



IRISH NATIONALISM & BRITISH IMPERIALISM

by Robert DORN

25p



RMG

ROBERT DORN

**IRISH NATIONALISM
AND
BRITISH IMPERIALISM**

The Plough Book Service
c/o 38 Clanawley Road
Dublin 5

COMMUNISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The workers' struggle to achieve the classless stateless society is worldwide. It cannot be limited within the boundaries of any one state or among the people of any ethnic group. Communism, Scientific Socialism, Marxism or Bolshevik-Leninism, as it is variously known, recognises this. Accordingly, those who adhere to it operate to an international strategy and within an international organisation: The Fourth International.

But, in doing so, they have to face many problems. The uneven and combined economic, political and social development of different areas of the world has created over and above the basic social struggle of class against class, variations upon the form of that struggle within different areas and involving the exploitation and oppression of peoples whose categories overlap those of class.

One of the strongest of such groupings is that of the nation. It has been described, definitively in the Bolshevik primer on the subject by J. V. Stalin.

"A historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up, manifested in a community of culture."*

The nation and the modern proletariat have one thing in common; both are the product of Capitalist development. The workers grew in number as the capitalists accumulated their surplus value by increasing pauperisation, thus providing themselves with a pool of labour to exploit through the wage system. The nation was developed by the capitalists' need for a commodity market under their own control. Without this not only would the wage system not have got beyond its embryo form, but capital itself could not be amassed effectively except by methods that only would be developed out of the experiences of its later period. The early capitalists, then, had to create themselves a secure market.

Its security was ensured by its stability (a home market could scarcely develop under conditions of civil war), its common language and territory. In turn, these created a common economic life, and "psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture".

The needs created by the forms of capitalist accumulation are not always, formally, the same (in under-developed workers' states accumulation is, of course, done under the plan rather than the market). However, a stable unit of culture, language, territory and economic life is necessary for any economic development before Socialism is achieved.

It can be said that all peoples must go through a national form of unity. However, this is not to say that national societies are already universal. (It seems likely that as much as half the world's population have only been assembled in nations, properly so-called, in the quarter-century since the Chinese revolution.)

* For other quotations to clarify this theory of the nation see Appendix I.

Of course national development could not proceed smoothly. In Western Europe, the development of several nations within centuries of each other encouraged national wars. In Eastern Europe, the slow development of capitalism resulted in the appearance of multi-national states. Here, dominant nations (Germans, Hungarians, Great Russians) controlled but could not assimilate a number of nationalities, until the development of capitalism gave these latter the impetus to establish their own independent national states.

Outside Europe, the national question was complicated in a way similar to its Eastern European development. But by the time capitalism had developed to the extent of igniting national feeling in Africa and Asia, it had reached its highest stage: Imperialism. In less than a century, the peoples of the earth were divided between the established nations, before being given formal (or achieving by force of arms, real) political independence. This process has hastened the development of national consciousness throughout the world.

It is now foreseeable that all peoples will know national status within a generation. However, in turn, this will merely be the prelude to a greater international consciousness.

If the nations developed from the same processes as did the working class, the two phenomena's claims are not identical. On the one hand, the nation includes all classes within itself itself, once it has been formed. On the other hand, its demands can be, and often are in blatant opposition to those of the other nations, setting worker against worker.

Nationalism, then, cannot be reconciled with internationalism and is not to be confused with it. That it can be so is because the facts of the class struggle do not allow the simple counterposing of workers' demands to national demands. The international working class cannot ignore the claims of a nation when it is oppressed. If it does so, bitter experience has shown two dangers. The first is that it will thus merely alienate its members in the oppressed nation and force them into the arms of the nation's bourgeoisie who will take the lead in the national struggles. (The experience of the Irish workers from 1916 to 1924 is relevant here.) On the other hand, it will be acting in a complacent manner to the counter-revolutionary chauvinism of the oppressor nation's workers. Of course, opportunists in the working-class movement will support their nations' claims, even where they are the oppressors of others, on the plea that otherwise they will lose their workers to their local bourgeoisies. However, in doing so, they, too, endanger their workers' real interests. They encourage among them desires that can only be satisfied by the exploitation and oppression of other nations and demands that their local capitalists can always trump. At the same time by aiding and abetting national oppression, they are cultivating hostility towards their own nation among the nation or nations oppressed.

