising unemployment, it became more difficult to persuade people to accept the next stage in the process when the current one was so obviously failing. So an interim programme was put together. It was

commissioned by Jacques Delors in 1993, called the White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment—Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century*. This was a more coherent social-democratic response to an emergency of exploding unemployment and social tensions which saw the doubling of unemployment in a decade accompanied by the rise of neo-fascist parties all across the Continent.

It saw lack of public investment, lack of investment in the infrastructure—physical and telecommunications, and above all in human resources—as a major problem. Low levels of investment in R&D and Science & Technology as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) were identified when compared to the US and Japan. European investment was also less efficient in these areas. Even where technical expertise and the volume of investment in science and technology was at least as good as their competitors, Europe got a much lower return in terms of new job creation and economic growth. The White Paper did stress the need for EMU but it was clearly marginal to the real urgent problems facing the European economy. The White Paper proposals could not be fully implemented because they required the member states to significantly increase public spending and investment in training, education, R&D and infrastructure. At the same time governments were expected to prepare their economies to meet the convergence criteria for entry to EMU on 1st January 1999. Most EU governments had large budget deficits and high levels of national debt because of the recession and high unemployment.

The only way they could meet the criteria was by cutting back on public spending, the exact opposite of the White Paper conclusions. It is impossible to know whether Delors was serious about the White Paper or whether it was a public relations exercise to offset or deflect declining enthusiasm for the wider goal of EMU. Either way, despite official endorsement by the Council of Ministers at the Essen Summit, the White Paper strategy was quietly forgotten as the governments of France, Germany and the Brussels machine moved up a gear in the fight to save the EMU project.

The second spanner in the works was the effective collapse of the ERM in the autumn of 1992. The ERM contained the prototype of the new EU currency, the ECU. It was a system which tied EU currencies closely together. EMU would lock the currencies together irreversibly at fixed parities in 1999. Therefore, making the ERM more rigid was the bridge to EMU. That bridge disintegrated after September 1992.

Precisely because the ERM became more inflexible as a means of preparing for EMU, it fell apart. An exchange rate reflects the price of one currency in terms of another. It is the interface between the relative prices

of one country and those of another. Relative prices in turn reflect the economic structure and level of development of an economy. Labour costs differ from one country to another depending on such factors as the strength of trade union organisation, levels of education and skill in the workforce, industrial structure and productivity levels, as well as taxation policies. Transport and utility costs differ from one country to another depending on factors such as physical features, population size and density, peripherality, etc.

The price of any good reflects the costs of its production, labour and capital costs (or constant and variable capital costs), and these costs are in turn determined by the intensity and efficiency with which these resources are exploited. A unit of currency and what it can be exchanged for therefore represents, in a highly distilled form, the entire complex set of socio-economic relations of a society. Since each organised society has a different set of socio-economic relations, each has its own currency. This causes a problem for trade because a unit of currency in one country will not buy the same quantity as a unit of currency in another country.

Therefore a rate of exchange is necessary for each currency e.g. it is necessary to establish how much one Irish punt is worth in German D'marks, US dollars etc. so that trade can take place on the basis of equivalence of values. If the exchange rate for each currency in terms of every other currency is fixed and remains unchanged for all time, there is no practical need for separate currencies at all. It would be far more convenient to have one currency for the whole world.

This is not possible because the economic structure and set of socio-economic relations in each society is changing all the time and at different speeds. Some countries are growing faster than others; some are developing and applying new technology better than others; they become more or less competitive relative to each other; institutional, legal and cultural changes take place at different speeds. Therefore the value of one currency in terms of any other is constantly changing, even on a daily basis, although usually within very narrow ranges.

If the currency exchange rate of a country fails to adjust to changing circumstances, that country will develop either a persistent long term balance of payments surplus or a persistent balance of payments deficit—either one is an unstable position and brings separate sets of problems. The ERM became so rigid that it was unable to accommodate these adjustments by the early 1990s.

Sterling, for instance, had gone into the ERM at the wrong rate. It was valued at too high a rate against the D'mark and other currencies. As a

result, British exporters found that they could not sell their goods abroad because they were priced too high in foreign currencies. For the same reason, imports became much cheaper than equivalent British goods, British consumers switched to buying more foreign goods, and they soon had a huge balance of payments problem and rocketing unemployment.

The simple, obvious way to solve such a problem is to devalue the over-valued currencies to a rate which reflects the real economic structure and performance of the country concerned. Another way is to slash wages until prices can be reduced to a competitive level. This is what the Churchill government did in the 1920s. Britain was then on the "Gold Standard", something similar to a single currency. Every currency on the Gold Standard had a fixed, unchangeable value in terms of an ounce of gold, and therefore had a fixed parity with every other currency on that Standard. It soon emerged that sterling was overvalued on the Gold Standard. The parity rate was out of line with socio-economic reality. British goods were too highly priced on foreign markets. The Churchill solution was to cut prices by cutting costs and to cut costs by forcing down the price of labour—wage rates.

They forcibly reduced the wages of British miners and others, a move which led directly to the general strike of 1926 which was followed by a deep, unnecessary recession. Britain was forced to abandon the Gold Standard in 1931 and devalue against the US dollar in particular.

Italy and Spain had similar problems to Britain just before the ERM collapse. The solution was obvious—a realignment of currencies within the ERM to reflect the relative changes in real economic structure and performance between the ERM member states. But this was not done because such an exercise would show that the different European economies were not ready for fixed exchange rates and it would call the whole EMU project into question. In any realignment, the French franc would have to fall against the D'mark but the French authorities set their faces adamantly against this even though it meant, and continues to mean, huge unemployment in France.

When the bureaucrats would not move, the markets moved for them and began selling weak currencies and buying strong ones. By February 1993, we had a situation where two of the big four economies in the EU (Britain and Italy) had departed from the ERM altogether; three others were forced out of their permitted bands of fluctuation; and one had never joined—Greece. So six of the then 12 states could not live with the ERM as it was then.

After that collapse, the ERM was re-constituted on the basis of the new parities which the markets had forced and on wider bands of fluctuation (15% instead of the previous 2.25% for most members). Once stability had been restored, the drive to meet the convergence criteria and achieve the single currency by the second target date (1st January 1997 was the first target) began in earnest, with Chancellor Kohl leading the charge. If there was one lesson to be learned from this debacle, it was that the ERM needed to be more flexible. Remarkably EU leaders drew the exact opposite conclusion and decided that a totally inflexible ERM, a single currency, a Gold Standard for the 21st century, should be created as quickly as possible. This demonstrated that the political importance of achieving EMU assumed a greater priority among EU leading circles than tackling economic problems like mass unemployment.

To join the club by 1999, countries had to abide by certain rules called the convergence criteria. These convergence criteria basically required aspiring members to behave like conservative German governments and central banks did before German re-unification. Their national debt had to be low—no more than 60% of national income. Government could not spend more than they took in from tax revenue unless the deficit was below 3% of national income. They had to keep their inflation rate within sight of the three lowest inflation states (and the same condition attached to long term interest rates), and their currency had to be stable within its band for two years before 1st January 1999. These are the convergence criteria.

Most EU governments have great difficulty meeting these targets and can only do so by savage cuts in public spending, usually accompanied by higher taxation on working people and the abolition or restriction of a whole range of social rights, from old age pensions to free health care and free education. Because the big and medium sized economies were among the worst debtors, a programme to cut debt levels radically in a very short time-frame has had devastating consequences for the whole of the EU economy. Because state spending accounts for 45-50% of national income in most EU countries, large cuts in public spending can only have one effect—they depress economic activity and increase unemployment.

Ken Coates, a British socialist MEP, has warned that the Maastricht convergence criteria could lead to a widespread loss of jobs across Europe unless they are balanced by action at the level of the Union. Writing in the *European Labour Forum*, 1995, Coates drew attention to several recent studies which showed that a single currency and the programme needed to realise it would lead to massive job losses and falling living standards in Austria, France, Denmark and Britain.

The attempt to meet the criteria have devastated the EU economies committed to the project. In Belgium wages have been frozen for the last three years. In January 1996, former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing confidently predicted that the French economy would expand by 2.8% in that year, thus easing the path to EMU. In fact the Maastricht inspired deflationary policies cut French growth in half to 1.5%. Italy, one of the star performers of the EU economies in the late 1980s, has gone for the EMU rules with a vengeance and as a result the Italian economy stagnated in 1996, with a growth of only 0.7%. In 1997, it was expected to grow by a still very low 1%. Unemployment in the EU as a whole stands at a historically high 11.25% and shows no sign of declining. In both France and Germany unemployment has reached post war record levels. The September 1997 figures for Germany show unemployment at 4.5 million and rising, figures not seen since the 1930s. In Naples and parts of southern Italy, unemployment rates are as high as 55%.

While workers, pensioners and public servants have resisted these cuts with mass protests in France and Germany especially, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) tamely pursues its role as the trade union wing of the Brussels bureaucracy. However, even the ETUC is concerned at the deflationary impact of the convergence criteria.

Peter Coldrick, Secretary of the ETUC, said in a statement on January 29th 1996 in an ETUC Declaration on Employment Creation and EMU:

There is a rising groundswell of opinion in the European debate that without credible initiatives to support economic growth—and especially employment creation—the single currency is unlikely to be accepted by workers and public opinion, and its very feasibility may be thrown into question.... the IGC [Inter-Governmental Conference] should aim to restore balance to the Treaty by giving the Union the essential powers and instruments to pursue a co-ordinated and effective employment policy... a European pact for employment could help build the climate of confidence and security which is lacking today, and help clear the path towards monetary union, which would then be flanked by a real European strategy for employment of equal strength and priority.

There are no credible initiatives, and unemployment has become much worse in the EU since that statement. So if all of the warnings of the studies referred to have been borne out, why is EMU apparently going ahead like a runaway train that no-one can stop or seems to want to stop? The straightforward answer is that EMU is in the long term interests of Euro-

pean capital and that it is worthwhile enduring (what they believe will be) short term pain to secure the ultimate objective.

The main arguments in favour of EMU are that a single currency will reduce transactions costs, create a climate of stable, low inflation and interest rates, enhance growth and employment and make the single market more efficient. In other words European capital needs to reduce costs and increase profit margins in order to avoid losing out in the global battle for market share, and the economic and political power which comes with that. The Single Currency itself will probably not reduce costs very much at all. But the process of getting there will reduce substantially social costs which must be paid for by taxation, and these social costs are being reduced by dismantling whole sectors of the welfare state. Perhaps even more importantly for capital in the long run is the belief that once a single currency is in place, it will force labour markets to become more "flexible".

European trade unions will lose many of the legal protections they have fought for for the last hundred years or so. The liberalisation of labour markets will reduce labour costs, make labour more mobile, reduce trade union power and increase labour productivity. This they see as the key to global competitiveness in the battle against non European based capital.

The propagandistic arguments in favour of a Single Currency are not convincing. The main claim is that EMU will lead to a permanent regime of low inflation and low interest rates. This claim is not proven. The United States is an economic and monetary union with a single currency. The US has experienced many periods of high interest rates and inflation in the last 20 years. The existence of a single currency *per se* does not guarantee low interest rates and inflation. Overall macroeconomic policy as well as the global environment are the determining factors here.

And well run economies outside a single currency area—even outside the EU like Switzerland and Norway—can deliver low inflation and low interest rates also.

Transactions costs (the banking costs of changing one currency into another) will be eliminated and may result in savings of 0.5% of gross national product to Ireland, according to the ESRI study of the implications of EMU for Ireland. Transactions costs are a small proportion of the total costs of trade. Trade between member states is 62% of the total trade of all member states with all other countries, including those outside the EU. Therefore transactions costs will still exist on almost 40% of total EU trade.

The advantages of a Single Currency claimed by the EU Commission are neither convincing nor important. They know that they cannot achieve

a federal Superstate without a single currency. They have their eye on the long term objective and probably do not themselves believe that a single currency will have any transformative economic consequences in the short to medium term. EMU is therefore about carving out for European capital a pre-eminent position as a global economic and political power bloc in the 21st century. It is not an end in itself but part of a process of continuous change and evolution.

France and Germany have already mapped out the next phase. It is fiscal and social security harmonisation. They want to introduce the same system of direct and indirect taxation across the EU. This would mean a reduction in the level of social provision from the highest standards prevailing in Europe, because one of their key concerns is that countries with high levels of social protection (and therefore high social security charges on labour, such as Belgium) are losing out in terms of jobs and investment to countries with lower levels of social protection.

Despite the devastation which adherence to the convergence criteria has caused, despite serious doubts among many economists, both of the left and the right, about the chances of the project succeeding in achieving the declared advantages, it is apparently going ahead. The political logic of the dynamics of the EU integration project, and the wider agenda of creating a superstate, demands that the project proceeds as planned and is immediately followed up with a strategy for tax and social security harmonisation.

If it does go ahead on time, there is likely to be serious consequences for less developed regions and for countries which enter EMU with their currency fixed at a parity which is higher than their economic circumstances would justify (primarily France).

Less developed states which experience difficulty keeping up with higher growth and higher productivity regions will not be able to use monetary policy to re-adjust slowly to a changing external environment or to adjust to a sudden shock or localised recession. They can only react by cutting wages, freezing wages, or ensuring that wages grow much more slowly than elsewhere. Alternatively they will attempt to increase labour productivity quickly by shedding large numbers of jobs. The unemployed workers would be expected to move to other regions of the union where there is a demand for labour (hence the importance of labour mobility).

Each state would be in much the same position as a state within the USA. However, unlike the USA, a state which gets into serious trouble vis-a-vis the rest of the union cannot be bailed out with large transfers of federal funds. This is not permitted under Maastricht rules and the EU will

not in any event have a federal budget to rescue individual states from severe recessions until well into the latter half of the next century.

States which are in severe difficulty will not even be allowed to borrow significantly on their own account in international markets. In EMU then, governments will surrender monetary policy as an instrument altogether and fiscal policy options will be severely constrained. Economic power and decision making will be centralised in a European Central Bank accountable to no democratic body and operating solely in the interests of European finance capital as dictated by the rules and conventions of "prudent management" in the world of banking.

Ireland may face special problems if this country joins and the British remain outside the Euro bloc. If Britain stays out, then 60% of our trade will continue to be carried on in sterling, dollars and non-Euro currencies. This implies a very large exposure to risks of shocks from outside the Euro-zone, as has been pointed out by economists such as Jim O'Leary, Brendan Walsh, Anthony Leddin, Dan McLaughlin, Chris Johns, Austin Hughes and others.

The ESRI have estimated that if Ireland joins and Britain remains outside, we would still gain a net 10,000 jobs from EMU participation. Jim O'Leary of Davy Stockbrokers disputes the ESRI analysis on the basis that their interest rate assumptions are over-optimistic. The Department of Finance, in a special study of the industries vulnerable in an EMU without Britain, has identified approximately 50,000 jobs as in the serious risk category.

In other words, if Ireland joins and Britain remains outside, and if there is a substantial devaluation of sterling against the Euro, we could lose up to 50,000 jobs. This could occur because a sudden large devaluation of sterling against the Euro would automatically increase the prices of Irish exports to Britain. The Irish exporting companies, mainly in the food sector, would see their profit margins wiped out unless they could reduce prices to the British market. They could only do this in two ways—either cut wages or jobs in Ireland, or simply relocate their plants to Britain.

The Single Currency project poses the greatest continent-wide assault on the jobs, rights and living standards of European workers since the 1930s. Its success or failure is directly related to the ability of the working class across the Continent to fight and resist it.

It hasn't gone away, you know: The fight for abortion rights

Rosanna Flynn

An unplanned pregnancy is never welcome news. If you are a 13-year-old rape victim, from a problem family, forced by poverty and discrimination to live in overcrowded conditions without basic amenities, it must be horrendous. When the powers that be spend weeks discussing whether or not you will be allowed to travel to another country for an abortion, it gets worse. On top of this, when your father is suddenly and mysteriously convinced that you should go through with the pregnancy, and you are subjected to harassment, and told that you will be guilty of murder if you reverse the invasion to which your body has been subjected, it must be unbearable. No wonder you see suicide as the only alternative.

All this happened last year in Ireland. The girl in question stuck to her guns, and was finally allowed have her pregnancy terminated in England. But this was not the first time. There was a similar case in 1992. Irish people in their thousands insisted that the victim was allowed to go to England for an abortion, and forced the Supreme Court to accept that a suicidal woman has that right.

But in many other cases, women were denied such a right. In 1981, midway through drug treatment for cancer, Sheila Hodggers became pregnant. To protect the "equal right to life" of the foetus, the drugs were withdrawn. After three months a tumour developed and she bore a premature baby which died immediately. Sheila died three days later.

There are many reasons why women have abortions. They come from all age groups in the childbearing years, and from all social and economic backgrounds. Some are married, and some are not. For some the pregnancy is just bad timing. Some see themselves as too young, or too old. Some have pressures of work or study. Some have completed their families. Some do not wish to become mothers at any time.

Many working-class women cannot afford to bring up a child. But poverty alone should not preclude motherhood. The state should provide full back-up services: proper free crèches, top grade medical care, good housing, good education and a good income. Capitalist society puts enormous financial strain on parents, whether married or single. The state should recognise this and play a much greater part in their care and upbringing.

What is needed is more practical help in the upbringing of children, and less scaremongering about the supposed psychological damage caused by abortion.

The "inevitable, life-long trauma" resulting from abortion has little foundation. Nine times out of ten, women's post-abortion feelings are of overwhelming relief. When guilt is felt, it is either connected with the relationship that led to conception or because of the pro-life lobby who portray abortion as murder, and subject us all to large gruesome photographs of aborted fetuses.

Why do these fanatics constantly talk about the unborn? A foetus is a *potential* human being, completely dependent on the woman for life, nourishment, oxygen, etc. Her body is host to it—a wonderful thing if you want to bear a child, but not at all pleasant if you don't. She, and only she, has the right to determine the future of the foetus. If a woman opts for termination, then obviously, the sooner this is done the better. Here her financial status plays a part. For working-class women getting the money together can be a very big problem, and can mean quite a long delay. There are the extra expenses of travel and accommodation. If she lives outside of the big cities, information and assistance will be more difficult to get.

The pro-lifers also tell us that we will sustain physical damage from abortion. This is just not true. The fact is that, up to twelve weeks, it is safer to have an abortion than to give birth. If the problem is addressed early in the pregnancy, theoretically surgery can be avoided altogether. A pill, called Mifegyne, that can terminate pregnancy, has been available for some years now. In theory, any GP in Britain can prescribe it up to nine weeks, but in reality they don't, as the law requires written permission from two doctors. The treatment consists of one pill and one pessary—no surgery, no hospitalisation, no anaesthetic—and is successful first time in 96 per cent of cases. The only proviso is that the patient is within ten miles of a GP, or near a hospital with 24-hour emergency service. Much safer than childbirth or surgical abortion, it costs £70. Going to England for an abortion costs on average £1,000.

Therefore, one would assume the days of invasive surgery were over. Not so. This pill is the best kept secret in the medical profession. It is used in just 5 per cent of cases. You need to know the name of the product, and who will prescribe it. The only problem is one of cost. It is, of course, *too cheap*. Mifegyne was denied a licence for ten years in Britain. Huge profits are made out of women with unwanted pregnancies. Only 10 per cent of abortions in Britain take place on the NHS. The real immorality involved in abortion is the profiteering of the private healthcare industry.

The media never tire of telling us that, of course, "no one in Ireland wants abortion". But an opinion poll in December told a different story. 77 per cent believed abortion should be available in certain circumstances (or in all circumstances, according to 28 per cent). 16 per cent wanted the 'pro-life' eighth amendment to the constitution repealed, and another 33 per cent favoured limited abortion legislation. Those who want abortion rights for Irish women are no tiny minority.

The often proclaimed end of the liberal agenda is perhaps most nonsensical when it comes to abortion, where the rights won for Irish women remain pitiful. The eighth amendment, and the British Act of 1861 that forbade abortion, need to be repealed. Abortion must be made available free of charge to all women wanting to terminate their pregnancy. The 'soft option' of legislation within the terms of the X case judgment won't do. Legislation requiring women to prove suicidal tendencies to the satisfaction of judges, doctors and other self-proclaimed 'experts' would do nothing to extend abortion rights. In practice, no woman would put herself through such an added ordeal, and the trail to England would continue.

The nettle has to be grasped. Free abortion on demand is a necessity for Irish women. When it comes to abortion rights, the fight has only just begun.

REVOLUTIONARY LIVES Antonio Gramsci

Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh

When the Italian socialist leader Antonio Gramsci was imprisoned by Mussolini's regime, his fame had preceded him. One day in the prison yard a fellow inmate "stared at me for a while, then asked, 'Gramsci, Antonio?' Yes, Antonio! I answered. 'It can't be,' he said, 'Antonio Gramsci must be a giant, not a little squirt like you.'" And Gramsci—shy, awkward, hunchbacked—indeed went against every conventional stereotype of the rugged revolutionary.

Gramsci was born in Ales on the island of Sardinia on 22 January 1891. His father was a government official, which meant that the Gramsci family were comfortably off. But Antonio's personal destiny was interrupted in early life. A childhood accident led to a severe spinal deformity and set off a train of illnesses that would follow him all his life. And after his father made the mistake of backing the wrong clique in a local election, irregularities were suddenly discovered in his running of the land registry, and his imprisonment plunged the family into poverty.

So Gramsci soon came to know the misfortune of ending up on society's losing side. At the age of eleven he had to go to work—ironically enough in the land registry, although he was shifting registers about rather than writing in them. Despite doing very well in school he had to give up his education to support the family, while the less-gifted sons of shopkeepers went forward. He experienced the desperate conditions of the Sardinian working people, a consequence of Italian capitalism's underdevelopment of the south and the islands.

His father's release after a few years allowed Gramsci to continue his schooling, though not without great sacrifice by the family, and in 1911 he managed to win a scholarship to the University of Turin. So Gramsci moved from the economically backward island to the heart of industrial Italy—and of Italian socialism. He was already familiar with socialist ideas: not only had his elder brother sent socialist literature home while working in Turin, but the working class of Sardinia itself had begun to fight. Gramsci rejected the socialism on offer from the Socialist Party (the PSI), however. Its wooden version of Marxism reduced the achievement of socialism to a mathematical accumulation of economic data, and it saw the

south as a "ball and chain" on the advanced workers of northern Italy. He nevertheless joined the party in 1913, and became involved in writing for and editing the city's socialist papers, but the sources of his socialism weren't those of the PSI leadership.

He finally embraced Marxism, like so many others, under the influence of the Russian revolution of 1917. Here was a revolution, he wrote, which destroyed the 'Marxist' schema: instead of waiting for capitalism to embrace every last inch of Russia, the Bolsheviks had realised that the time was ripe for the workers to take power. Here was a Marxism that was about taking a real, active part in history, not passively accepting a role as its victims.

These ideas became a practical reality during the 'biennio rosso', the 'two red years' of 1919 and 1920. The first world war was followed by a drastic economic crisis, in which the cost of living rocketed. In response, and in tandem with the revolutionary upsurge across Europe, the Italian workers launched wave upon wave of strikes and demonstrations, culminating in September 1920 when they seized control of their factories for a time.

Gramsci and others launched the magazine *L'Ordine Nuovo* (The New Order) in the midst of the struggles. Consciously identifying themselves with the Russian revolution, the 'ordinovisti' asked themselves if the Italian working class had any native equivalent of the soviets—the workers' councils used by the Russian workers to win power. They had: the internal commissions. These committees of trade union representatives in each factory had to transform themselves into factory councils, broaden themselves out to include unorganised workers, challenge the bosses' power in the factories, and link up nationally to fight for political power. Gramsci wrote that

the development of the internal commission became the central problem, the *idea*, of *L'Ordine Nuovo*. It came to be seen as the fundamental problem of the workers' revolution; it was the problem of proletarian "liberty". For ourselves and our followers, *L'Ordine Nuovo* became the "journal of the Factory Councils". The workers loved *L'Ordine Nuovo* (this we can state with inner satisfaction) and why did they love it? Because in its articles they discovered a part, the best part, of themselves. Because they felt its articles were pervaded by that same spirit of inner searching that they experienced: "How can we become free? How can we become ourselves?" Because its articles were not cold, intellectual structures, but sprung from our discussions with the best workers;

they elaborated the actual sentiments, goals and passions of the Turin working class, that we ourselves had provoked and tested. Because its articles were virtually a "taking note" of actual events, seen as moments of a process of inner liberation and self-expression on the part of the working class.

Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* insisted that the workers' state already existed potentially in the organs of the working class. That state—which "will guarantee freedom to all anti-capitalist tendencies and offer them the possibility of forming a proletarian government, and externally will operate as an implacable machine crushing the organs of capitalist industrial and political power"—would need the *economic* power of the workers as a basis for its *political* sway. The socialist revolution, wrote Gramsci, was not just a matter of overthrowing the capitalist state, or of placing power in the hands of communists: "The revolution is proletarian and communist only to the extent that it is a liberation of the proletarian and communist forces of production that were developing within the very heart of the society dominated by the capitalist class." And the factory council was the tool for the job: "The Factory Council, as an expression of the autonomy of the producer in the industrial sphere and as the basis for communist economic organisation, is the instrument for the final struggle to the death with the capitalist order, in that it creates the conditions in which class-divided society is eliminated and any new class division is made 'physically' impossible."

PSI leaders condemned the *Ordine Nuovo* for concentrating on industrial issues to the exclusion of politics. This was a myth, replied Gramsci: "we simply made the mistake of believing that only the masses can make the communist revolution, and that neither a party secretary nor a president of the republic can achieve it by issuing decrees. Apparently this was also the opinion of Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg, and is Lenin's opinion". They also, unlike the Socialist leaders, wanted to win the small farmers of the south to their banner: "not only is it true that by emancipating itself the working class will emancipate all the other oppressed and exploited classes, but it is no less a fact that the only way these other classes will ever emancipate themselves is to enter into a close alliance with the working class".

The PSI proved unwilling and unable to seize the opportunity of the biennio rosso. While the party had a large reformist wing, and a bigger revolutionary wing, the main levers of power were held by the 'maximalists'. The language of maximalism was revolutionary—they

opposed the war, supported the Russian revolution, called for communism in Italy—but its practice was all compromise. The ordinovisti demanded that the PSI expel the reformists, lead the factory council movement towards political power, become a real revolutionary socialist party. All this the maximalist leaders refused to do, abandoning the struggles of 1919-20 to a lack of direction.

The battle for the PSI was fought out at its congress in January 1921. When the dust settled, the reformist resolution won 14,000 votes, the maximalists won 98,000, and the revolutionaries 58,000. This left wing walked out and set up the Communist Party of Italy (the PCI).

Gramsci had written prophetically the year before that

The present phase of the class struggle in Italy is the phase that precedes: either the conquest of political power on the part of the revolutionary proletariat and the transition to new modes of production and distribution... —or a tremendous reaction on the part of the propertied classes and governing caste. No violence will be spared in subjecting the industrial and agricultural proletariat to servile labour: there will be a bid to smash once and for all the working class's organ of political struggle (the Socialist Party) and to incorporate its organs of economic resistance (the trade unions and co-operatives) into the machinery of the bourgeois State.

This was the period when the fascist squads began to grow, breaking strikes of agricultural workers, burning down the offices of trade unions and socialist papers. Without the benefit of hindsight, it proved very difficult for the Italian socialists to get to grips with fascism, but Gramsci's writings provide brilliant insights. He recognised that fascism was not just any old reactionary movement, but a new, specific, and dangerous phenomenon, based in the Italian middle class. It was supported and employed by big landowners and businessmen, but had a definite degree of autonomy. It would face internal contradictions between its anti-establishment rhetoric and its conservative reality. The rise of fascism demanded a serious, united working-class response—ultimately, the overthrow of capitalist society itself.

What could have been the beginnings of such a response sprang up in the form of the Arditi del Popolo, popular anti-fascist militias. Rank-and-file Socialists, Communists, and trade unionists joined and supported the Arditi, but the leaderships of both the PSI and the PCI opposed them. Gramsci publicly expressed his own support, but the PCI line de-

manded separate Communist militias—which failed to materialise, even after the Arditi del Popolo died out in the face of such opposition.

This was typical of the PCI's sectarian attitudes. The 58,000 congress votes didn't translate into anything like 58,000 members for the new party, and the majority of left-wing workers stayed elsewhere. Amadeo Bordiga emerged as Communist Party leader—a powerful fighter but rigidly sectarian. Under his leadership fascism was regarded as just another form of capitalist reaction, which would succeed only in paving the way for socialist victory. A united front with other working-class organisations was off the cards, as was any attempt to make the PCI a mass workers' party. As long as the Communists kept themselves pure in readiness for the revolution, all would be well.

Little trace of *Ordine Nuovo* politics was to be found in the young PCI. Gramsci made no challenge to Bordiga at first, however. If Bordiga was too far to the left, others in the party were too far to the right, and he was concerned not to allow them assume leadership. And indeed, Gramsci himself was by no means free of Bordigan tendencies. But he soon became convinced that the party had to be turned around.

Bordiga's dominance, he concluded, arose from his willingness to organise a faction within the PSI years before. If the ordinovisti hadn't been reluctant to do the same, the factory occupations of 1920 could have found a socialist leadership and a different result. Instead, when the split came, the PCI became an ultra-left rump, and too fixated on itself to become anything else:

The error of the party has been to have accorded priority in an abstract fashion to the problem of party organisation, which in practice has simply meant creating an apparatus of functionaries who could be depended on for their orthodoxy towards the official view. It was believed, and is still believed, that the revolution depends only on the existence of such an apparatus; and it is sometimes even believed that its existence can bring about the revolution.... Any participation by the masses in the activity and internal life of the party, other than on big occasions and following a formal decree from the centre, has been seen as a danger to unity and centralism. The party has not been seen as the result of a dialectical process, in which the spontaneous movement of the revolutionary masses and the organising and directing will of the centre converge. It has been seen merely as something suspended in the air; something with its own spontaneous and self-generated development; something which the masses will join when the situation is right and

the crest of the revolutionary wave is at its highest point, or when the party centre decides to initiate an offensive

A major educational effort was required inside the PCI to make its activists into real Marxists, "who in other words have brains as well as lungs and a throat".

Gramsci eventually won the argument, and by 1924 was effectively leader of the party. (He was elected as a parliamentary deputy in the same year.) He attempted to point the Communists in a new direction:

The principle that the party leads the working class must not be interpreted in a mechanical manner. It is necessary not to believe that the party can lead the working class through an external imposition of authority.... these deviations lead to an arbitrary, formal over-estimation of the party, so far as its function as leader of the class is concerned. We assert that the capacity to lead the class is related, not to the fact that the party "proclaims" itself its revolutionary organ, but to the fact that it "really" succeeds, as a part of the working class, in linking itself with all the sections of that class and impressing upon the masses a movement in the direction desired

And it could only become a real party of the working class in so far as it tackled the concrete problems that the struggle for power threw up. For instance, "In no country is the proletariat capable of winning power and keeping it with its own forces alone", wrote Gramsci. "It must therefore obtain allies: in other words, it must follow a policy that will enable it to place itself at the head of the other classes who have anti-capitalist interests, and guide them in the struggle to overthrow bourgeois society."

In Italy this meant above all winning the small farmers of the south. Looking back on the years of the *Ordine Nuovo*, Gramsci claimed as one of its great merits "that of bringing the Southern question forcibly to the attention of the workers' vanguard, and identifying it as one of the essential problems of national policy for the revolutionary proletariat.... The revolutionary worker of Turin and Milan became the protagonist of the Southern question" instead of the southern middle-class politicians. But these same revolutionary workers would first have to shed every trace of craft or regional prejudice:

The proletariat can become the leading and dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of class alliances which allows it to

mobilise the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois State.... They must think as workers who are members of a class which aims to lead the peasants and intellectuals. Of a class which can win and build socialism only if it is aided and followed by the great majority of these social strata. If this is not achieved, the proletariat does not become the leading class; and these strata (which in Italy represent the majority of the population), remaining under bourgeois leadership, enable the State to resist the proletarian assault and wear it down.

Gramsci's leadership of the PCI was abruptly terminated on 8 November 1926. On the pretext of an attempt to assassinate Mussolini, the fascists moved to wipe out all opposition. Gramsci was arrested and sent to a prison colony. Despite the regime's reputation for punctuality, his parliamentary immunity from arrest wasn't removed until the following day.

"Some call me satanic, some saintly, but I have no intention of appearing a martyr or a hero", wrote Gramsci to his brother while awaiting trial. "I think of myself as an ordinary man who refuses to barter his deep convictions for anything in the world." Shortly before his trial began he told his mother not to worry, that he was a political prisoner:

I'm not ashamed, nor will I ever be ashamed of this fact. Basically, I myself willed this arrest and condemnation. I've always refused to compromise my ideas and am ready to die for them, not just to be put in prison. For this reason, I feel serene and satisfied with myself.... There was no other way to act. Yes, life is difficult, and sometimes sons, for the sake of their own honour and dignity, have to make their mothers suffer.

The trial of twenty two Communists before the fascist Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State lasted a week. In the case of Gramsci the state prosecutor demanded: "We must prevent this brain from functioning for twenty years." The judges duly obliged, adding another four months and five days for good measure. But if they thought to close down Gramsci's brain they were to be sorely disappointed.

The last thing someone as susceptible to illness as Gramsci needed was prison and, although it was clear from the beginning that a plea for mercy to Mussolini would have been favourably received, he refused to recant. As he wrote to his mother, "Imprisonment is a terrible thing, but for me dishonour on account of moral weakness or cowardice would be even worse".

Instead he insisted on everything he was entitled to and no more—the right to medical treatment, to visits, to read and to write.

Gramsci's isolation was increased by a clear falling-out with the PCI. He disagreed with the disastrous so-called 'left turn' pursued by the international Communist movement from 1929, which branded the labour parties 'social fascists' and cut revolutionaries off from the working class. At the same time, while disagreeing with Trotsky and the Russian opposition, he had opposed their suppression, and now opposed the expulsion of dissidents from the Italian party.

But Gramsci planned to use his enforced separation from the immediate struggle to develop his political thoughts. The eye of the prison censor forced him to make arguments by analogy, and to employ roundabout phraseology when describing Marxist thinkers and concepts. But the thirty three copybooks Gramsci filled with the results of his prison reflections represent not just a triumph of revolutionary will, but one of the twentieth century's most valuable contributions to Marxism.

From the rise of the Italian capitalist class he drew conclusions on the nature of political leadership in general:

the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to "liquidate", or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well.

Gramsci was here continuing the thinking he had put forward outside prison, and consciously developing what he saw as a major theme of Lenin's thought in particular.

The prison copybooks also examine the role of intellectuals, both as a separate stratum, and as a part of each class. His concern was to develop a layer of "organic intellectuals" in the working class, "intellectuals of a new type which arise directly out of the masses, but remain in contact with them to become, as it were, the whalebone in the corset". He wrote a sustained critique of the Communist International's handbook of Marxist theory, attacking its dead and mechanical approach and arguing for a living, active Marxism.

The role of the revolutionary party, he wrote, should be to lead as the *ordinovisti* led the factory councils movement in Turin:

This leadership was not "abstract"; it neither consisted in mechanically repeating scientific or theoretical formulae, nor did it confuse politics, real action, with theoretical disquisition. It applied itself to real men, formed in specific historical relations, with specific feelings, outlooks, fragmentary conceptions of the world, etc., which were the result of "spontaneous" combinations of a given situation of material production with the "fortuitous" agglomeration within it of disparate social elements. This element of "spontaneity" was not neglected and even less despised. It was *educated*, directed, purged of extraneous contaminations; the aim was to bring it into line with modern theory—but in a living and historically effective manner.... This unity between "spontaneity" and "conscious leadership" or "discipline" is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes, in so far as this is mass politics and not merely an adventure by groups claiming to represent the masses.

And all the time, Gramsci was physically deteriorating. Constant attacks of dizziness and insomnia combined with severe stomach disorders. He was suffering from arterio-sclerosis, as well as pulmonary tuberculosis and Pott's disease, a tubercular infection of the back. An international campaign for his release forced Mussolini to relent somewhat: at the end of 1933 Gramsci was transferred to a prison clinic, and in 1935 to a proper clinic, where he was still kept under constant watch by fascist guards. His condition worsened, with the doctors adding high blood pressure, gout, and angina to the list.

Gramsci planned to move home to Sardinia when his sentence expired on 21 April 1937. But his imprisonment had left him in no condition to go anywhere. On the 25th, hours after receiving official confirmation that he was free to go, he suffered a brain haemorrhage. He lingered until 4:10 am on 27 April 1937.

During an extremely serious attack in 1933 Gramsci, hovering between life and death, began to rant against religion, as he told his sister-in-law in a letter: "Apparently, I talked for one whole night about the immortality of the soul in a realistic and historical sense, claiming that immortality is a necessary survival after death of man's noblest actions and the incorporation of them, beyond human will, into the universal process of history." In

this sense, Antonio Gramsci is immortal. His life and work—from his contribution to the factory councils movement to his fight against fascism, from his attempts to build the forces of socialist revolution in Italy to his development of Marxist thought in Mussolini's jails—do survive after him, and will as long as workers fight for freedom. The central fascist police report on Gramsci in 1935, as he lay dying, got it spot on: "Antonio Gramsci is one of the most outstanding personalities in the communist world and as such, consequently, is an element worthy of the most intensive and careful surveillance."

Future Shock agus fabhalscéalta eile

Tomás Mac Siomóin

Muide a mhair trí bhlianta corracha na seascaidí agus na seachtóidí, is maith is cuimhneach linn an rabharta mór dóchais a bhuaill lucht cosanta an chaipitleachais ag an am. Ba í an nuatheicneolaíocht an eochair-sciath, dar le fáidheanna na nua-aoise; ba í forbairt na teicneolaíochta seo ar scála domhanda a bhí a dhul cor nua nár shamhlaigh Karl Marx bocht a chur i stair an chine. Bhíodh leithéid Alvin Toffler (ba é a *Future Shock* seisean a thionscnaigh leabharlann atá ag méadú ó shin) ag áitiú orainn go gcruthódh na teicneolaíochtaí nua táirgiachta agus cumarsáide, trí tháirgiúlacht a mhéadú as cuimse, rathúnas eacnamaíoch a chuireadh críochna uilig na cruinne. Bhí oíche fhada dhórcha an chine ar ár gcúl agus grian IBM etc ag soilsiú gheataí thir na geallúna...

Níor fhág an dul chun cinn seo nach mbeadh fadhbanna le sárú, áfach. Tharla go nglacadh an t-innealra nua-aimsire seo tascanna deacra leadránacha an duine idir lámha (miotálacha, gan amhras), laghdófaí meánleibhéal uaireanta oibre go suntasach; an *future shock* a bheadh le sárú ag an oibrí bocht sa gcomhthéacs nua seo ná cén chaoi le uaireanta fada nuachruthaithe seo a dhíomhaointis a chur thairis. Bheadh módhanna iomchuí oideachais de dhíth, ar ndóigh, leis an lucht oibre a oiliúint chun comhlíonadh cultúrtha agus sásamh pearsanta a bhaint as na laethe saoire a shínfeadh idir é féin agus léas, má b'fhíor do lucht fáistine.

A bhuíochas leis an bhforbairt seo uilig, ar ghá a rá go mbeadh na fadhbanna ársa úd a chráigh an cine ó thús ama anall—gorta, tinneas, anó, bochtanas etc—fágtha in ár ndiaidh ar charn brúscair na staire.

Dhealraigh sé go raibh claonta fadtéarmacha áirithe a bhí le braith sna seascaidí—an laghdú ar an lá oibre, méadú ar phá, isliú ar aois an phinsin—ag teacht le targaireachtaí mealltacha dá samhail a bhíodh ag fáil an-teaspáineadh an tráth úd. Ná níl an *genre* faoin gcré fós. I bhfianaise an mhéid sin, breathain ar théacsanna ar nós *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labour Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era* (1995) le Jeremy Rifkin, ina samhlaítear innealra an todhchaí i mbun chuile ghné den táirgiacht fhad's bheas an t-iarlucht oibre ag déanamh aeir (chultúrtha) dóibh féin.

Ní mar a siltear bítear, ar ndóigh, agus chruthaigh an nuatheicneolaíocht *future shock*anna eile seachas an ceann a bhí i gceist ag Toffler. Ó

éigeandáil phraghas an fhuinnimh, 1973-74, i leith, cuir i gcás, tá méadú 10% tagtha ar an mbliain oibre sna Stáit Aontaithe agus tá méadú suntasach tagtha chomh maith ar líon na bpá-oibrithe, na milliúin inimirceoirí maille le banoibrithe ar phá íseal á gcur san áireamh. Tá na claonta céanna ag roinnt leis na tíortha forbartha (arbh ionann iad agus tíortha an OECD). De réir figiúirí a d'fhoilsigh an eagraíocht chéanna i 1994, mhéadaigh an céatadán de phá-oibrithe sa daonra fré chéile ó 42.8% i 1970 go 46.8% i 1993.

Anuas ar an tsuáilce bhreá seo, tá lá oibre níos faide á chur isteach anois ná mar a bhíodh cheana ag níos mó oibrithe—agus tá luach meánach saothair na n-oibrithe craptha chomh maith sna tíortha forbartha, d'ainneoin róbótáil obair thionsclaíochta, ríomhairí obair thráchtála agus an talmhaíocht a bheith foircithe ag an teicneolaíocht etc. Lena rá go haicearrach, ní hamháin nár laghdaigh an teicneolaíocht an t-inchur daonna i saol na hoibre—a mhalrait ghlan a tharla.

An fáth nár tháinig an tuar faoi thargaireacht lucht léite an todhchaí ná go ndearna na hanailiseoirí seo talamh shlán dhó go raibh mianach an chaipitleachais féin claochlaithe go bunúsach ag an nuatheicneolaíocht agus gur féidir leis an innealra féin luach a chruthú, agus farasbarr is brabach dá réir sin. Ach tacaíonn fianaise an tsaoil féin—na claonta reatha i leith pá agus fostaíochta atá díreach luaite againn—leis an mbuntairiscint úd de chuid Karl Marx ina maítear gurb é saothar an duine amháin a chruthaíonn luach, nach aon chuid de shuáilce an innill luach a chruthú.

Is éard atá fúinne a dhéanamh san alt seo ná feidhm a bhaint as an mbuntairiscint seo de chuid Marx le léiriú nach féidir le feidhmiú na nuatheicneolaíochta fadhbanna na bpobal a sháru fhad's bheas na pobail chéanna faoi shrathar shaol an chaipitleachais. Ar dtús, ní mór dúinn cuid den teoiric atá taobh thiar dá sheasamh seo a achoimriú.

Sa gcaipitleachas baintear feidhm as saothar an duine le luacha a chruthú agus, dar le Karl Marx, is é an saothar céanna an t-aon bhunús atá le luach. Lena chur ar dhóigh eile, is éard atá i saothar an duine ábhar luacha nach réadaítear go dtí go sealbhaíonn an caipitlí torthaí an tsaothair agus go malartaíonn iad le haghaidh airgid. Is é sin le rá, is ionann réadú an luacha agus cruth an airgid a chur air. Mura dtarlódh an sealbhú/malartú seo sa gcéad áit, b'ionann sin agus gan na luacha céanna a chruthú a bheag ná a mhór. Agus is iad na luacha a réadaítear amhlaidh a chruthaíonn brabach an chaipitlí agus, trína n-athdháileadh i bpáirt ar an bpobal mór (tuarastal), éileamh an tsochaí ar thráchtearraí. Tá an athchúrsáil seo riachtanach chun an córas caipitleach a chaomhnú agus a athghiniúint.

Cuireann buaniomaíocht an chaipitleachais brú leanúnach ar an gcaipitlí innealra nua a chur ina mhonarcha in áit an duine. Tuige? Maidir le saothrú an bhrabaigh—ar ghné bhunúsach den chaipitleachas é—tugann sé buntáiste dó agus é ag iomaíocht lena chomhchaipitlithe. Cuir inneall (nach n-éilíonn coinníollacha níos fearr oibre, cíorrú ar uaireanta an lae oibre, árachas sóisialta, arduithe pá etc) in áit scór oibrí, abair, agus méadóidh sé an táirgiúlacht. Ba mhó freisin an táirgeadh a gheobhadh sé as gach aonad infheistithe—buntáiste riachtanach dó agus é i ngleic mharfach lena chomhacasamhail.

Tá taobh eile ag an scéal seo, áfach—taobh dhorcha. Agus bata is bóthar faighte acu, ba lú ar fad cumas caiteachais na n-oibrithe seachas mar bhíodh agus iad ag crácamas ar son an chaipitlí. Má shainmhínítear an meánráta brabaigh mar an breisluach iomlán agus é roinnte ag costais treallaimh agus saothair, chaithfeadh an meánráta brabaigh titim freisin. B'eo claonadh fadtéarmach, dar le Marx, ach léirigh sé go raibh frithchlaonta i gceist chomh maith.

Is fear seiftiúil é an caipitlí gan aon agó, le mianach tréan féincho-santach ag roinnt leis i gcónaí. Agus é ag iarraidh claonadh laghdaithe an bhrabaigh a chur ar neamhni agus a ráta brabaigh a mhéadú, dá mb'fhéidir sin, cruthaíonn sé fáinne fi dó féin, áfach. Baineann sé úsáid as módhanna feabhsaithe táirgiúchá lena chuid caiteachas ar thuarastal a laghdú; an toradh a bhíonn ar an gcur chuige seo, ar ndóigh, ná dífhostaíocht agus níos lú airgid fós ar fáil don tsochaí fré chéile leis an táirgeadh méadaithe seo a chuireann an t-innealra nua ar fáil a cheannach. A chuid brabaigh agus brabach a bhráithre a bhíonn thíos leis an scéal seo sa deireadh.

Lena chur go haicearrach, fágтар an caipitleachas idir dhá thine bhealtaine. An dá mhéid a laghdaítear tuarastal le brabach a mhéadú is ea is mó iad na fadhbanna réadaithe a thagann ar an bhfód. Agus an dá mhéid a chuirtear le tuarastal d'fhonn cumas caiteachais a mhéadú is ea is lú an brabach a shaothraítear agus is ea is lú saol a bhíonn i ndán don fhiontar dá réir sin.

An bhainisteoireacht Keynesach ar olléileamh a mholann monataraithe nualíobrála, ní féidir léi tada a dhéanamh leis an meath leanúnach seo ar tháirgeadh luacha a chosc. Ní chuireann sé riamh san áireamh go gciorraítear réadú luacha de bharr gur lú cion na luacha a tháirgítear de réir mar a laghdaítear inchur díreach an duine sa bproiséas déantúsaíochta. Tagann gach teoiric agus gach polasaí athdháilithe ioncam salach ar an bhfirinne shearbh seo.

Ann féin, ní chuimsíonn an tuiscint seo de chuid Marx saol iomlán an chaipitleachais—bhí i bhfad níos mó ná sin le rá aige faoi chóras an bhra-

baigh, ar ndóigh—ach osclaíonn sí fuinneog ar chuid bhunúsach d'fhírinne an chórais.

Mar a dúramar, nuair a labhair Marx ar chrapadh an ráta bhrabaigh is ag labhairt ar chlaonadh a bhí sé; shainmhínigh sé freisin na frithchlaonta a chuireann cluiche scoir an chórais chaipitligh ar athlá. Lena chuid caiteachas ar innealra a chúiteamh cuireann an caipitil dlús leis an dúshaothrú a dhéanann sé ar a chuid fostaithe le cuidiú an innealra chéanna. Cuireann sé fad leis an lá oibre, go háirithe i dtíortha neamhfhorbartha ina mbeadh an lucht oibre níos mí-cagraithe, níos géilliúla agus níos boichte. (Shílfeá nach mbeadh sé chomh furasta sin an cur chuige seo a leanúint go hoscailte i bhfearann an Tíogair Cheiltigh ach is í fírinne an scéil ná go gcuireann cuid mhór oibrithe sna nuathionscail abhus 10 n-uair a chloig oibre isteach, ar an meán, in aghaidh an lae.) Ag filliúint ar an domhan neamhfhorbartha, dá n-athlonnófaí tionscail ansiúd ar scála sách leathan—i bhfocail eile, dá leanfaí le claonadh atá le brath go suntasach cheana féin—ba é an toradh a bheadh ar seo ná go gcrapadh ar éileamh sna margai baile sna tíortha forbartha. Ní ligfeadh a gcuid bochtanais, ar ndóigh, do mhargai an Tríú Domhain an chailliúint seo a chúiteamh, go fóilleach ar chaoi ar bith. Buntáiste eile a bhaineann leis an oll-linn difhostaithe a bheith suite san Áis, abair, ná dá n-éireadh oibrithe Éireannacha ró-mhíleata d'fhéachfaí lena gceansú trí aistriú an mhonarchain chun na hÁise a bhagairt orthu. (Agus faoi láthair bagraítear gluaiseacht chun na hAfraice ar oibrithe i dtíortha san Áis ar nós Taiwan.)

Aris ar ais, b'fhéidir do thír ar nós muide luacha a réadú i margai eachtracha an domhain fhorbartha. Ach arís is ag plé le seift shealadach atá muid. De réir mar a d'fhásfadh difhostaíocht sna tíortha a ghlacann lenár gcuid onnmhairithe (agus i cothaithe i bpáirt ag na hearraí céanna) nó de réir mar a tharlódh na gnáthéigeandálacha eacnamaíocha is dual don chóras caipitleach, bhuailfí an t-onnmhairitheoir a bheadh spleách ar an saghas tráchtála seo—muide, sa chás seo.

Seift seanbhunaithe eile i mála an chaipitil ná tuarastail a laghdú. Dá chomhartha sin, tá borradh ag teacht ar fud an domhain fhorbartha faoi líon na bpost ar phá íseal. Postanna den chineál sin is bun leis an laghdú suntasach ar dhifhostaíocht sna Stáit Aontaithe, agus bhainfeadh an scéal céanna leis an domhan forbartha fré chéile—an tír se'againne san áireamh, mar is léir do chách. Tá an fáinne fí a ghinfidh an laghdú ar oll-éileamh a chruthófar dá bharr pléite againn cheana féin.

Bealach traidisiúnta eile chun an éigeandáil a eascraíonn as éileamh íseal ar earraí a sheachaint, ar feadh tamaill ar chaoi ar bith, ná píghneacha a chur i bpócaí na ndaoine trí airgead a phriondáil. Freagraíonn an

margadh don straitéis seo trí phraghasanna a ardú. An costas a bhaineann le fadhb an réadaithe a chur ar an méar fhada sa gcaoi seo ná go ndiluacháiltear an t-airgeadra go dtí go nochtaíonn iomaíocht sna margai idirnáisiúnta, agus laghdú ar onnmhairiú dá réir, an fhadhb chéanna athuair. Is é an staigfléisean, nó marbh-bhoilsciú, an comhréiteach idir lagthrá eacnamaíoch ar thaobh amháin agus boilsciú ar an taobh eile.

Muran fadhb an chaitheamh aimsire an fhadhb is mó a bheas ag dó na geirbe i bpobail an domhain fhorbartha amach anseo, cén cineál *future shock* atá i ndán do na tíortha úd an atá fágtha ar gcúl i rás na teicneolaíochta? Is tíortha iad seo atá, ar an mórgóir, craite ag fadhbanna sóisialta agus eacnamaíocha nach bhfuil éaló uathu taobh istigh den leagan amach atá ceaptha dóibh ag na háisíneachtaí idirnáisiúnta úd, an Ciste Airgeadra Idirnáisiúnta agus an Banc Domhanda, atá ag feidhmiú dáiríre ar son an chaipitil idirnáisiúnta. Tharla nach mbíonn buntáiste fhorbairt na teicneolaíochta ag pobail na gcríocha seo de ghnáth méadaíonn siad a gcuid táirgiúlachta agus cuireann siad lena gcuid breisluacha trína n-iarrachtaí corpartha féin. An toradh a bhíonn ar seo ná de réir mar a thig méadú ar tháirgiúlacht chaipitil an chumhachta impiriúil, cuirtear an lucht oibre sna tíortha a mhaireann faoi bhróg an chumhachta chéanna faoi chuing ráta dúshaothraithe a bhíonn ardaithe dá réir sin. Ag an am céanna, laghdaítear luach a saothair trí ardrátaí boilsciú a chur i bhfeidhm. (Is údar alt ar leith i gné eile d'anó an Tríú Domhain—na fiacha idirnáisiúnta úd a leagann ualach chomh trom sin ar na haicmí is laige sna tíortha atá faoi thrácht.)

Laige mhór ar eacnamaíochtaí an Tríú Domhain, agus laige atá cothaithe ag na háisíneachtaí idirnáisiúnta atá ceaptha a bheith ag cabhrú leo, ná go mbíonn orthu a gcuid breisluacha a réadú sna margai i gcéin. Onnmhairiú an geisfhocal. Spreagann an leagan amach seo ar chúrsaí eacnamaíocha polasaí díluachála i leith rátaí malairte le cuidiú le honnmhairitheoirí sna tíortha atá faoi thrácht. Facthas rátaí millteanacha díluachála sa Tríú Domhan sna hochtóidí agus é i bpáirt le borradh scafánta faoin mboilsciú a d'fhág pobail na réigiún úd i bhfiordhroch-chaoi.

Mar atá ráite againn, ní údar iontais ar chor ar bith é ról na n-áisíneachtaí idirnáisiúnta i leith an Tríú Domhain tharla gurb é a bhforchuspóir siadsan aistriú an bhreisluacha ó na nua-chóilíneachtaí a dhearbhu, titim ó chéile sóisialta agus eacnamaíoch na nua-chóilíneachtaí a sheachaint agus féachaint chuige go mbíonn an bhuntógáil chui ar fáil sna críocha úd an chun ligint don chaipiteal idirnáisiúnta alpadh roimhe.

Bochtanas, ródhaonra, drochshaol agus deachtóireachtaí—sin iad na torthaí ar fud an domhain a leanann feidhmiú an chórais chaipitligh—agus

léiríonn claonta reatha, agus na droch-chomharthaí seo a dhul i ndonacht i Meiriceá Theas, san Afraic agus i sciar nach beag den Áis, gur beag an baul go gcuirfidh caipitleachas na 21ú aoise ar cheal iad. Ní leor ar chor ar bith a rá gur constaicí i mbealach na forbartha iad na comharthaí céanna; taispeánann an saol dúinn gur de dhlúth agus d'inneach na forbartha caipitlí iad.

D'ainneoin go bhféadfadh an teicneolaíocht, go teoiriciúil, giorrú le hanó an chine ar scála domhanda, bheadh ar na háisíneachtaí domhanda—ar ionstraimí iad dáiríre den chaipiteal idirnáisiúnta, mar atá ráite thuas—athdháileadh chomh mór sin a dhéanamh ar luacha idirnáisiúnta nach bhféadfaí athghiniúint an chaipitil féin a chur i gcrích. Níl faoin gcaipitleachas lámh a chur ina bhás féin. Cuireadh muid an *scenario* buile seo lena raibh le rá ag Alice Glenn tráth faoi thurcáithe a vótálfadh don Nollaig!

Le hachóimriú a dhéanamh ar bhunbhrí an ailt seo: an chontrárthacht bhunúsach a bhaineann le feidhmiú na dteicneolaíochtaí nua a chuireann postanna ar cheal chun leas an duine a dhéanamh ná go mbaineann siad rátaí táirgíochta níos airde amach i dtéarmaí fisiciúla—ach, ar an taobh eile den scéal, laghdaítear ráta an bhrabhaigh, agus dá réir baintear den fhórsa a bhrostaíonn an geilleagar caipitleach chun cinn. De bhréis air sin, laghdaítear cumas caiteachais an phobail, rud a chiallaíonn éileamh laghdaithe ar na hearraí a chruthaíonn an córas déantúsaíochta. I bhfocail eile, níorbh fhéidir taibhsí na dífhostaíochta, an bhochtanaís ná an ghorta fhorleathain a dhíothú trí mhódhanna táirgíochta a ghiorródh le saothar an duine a chur i bhfeidhm fhad's bheadh an cur chuige seo ag tabhairt tús áite do riachtanais an chórais chaipitligh. Ní chuirfeadh aon chóras seachas an sóisialachas, córas ina roinnfí an toradh sóisialta go cothrom ar lucht a chruthaithe, buanna iomadúla na teicneolaíochta ag fóint do leas an duine ins chuile thír.

B'in an neantóg nach raibh treabhcais ard-dóchasacha na teicneolaíochta, ó Toffler go Rifkin, sásta breith ariamh uirthi. Sin í an neantóg nach mbíonn na maithe móra abhus, ó Mhichael Smurfit go Mary McAleese, a bhíonn ag labhairt go croibhríste ar an gcontúirt a bhaineann leis an *social exclusion* atá ag méadú i bhfearann seo an Tiogair Cheiltigh, sásta breith uirthi. Ach go dtí go mbéarfad uirthi beidh fadhbanna an *future shock* nár shamhlaigh Toffler agus a bhráithre úd, agus a ghearánaíonn siad go fuíoch, a dhul in olcas. Ní aon nuaíocht í sin, áfach; litrígh Karl Marx bunchreat an scéil amach 150 bliain ó shin go baileach i bh*Forógra an Pháirtí Chumannaigh*...

Fianna Fáil and the IRA: lessons from the 1930s

Brian Hanley

The election of Mary McAleese as president in November 1997, despite attempts to smear her with a 'Provo' label, has been hailed as the sign of a new respectability for nationalism in Southern Ireland. Certainly Sinn Féin seem to think so. Despite not officially backing McAleese, *An Phoblacht* could barely contain itself at the prospect of her election. The Christmas issue proudly proclaimed 1997 a year of "growing nationalist strength".

But what is the reality? Certainly the IRA ceasefire has made it easier to publicly discuss the Six Counties and Irish history in general in the South. But the hysterical reactions to the temporary resumption of the IRA campaign, and the corresponding lack of reaction to loyalist murders, should lead us to question how deep this sentiment goes.

While McAleese romped home over a second if not third rate opposition, 53% of the population didn't even vote. The poorest, working class areas registered the highest abstention levels. Personally McAleese is a middle class careerist who has close links to the Church hierarchy. It is indicative of the current thinking of the Sinn Féin leadership that somehow an alliance of McAleese, Tim Pat Coogan, Niall O'Dowd and Bertie Ahern is supposed to have a useful role to play in creating a new Ireland. At its centre lies a confusion about the nature of Fianna Fáil and its goals.

Despite its record there are many who see Fianna Fáil as genuinely committed to a united Ireland. This article will argue the opposite: That since the 1930s when it entered the mainstream of Southern politics Fianna Fáil has been primarily concerned about securing the stability of the 26 County state.

Fianna Fáil's reputation for radicalism does have a sound historical basis. They emerged from the defeated anti-treatyites in the Civil War, having faced brutal state repression, Church condemnation and blacklisting by Free State employers. For many of the anti-treaty republicans their experiences forced them to draw radical conclusions.

I was too green and inexperienced to comprehend that there were forces in our society much more powerful than even an undivided IRA could resist... Still less did I understand the virulence of the bourgeoisie as

they perceived the threat to their hopes of power and position... nor was I aware of the lengths to which the Church would go to maintain its dominance of a peasant population steeped in superstition and an urban proletariat soused in Saint Joseph's medals... I was well informed on and could see the analogy with the Paris Commune; even more contemporaneously I had read of the fate of Bela Kun and his Communists at the hands of the Hungarian bourgeoisie... A fearful bourgeois, of whatever nationality, is as savage as any wild animal.

It may surprise some readers that the above passage was written by a future Fianna Fáil minister, C S Andrews, father of the current Foreign Affairs head David Andrews. When De Valera led the split from Sinn Féin in 1926 many of the left wing of the IRA placed hopes in the new party. In contrast to the moribund Sinn Féin, which stuck religiously to believing itself to be the rightful government of Ireland, *An Phoblacht* published Fianna Fáil news and encouraged Fianna Fáil speakers at rallies and demonstrations.

To understand the relationship between the IRA and Fianna Fáil at this time it must be remembered that most of the leading figures in both groups knew each other, were often close friends, and had gone through the Tan War, Civil War, jail and internment camp together. The poverty and austerity of the Free State in the 1920s meant that many thousands of republicans were forced to leave Ireland. Those that stayed suffered constant police harassment and were never allowed to forget their status as 'irregulars'. So while most IRA volunteers disapproved of Fianna Fáil entering the Free State parliament and taking the Oath of Allegiance, they did not elevate it to the level of betrayal practised by the Free Staters. Only the diehard leaders of Sinn Féin were obsessed with the Second Dáil's holy writ.

For the IRA left, and indeed its mainstream led by Chief of Staff Moss Twomey, the growth of Fianna Fáil was an opportunity for stepping up the struggle for a radical overthrow of Free State capitalism and/or forcing a Fianna Fáil government to renew the war against Britain—the 'second round' in which the IRA would once again become Ireland's rightful army. While distrustful of Fianna Fáil's 'political' direction they tended to see opportunities rather than dangers lying within it.

To the average volunteer the situation was even less problematic. Constantly in danger of being jailed during the Cosgrave government's periodic bouts of coercion, subject to a Special Branch who tended to shoot first and ask questions later, and still relative outcasts with the local Free State

elites, the prospect of a change in government must have seemed overwhelmingly attractive. So when Fianna Fáil got their chance in 1932, not only did IRA volunteers work for them, they were given explicit permission to do so by an Army Council suspension of standing rules forbidding volunteers from canvassing for 'Free State' parties. "Get Cosgrave Out", screamed the *An Phoblacht* headline. Of course Cosgrave out meant De Valera in. IRA volunteers guarded polling stations, protected Fianna Fáil canvassers and engaged in the time honoured pastime of voting early and often.

The election was fought in a bitter atmosphere with the Free State press conjuring up images of Fianna Fáil bolshevik gunmen eager to destroy democracy in Ireland. The British press forecast renewal of war if De Valera came to power. For the IRA the election marked a welcome opportunity to unite with Fianna Fáilers and escape being the centre of a sustained 'Red scare' launched by the Cosgrave regime in 1931.

The IRA leadership were caught up in the general fervour to elect Fianna Fáil. As Moss Twomey admitted to the Clan na Gael organisation in the US: "Volunteers could not be restrained from voting against their [the Cosgrave government's] candidates". Faced with the new government Twomey told his American supporters, "The country is splendid right now"—but he signalled a problem which was to grow deeper for the IRA under Fianna Fáil. "Nobody visualised a Free State which Republicans were not supposed to attack! And that is just what we have today in the 26 Counties... we don't want the Cosgrave imperialist gang back, and we wish to avoid doing anything which may provide the pretext for their comeback."

The new Fianna Fáil administration were certainly aware of the potential danger that a large independent body like the IRA could still pose. Over Summer 1932 leading Fianna Fáil figures met with IRA leaders to discuss the future. Fianna Fáil wanted the IRA to become the backbone of a new volunteer reserve of the Free State Army. The IRA were interested in a working alliance of Fianna Fáil, Labour, trade unions and others in an anti-imperialist front. The discussions led nowhere.

While the existence of an independent army posed problems for Fianna Fáil, it posed problems for the IRA also. The central one being: what role did it play when it wasn't at war? The average unit drilled regularly, marched and counter-marched, held commemorations and very occasionally held weapons training. Activities like the boycott of British Bass ale gave volunteers the chance to let off steam, but politically led nowhere. The left within the IRA pointed out that without social and economic activity,

as George Gilmore put it at the 1933 Army Convention, "we will become a safety valve for Fianna Fáil". Moss Twomey assured the delegates that they were not only soldiers but "revolutionaries", but believed "There is a great deal in George's point of view, but it just isn't feasible". The majority of the convention agreed that the Army's concentration should be on the "perfection of the IRA as a military force".

This was all very fine if war was in the offing, but as the 1930s wore on Fianna Fáil consolidated its base in Irish society. On the one hand it gained respectability with the Church and the middle classes, and on the other it provided some improvements in working people's living standards. The prospect of a 'second round', let alone support for it, waned.

The emergence of fascism, in the shape of the Blueshirts under ex-police chief O'Duffy, did provide volunteers with a focus in 1933 and 1934—the IRA were the cutting edge in the struggle against the Blueshirts, despite leadership misgivings. Yet the threat of O'Duffy also provided Fianna Fáil with the pretext to adopt a 'law and order' persona, previously alien to the 'slightly constitutional' party, and also to incorporate several hundred ex-IRA men into the state machine, in the new 'Broy Harriers', a special unit of the police. Within ten years these men, most of whom joined in order to combat the Blueshirts, would be hunting down their former comrades. By 1933, the gulf was widening within the IRA between the left and the mainstream.

A test for both Fianna Fáil and the IRA's radicalism came with the case of James Gralton, a Leitrim Communist. After a sustained local campaign of press and Church hysteria Gralton was deported to the United States in 1933. Following the euphoria of the 1932 Eucharistic Congress any remaining rupture with the Church had been healed for Fianna Fáil. They were now adept at tarring their enemies with the red scare brush themselves. The officer commanding the North Mayo IRA reported to the adjutant general during the January 1933 general election that "several clergymen hitherto hostile are now supporting Fianna Fáil in this election here... 215 Volunteers are working for Fianna Fáil... in this Brigade area".

For the IRA the case was even more problematic. Twomey wrote privately that the expulsion "was a shame" and that the "Knights" (of Columbanus) were behind it. (While usually characterised as right wing or apolitical, a reading of Twomey's private papers gives the impression of a moderate left winger intent on holding an army together at any cost.) The IRA adjutant general, Seán MacBride, sent the following message to the Gralton defence rally at the Rotunda in Dublin.

We are aware that Gralton holds and has expressed views which are hostile to the existing economic order here. This, presumably, is the crime of which he is guilty, and for which he has secretly been condemned. In other words, Gralton's presumed crime is being guilty of exploring the manner in which the mass of the people are being exploited... This organisation is taking steps to organise opinion against Gralton's expulsion.

However the local IRA under Seán O'Farrell asked the 1933 Army Convention to be allowed remain neutral in the affair—and strong evidence suggests it was IRA members who shot up and burned Gralton's hall! The case sums up the difficulty of how the IRA's leadership related to local units who were often at best apolitical if not armed Fianna Fáilers.

The anti-Communist hysteria drummed up around the Gralton case also had repercussions for the IRA in Dublin. In 1933 mobs attacked the headquarters of the Revolutionary Workers Groups, the Workers College and the Workers Union of Ireland. Twomey saw the rioters as no more than "a gang of rowdies... I must say the 'storm-troops' I saw last night were the poorest stuff imaginable... 12 men would have scattered the... mob"—but the IRA didn't send one man. Charlie Gilmore of the IRA took it upon himself to defend RWG members, and was arrested in possession of firearms. The IRA announced that Gilmore was not acting under orders. He was only retrospectively granted authorisation. Despite the fact that the IRA had sympathy with a left wing group under attack from right wing mobs, the IRA as a whole was afraid even to defend its own members openly.

Later, in 1935, the Fianna Fáil government faced a challenge from the Dublin Tramway strikers, and the IRA intervened actively on the strikers' side. The IRA's continuing activity in strikes, plus the real danger of allowing an armed group of substantial size operate outside the law, was persuading Fianna Fáil to begin the process of clamping down on their former comrades and, in some cases, friends.

Politically the IRA was now in flux. In 1934 the bulk of the left had withdrawn to form the Republican Congress. The Sinn Féin organisation was ignored by most Republicans. Attempts by Seán MacBride to launch political initiatives, like Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann, were stillborn. As Poppy Day declined, so did the annual Republican show of force against it. The Army stagnated and several actions which outraged public opinion gave Fianna Fáil the opportunity to move against them, banning the IRA and jailing Moss Twomey in Summer 1936.

For many old soldiers, Tan and Civil War veterans, the progress of the Fianna Fáil government was the best they could have hoped for, if not more. They were now entitled to Civil War pensions, and indeed felt they deserved a bit of peace and quiet. The prospects of a 'second round' were gone by 1936. The activists of the early 30s were disillusioned and some had gone to Spain with the International Brigades. MacBride briefly became Chief of Staff, then resigned and left because he felt the 1937 Constitution could not be opposed. IRA volunteers became embroiled in futile feuds with reserve soldiers and in stunts which occasionally amused but never gained mass support. The IRA was becoming a voice in the wilderness, its purpose unclear to most. The failure to build an alternative in the early 30s, the attempt to ride on Fianna Fáil's coat tails, had come to an end.

Meanwhile Fianna Fáil could point out that they had abolished the Governor General, the Privy Council and the Oath of Allegiance, withheld the land annuities and eventually regained the 'Treaty ports'. Seán T O'Kelly was able to boast: "In the last six years, look how we whipped John Bull every time".

During the war years Fianna Fáil would execute six IRA men, including a 1916 veteran. Three were to die on hunger strike, and a further four shot down by Free State police. Hundreds were interned. In contrast only one IRA volunteer was executed in the Six Counties, and that led to an outcry of Southern opinion. Gerry Boland, who in 1926 had travelled to Moscow to seek Russian aid for the IRA, was able to announce: "The IRA is dead and I killed it." Boland's reasoning was clear—Fianna Fáil was the government of the 26 County state, and its legitimate defenders.

Whatever their rhetoric about the North the same holds today—Fianna Fáil are the 26 County party par excellence. Their only interest in the current situation is how the 'peace process' can end militant republican opposition to the Six County state and thus ensure stability for their own. Illusions in Fianna Fáil in 1932 were understandable; to have any hope in them in 1998 could well be tragic.

The Hidden Connolly

Our series of James Connolly's 'lost writings'—articles which have never been published since his execution—continues here with another three articles from the Workers' Republic. 'Soldiers of the Queen' is a blistering attack on the British Army, which drew the attention of the authorities on the paper. A 'Home Thrusts' column berates the Labour councillors of Cork and holds out to the city's workers the prospect of the socialist republic. And an editorial on the fight for children's rights is as relevant today as it was a century ago.

"Soldiers of the Queen"

[*Workers' Republic*, 15 July 1899]

The opprobrious epithet "hired assassins," so often applied to the Army by Socialist propagandists, seems to many people in Ireland—accustomed as they are to the double-dealing of the Home Rule press—as a somewhat harsh characterisation of the military forces of the Crown. We have been so long accustomed to see our capitalist patriots playing fast and loose in this matter, so long been inured to seeing and hearing the journalists and politicians who profess to hate our English masters, devoting whole columns of space in their newspapers to "Garrison Gossip," and other tittle tattle relative to the Army, so often seen our Home Rule Corporations petition the British Government to allow the permanent establishment of a military force in their towns, are so familiarised with the strange spectacle of Irish MPs rising in the British Parliament to demand better treatment for those British soldiers to whom Ireland had the misfortune to give birth, that the public mind of this country has almost lost sight of the grim and ugly fact that the British Army in Ireland has only one reason for existence—that reason being the desire of the governing and oppressing classes to possess ready for use a body of highly disciplined armed men, who, on the first sign of an active desire on the part of the oppressed to get rid of their governors and oppressors, can be relied upon to proceed without asking questions to cut the throat of, or otherwise destroy, every man so aspiring to freedom. In other words, the Army is, in plain matter-of-fact language, what the Socialists so bluntly describe it to be, viz, a body of hired assassins, creatures in the shape of men, who, upon enlisting as "soldiers of the Queen" agree in exchange for the sum of 8d or 1/- per day to take the life

of any person, be it man, woman or child, whom our rulers desire to get rid of. Of course, unlike private assassins who only murder under the influence of passion, the Army performs its work under the approval of a Christian hierarchy—bishops bless its banners, churches pray that the army of their particular nation may cut enough throats to secure a victory, and each battalion carries upon its payroll a clergyman whose especial function it is to assure the delights of Heaven to such of the gallant heroes as fall in the course of the work of murder. We admit the presence of clergymen amid such surroundings, although in glaring contrast to the teaching of the Master they profess to serve—"Thou shalt not kill"—is not without precedent. The brigands of the Middle Ages usually had attached to their bands some disrobed priest, who also, like his modern prototype in the Army, issued absolution to the wounded members of his band of marauders.

The soldier then is, no matter in what light we examine his position, a "hired assassin"—his first duty, he is told, is to "obey." To obey whom? His superior officers, who in turn must obey the Government. When the mandate goes forth, "Kill," he must kill and dare not ask the reason why. The government under whose orders he serves may have been elected to power on some question of internal administration in England, Local Option¹, Franchise, or Disestablishment², but as soon as it is in power it has the right to launch all the military and naval forces of the Crown into a war of aggression in the interest of the possessing class, even if it should be upon a people with whom the vast majority of its constituents desire to live in peace. It has also the legal right to use its power against the working class in its own land should they become restless under the system of wage slavery. Whatever be the excuse for ordering out the Army, the soldier has no option but to obey. Whether it be Egyptians revolting against oppression, Boers defending their independence, Indians maddened with famine, or Irishmen hungering for freedom; whether the human being coming within his line of sight be stranger or friend, father, mother, sister, brother or sweetheart, the soldier has no option but to press the trigger, and send the death-dealing instrument on its errand of murder. He is only a "hired assassin," and must earn the wages of his hire. What is a hired assassin, properly defined? One who engages to take human life without having personal injury to avenge, at the command of whoever pays him for doing so. Does not this description suit the soldier exactly?

The demoralising effect of this occupation is further exemplified in the life and language of the soldier himself. The moral atmosphere of a barrack room is of the most revolting character, as is the ordinary language of the soldier the most bestial conceivable. The Army is a veritable moral

cesspool corrupting all within its bounds, and exuding forth a miasma of pestilence upon every spot so unfortunate as to be cursed by its presence. The most degraded races within the wide-spreading British Empire sink lower in the scale of humanity after peaceful contact with the British Army; indeed it may be truthfully averred that a desolating war would inflict upon a country less injury than a peaceful occupation by the "Soldiers of the Queen." Do our Irish mothers, who see their sons enlist in this sink of corruption without erasing their names from the family roll, do the Irish maidens who give themselves up to the embraces of this hireling soldiery, realise the awful depravity hidden beneath the gaudy uniforms and dazzling trappings of the British garrison? A standing army anywhere, in any country, is first of all unnecessary; secondly, a tool in the hands of oppressors of the people; thirdly, a generator of prostitution, but the British Army is in the last particular the most odious on the face of the earth. Witness the OFFICIAL STATISTICS, which tell us that the rate per 1,000 of admissions to hospital for venereal diseases is

In the Prussian Army	26.7
... .. French ...	43.8
... .. Austrian ...	65.4
And	
British in India	458.3

or nearly every second man; ten times as many as in the French Army.

"Soldiers of the Queen." Gallant Army, noble Queen.

Many people will, no doubt, question the propriety of our action in dragging this unsavoury subject into the light of day in this manner, but our action is prompted by the desire to awaken in the minds of our Irish workers such a real and abiding hatred of this instrument of tyranny, mingled with loathing of its character, as will serve in the first place to destroy the prospects of recruiting in Ireland, and in the second place to fire their brains and nerve their arms against the day when we will wipe the foul stain of its presence from our midst. This is our purpose, and to place within reach of our Irish girls a knowledge of the constituent parts that go to the make-up of a British soldier, that they might flee from his polluting embraces as from a thing accursed.

Should we succeed in planting in the breasts of our fellow wage slaves a tenth part of the hatred we ourselves feel for this blood-be-decked tool of our tyrants, we shall feel confident that the day is not far distant when the

long standing account between the Irish worker and his exploiters will be paid in full.

Home Thrusts

[*Workers' Republic*, 9 September 1899]

Rebel Cork!

Well, well, who'd have thought it?

Cork, whose Labour men showed such a splendid example to Dublin³, Cork, whose Labour men fought their way into the Council, while the Dublin Labour men only begged their way in; Cork, whose Labour men forced on the Evening Sittings⁴ while the Dublin men had not the manliness to press the question; Cork, whose Labour men, immediately they were in, increased the wages and bettered the condition of the Corporation labourers; Cork now takes a flop back into the bog of reaction, and its treacherous middle class councillors deal Labour a terrific slap in the face.

In the course of one sitting the rule establishing Evening Sittings, and the rule enforcing the insertion of a Fair Wages clause in all city contracts were rescinded by a majority of the City Council.

One councillor gravely informing the meeting that if the Fair Wages clause was insisted on it would close all the factories in the country inside twelve months.

This is as much as to say that the factories of Ireland are dependent upon the systematic underpaying of their employees, and that if they were to pay what is known as a "Fair Wage" they would speedily be ruined.

Remember, a Fair Wage, as here understood, means nothing more than the wage established as a standard by trade-union effort in the district.

It is not an ideal wage, nor even necessarily a high wage.

It may even be a starvation wage.

It is only "fair" in so far as it is the standard agreed upon between the trade union and the majority of the employing class.

Therefore, when the Cork City Council thus rescinded the resolution enforcing a fair wage, they were virtually declaring the standard wage of the district to be too high, and therefore inviting every employer in the city to refuse to continue paying that wage to their employees.

And plead the example of the City Council as their justification.

The whole disgraceful performance is a confirmation of the truth I have so often pointed out, that the employing class are the most immediate enemies of the Irish workers, and that until we have mustered up courage,

and acquired knowledge, enough to drive this home-made breed of tyrants from public life we need not delude ourselves with the hope that the gates of national emancipation will ever open to us.

The English oppressor, indeed! Why, here are Irishmen—rulers elected by Rebel Cork—openly declaring that the prosperity of Ireland depends upon the robbery of her working class, and that to insist upon a Fair Wage being paid would ruin the country.

Thus showing that when men of their class speak of "loving their country" they do not mean that they love the people, but only the soil—the inanimate earth, not the living, suffering men and women.

But I have every hope that the working men of Cork will, at next election, remember the men who thus trampled upon the political and social rights of the labourer.

And remembering them, give them a much-needed rest from municipal exertions.

The Labour Councillors of Cork were careful to disassociate themselves from the ISRP⁵ during, and immediately after the elections.

They wished to respect the "rights of property," and, I think, honestly believed that the propertied classes could be brought to listen to reason and the appeals of common humanity.

They should know better now. They should be able to realise now that the members of the propertied class are so blinded by the lust for gold, have their souls so steeped in the desire for power, that they cannot be reasoned with, or argued out of their resolve to maintain unfettered their rights to plunder, any more than the tiger in his jungle can be reasoned or argued out of satiating his appetite upon his helpless victim.

The Labour men of Cork should now, in the light of this latest object lesson in the cannibalistic instincts of the employing class, reconsider their attitude towards the Socialist Republican Party.

Listen, Oh, Men of Cork!

The employing class has said, through its representatives on the City Council, that it will have no compromise with you, but will fight you to the bitter end.

The only answer you can make, and still preserve your self-respect, is to accept that challenge, and tell them in addition that since they will not have a compromise with you, neither will you ever more dream of suggesting a compromise with them, but

That henceforth you will rally the working class to fight for the full fruits of their labour, all they produce by their toil, which can only be made theirs through the subjugation and dispossession of the propertied class.

When you are urging their extinction as a class they can not fight you more bitterly than they are doing now.

Therefore, let the Socialist Republic be your watchword; the tools to those who use them, the product to the producers.

The Socialist Republic! What does that mean?

It means that the industries of Cork shall be owned by the people of Cork, that the organized trades of Cork find in their own ranks men to undertake all the managerial work and superintendence of those industries, that you, the workers, could elect suitable men to such positions, and having elected them would serve under them as zealously as you now serve the slave-driving foremen of a private employer; that therefore the capitalist is unnecessary, and the profits he now absorbs could be retained for the use of the workers—to whom they properly belong.

And that, freed from the necessity of maintaining this idle and superfluous class, the length of the working day could be easily cut in half, while the remuneration for your toil might be multiplied fourfold.

That no one should want, that none should be overworked, that none should live in insolent idleness, that man should no longer prey upon his fellow man, that JUSTICE will be realised.

That productive property—all property held for profit—should be made the public property of the community, State or City, and co-operatively operated by the labour of the adult population, under whatever rules they themselves might like to frame for their own guidance.

That is Socialism, in brief. Not so awful, is it?

But the mere advocacy of it would frighten more reforms out of the master class than all the speeches you could make about the rights of Labour.

SPAILPÍN

A Plea for the Children

[*Workers' Republic*, 2 December 1899]

We wonder how many of our readers fully appreciated the significance of that plank in our municipal programme⁶ which demands the free maintenance of children at School. In no item of the Socialist programme are the economic and humanitarian aspects of the movement so closely blended, and none are so much required in the interest of future generations. For the misery and oppression under which the adults of this generation suffer, they have themselves largely to blame as much of it is immediately remov-

able, and all of it could be abolished by a concerted effort on the part of its victims. But the children who suffer most from this inhuman social system; who are stunted in growth, physically and intellectually; who are dragged up, for the most part, in tenement houses which ever tend to become veritable cesspools of crime and degradation; who are shut out by the poverty of their parents from every avenue of enlightenment, and who find their whole lives warped and distorted by the evil conditions surrounding their infancy; their claim for consideration is superior to all political exigencies, and ought to be pressed forward with all the energy we possess.

It may be urged against such a demand that it introduces the public power of the community into a sphere from which it ought to be excluded—the home. But this is an argument which cannot be seriously entertained when we consider the many and varied inroads upon private life which the power of the State has already made, and in which such public intervention has proven to be in the highest degree beneficent. The individual can no longer use his property as he pleases, even when that property is in inanimate things, but when property takes the form of human beings, as children, the “rights” of the individual are circumscribed and limited in the most thorough manner. And what sane man to-day would venture to assert that the right of parents to do as they like with their children—a right which all too often took the form of brutal maltreatment and systematic starvation—was more compatible with public welfare, or private morality, than the supervision enforced by the State at present. And as the right of the individual to maltreat his children has been suppressed in the interest of the children, should not the social maltreatment of the children which follows as a result of the enforced poverty of the parents also be suppressed? If it is right that parents should not be allowed to sentence their children to corporal punishment of a severe character, or to curtail their supply of food below what is necessary for their subsistence, is it not also right that Society which, through its faulty economic organisation, sentences the parents themselves to a lifetime of drudgery and ill-required toil, should use its power to provide the children of the poor it has created with sufficient of the necessities of life to allow of their proper development into capable, self-respecting men and women? It is said this would encourage drunkards and loafers to neglect their children. But the children of such people are neglected now, and the maintenance of their children out of public funds could not increase such neglect, but would only save the helpless little ones from its consequences. Why should children suffer, even if the parents are criminal and indolent?

Society owes a duty to these children—they are the citizens of the future; as their childhood is made happy and healthful, and therefore truly susceptible of receiving education, so will their manhood and womanhood tend to become; so will the civilization they mould be worthy of an enlightened people. Therefore, we repeat, the Free Maintenance of the Children is a most important item to be fought for, and we look to see the revolutionary working class making this demand a prominent feature in its future agitation—resolved that capitalist society, which starved and stunted our childhood, and debases and exploits our manhood, shall, at least, be compelled to take its clutches off the lives of our children and leave the rising generation physically and mentally capable of accomplishing the glorious task of social reconstruction now awaiting it.

NOTES

1. The right of local areas to legislate for themselves, especially in regard to licensing laws.
2. Disestablishment of the Anglican Church, that is.
3. Cork elected nine Labour candidates in 1899.
4. Evening sittings of the Corporation, so that workers elected could attend without endangering their employment.
5. The Irish Socialist Republican Party, founded by Connolly in 1896.
6. The programme put forward by the ISRP in local elections.

Working class fool: Workers in the arts and media

Mick Doyle

Portrayals of the Irish working class, on the rare occasions it features in the media or arts in Ireland, are not so much inspired by the idea of a working class hero as by that of a working class fool. Similarly negative portrayals can be found in all industrialised countries but when it comes to blanket, unadulterated class prejudice, the Irish cultural world keeps well up with the pack.

Working class characters, invariably with thick Dublin accents—that accent representing workers countrywide—are regularly depicted as being woefully stupid, criminally bent or an admirable combination of both. Though prevalent today, it's a depiction that can be traced back to the emergence of class subjects in Irish culture.

Of the few seminal figures in Irish literature to tackle class issues some often themselves presented a negative picture. Although working class himself, and a lifelong socialist, many of Seán O'Casey's characters, particularly those who have the audacity to profess political beliefs, are constantly having fun poked at them, swaggering about the stage like vain 'Paycocks', mispronouncing words left, right and centre. Many of those involved in political struggles display barely a grasp of the aims they are struggling for, hardly seem to care about those aims at all. Jack Clitheroe in *The Plough and the Stars*, for instance, is more concerned about the for-ester's uniform he'll get if he becomes an officer in the Citizen Army than he is about the fight to establish a workers' republic. It's interesting that performances of O'Casey's works play to an audience these days that gets as much of a giggle out of the Dublin accent as they do any of his intended comic pieces. Interesting, maybe, but hardly surprising given some of his characters. Nor is it surprising that O'Casey's works continually fail to draw significant numbers of working class people into theatres that remain the preserve of the middle and upper classes.

Why then are negative representations the dominant ones?

One reason for it is straightforward enough: Ireland was largely a rural country until the 1960s and the great bulk of art that dealt with the under-privileged at all dealt with the rural poor. There was no romance, albeit

imagined, to be found in the tiny working class. It attracted little artistic interest from outside and produced few artists of its own.

Another is that the class struggle in Ireland has been rightly tied to, but often obscured by, the struggle for national independence, resulting inevitably in a blurring of class allegiance and the diminution of an otherwise strong working class voice in politics or the arts. Many outstanding activists/artists were drawn to organisations that espoused socialist ideals but whose driving concern was the unification of the country, if needs be abandoning those same socialist ideals somewhere down the line. It should be pointed out, though, that the republican movement was often the only radical movement on offer.

Probably no Irish artist is a better illustration of this than Brendan Behan. Behan grew up in the slums of north Dublin during the 1920s. He joined the IRA in his early teens, an organisation that contained many volunteers whose political outlook was poles apart from his own. Class frequently raises its head in Behan's writing, although the greater part of his work concerns the independence struggle.

Although working class artists face an uphill struggle in every country, class is a clearer issue in England, for example, and consequently there is a greater body of distinguishable working class art and, as a result, more balance.

A third, and again fairly obvious, reason is that the same system which stifles ambition in other areas of life fairly strangles it in the overly competitive world of the arts—actors and scriptwriters from working class backgrounds talk of the snobbery they encounter from their middle class colleagues, while they participate in dramas that more often than not bear little resemblance to their own experience. Actors who do persevere rarely get to play positive roles. Scriptwriters who write positive roles often turn their scripts in only to have them re-written by producers who are unable or unwilling to abandon their own prejudices.

No one would argue against the fact that comic or criminal individuals exist in working class communities, as they do in all communities, but they don't represent the majority of working people, who in spite of economic hardship continue to live law abiding and productive lives. Neither would anyone argue against the right, indeed the necessity, of artists to highlight comic or criminal characters, but against the fact that publishers, agents and producers choose these depictions to the exclusion of almost anything else. The few 'working class' manuscripts that do make it onto our screens or bookshelves invariably conform to the prejudices of their editors and publishers.

Look at Roddy Doyle. Considered by many to be the authority on the modern Irish working class, he regularly spins the two-headed coin of criminal/clown. Admittedly, his first three novels, the Barrytown trilogy, are comedies, but the characters are one-dimensional, aggressive beyond all necessity, rustophobic, and ultimately limited in their ability to improve their lot: the whole endeavour usually ends in a rowing shambles. Doyle seems to view his creations much as a Victorian explorer might have viewed an undiscovered tribe, with a kind of fatherly fondness but, at heart, fearful of their latent savagery. Although Doyle at least uses the working class as his vehicle, and undoubtedly with good intentions, his later works *The Family* and *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* offer a more disturbing view of working class people and are no less one-sided for that. His characters have merely switched from clowning incompetents to armed robbers, wife beaters and child molesters. The point being that the central issue dealt with in these works, that of child and spouse abuse, could just as easily have featured middle or upper class families.

It's important to stress here that the desire of politically conscious artists is not to pack the media with dour, heroic workers, but to go some way towards righting the balance, to throw at least a splash of objectivity onto a canvas of crooks and cretins who must at all cost crank a few laughs out of a middle class audience.

Working people of course have had their artistic champions: James Stephens, James Plunkett, Jim Sheridan and Christy Brown, to name some. They and others like them at one time or another reflected life in their communities honestly and sympathetically. But, strong as their voices are, they are drowned in the veritable flood of negativity that is the main. Jim Sheridan, for example, is Ireland's only established working class film maker. And, apart from Sheridan, all of those listed above are (as Roddy Doyle might say) brown bread. Perhaps it's no coincidence either that Stephens was writing at a time of growing industrial unrest, that Plunkett's *Strumpet City* is set during the 1913 lockout, that Brendan Behan matured politically during one of the most radical periods of modern Irish history, and that Brown's work coincided with a wave of working class writing in Britain.

The modern working class get an even rougher ride in the media. They rarely feature in RTE dramas, popping up primarily in ads or occasionally in serials. And when they do, they fall into the stupid or criminal stereotype. With the possible exception of *Fair City*, most of whose main characters are small business people anyway, workers continue to grunt and growl at us across the airwaves. The 'equal opportunities employer' seems

singularly blind to equality when it comes to the working class. Their advertisements are replete with soft-headed labourers and menacing gougers. There's the doddering father who can't figure out why his son has bought him a box of chocolates, the glazier who receives curt professional advice from the middle class housewife, the criminals who encourage you to get hooked up to Telecom PhoneWatch... the list goes on.

Not one of their series contains a trade union member. Perhaps we should be thankful for small mercies: the network's record on covering actual class struggle is just as deplorable as their fictional depictions and all the more sinister for that.

The main and most obvious reason for these portrayals is the almost total lack of involvement of working people in the media; the fact that the vast number of scriptwriters, actors and producers are middle class; that, put simply, the picture we get from them is the picture they have of us.

But why do working people put up with it? Why, for instance, do hundreds of thousands of people watch *Upwardly Mobile*? The very lack of working class representation in the media, the novelty of seeing yourself on screen, almost regardless of the message put out, is one explanation. Another explanation, and saddest of all, is that a significant segment of the working class accepts its own negative stereotyping. This is hardly surprising when they have to contend with a system that relentlessly hammers the self confidence of working people from the schoolyard to the old folks' home, that screams their incompetence into their heads almost every day of their lives, that eventually convinces them they are in fact stupid or worthless.

Things may be changing though, albeit slowly. Although working class students are still very much in the minority, there are more young people from working class backgrounds in third level education now than there ever was in the history of the country. Older people too are taking advantage of adult education programmes and returning to study. This is a spin-off of rising expectations in the working class in general as the economy booms. It will inevitably lead to more working class students getting involved in the arts and the media. Something similar happened in Britain in the late 50s and early 60s. It gave rise to what became known as the 'angry young men', writers like John Osborne and Alan Sillitoe, and to a plethora of 'kitchen sink' dramas. There are hopeful signs already. Pat McCabe's novel *The Butcher Boy* looks deeply and sympathetically into the deteriorating mind of a working class child, and the film version has pulled in an even wider audience. The recent film *I Went Down*, although

featuring gangsters, deals humorously and sympathetically with its two main characters. Not much, you might say. But it's a start.

Portrayals of working class people will only be fundamentally changed, though, when the non fictional class struggle begins to race up the best-seller lists again. When workers are fighting back decisively it will no longer be as easy or acceptable to portray them as fools. And if a boom in the economy can force the floodgates of prejudice open wide enough for more working class artists to slip through, imagine what a complete overthrow of the system could do.

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