A further twist is provided by the fact that, occasionally, what would otherwise be a valid claim of a nation against oppression would, if granted, have disastrous effects on the course of the international

class struggle. One example of this was the claim of the French Republic to the restoration to it of Alsace-Lorraine between 1871 and 1914. This was, in itself, a valid national claim; by occupying the territories claimed, Germany was committing a real act of oppression against France. Nonetheless Marxists could not support any attempt by France to undo the wrong by force—albeit as a war of liberation. Both the powers concerned were major, eventually imperialist, powers with international alliances. A “war of liberation of Alsace-Lorraine” could not stop there; the peace of the whole world would be endangered by it. A second example of a national claim at once valid and counter revolutionary was the expansion of Germany in 1938: the Anschluss with Austria and the occupation of the Sudetenland. Both events were arguably (the first certainly,) the satisfaction of legitimate national claims. Nonetheless both meant the consolidation of Fascist power and the recognisable advance of the world towards war. These objective considerations overruled talk of self-determination for proletarian internationalists. However, here, the nature of Nazi Germany made the choice obvious for Marxists. Moreover, the occupation of the Baltic States and of parts of Finland was not self-determination by the Russians. However, they did perform a progressive function over and above the right of self-determination; the workers' state's right to protect itself from a Nazi threat. As such they were supported by such Marxist critics of the existing soviet regime as Leon Trotsky. But it must be said that such breaches of the principle of support for oppressed nations are to be understood correctly as tactical: that they are forced upon Communists by the facts of the revolutionary struggle and that they will be rectified with that struggle's inevitably victorious conclusion.

In general, then, except under specific material circumstances, the Communists are in support of the **democratic** claims of oppressed nations, whether to independence, to a more equitable drawing of boundaries, to the ending of oppression of their culture or to the abatement of any other specific abuse. Beyond that Communists cannot go: once the national claims step over the objective border surrounding the nation concerned, the oppressed nation has become itself an oppressor. Marx and Engels supported the German people's right to a united state. But when the German capitalists added to their new empire by seizing the French territories of Alsace and Eastern Lorraine, these Communist leaders denounced those they had supported critically the previous day.

Support of the democratic claims of an oppressed nation is not to be denied leaders of the workers of that nation—always within the limits set above. But again, they cannot stop at this any more than the bourgeois leaders can. Whereas the bourgeois nationalists place their national claims over and above what is objectively democratic, the Communists place their revolutionary and international duties over their national ones. Not only must they withdraw from even the democratic struggle on those rare occasions where it weakens the international strength of the workers, but they must also go beyond

the achievement of the most democratic self-determined national state. Once that is achieved, once the oppressive power has withdrawn its claims, the Communists must support, if not take the lead in, making any demand that their nation's state fuse as an equal with the now democratic ex-oppressor, or with any suitable or likely partner. In this way the people of Tsarist Russia, once liberated, first established their independent states and then (albeit with some exceptions) fused themselves voluntarily into the present Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Under imperialism, when the end of the political oppression merely means the continuation of economic exploitation by other means, this is only likely to be practicable under exceptional circumstances. Nonetheless the Communists must continue to struggle against any satisfaction with the national state, against national pride, and against feeling of hostility to other peoples.

These are merely general remarks on the Communist method of handling national questions. Over and above them is the duty—in this matter as much as in any other—to apply it in full consideration of the facts of each case.

THE DEBATE ON THE IRISH NATIONAL QUESTION

Traditionally, it has been the view of Communists that the people of the thirty-two counties of Ireland constitute a single nation and that unification of this country is a necessary revolutionary task.

However, in the last few years, there has arisen a theory that opposes this directly. In this period it was put forward first (and significantly enough) by the Fascist journalist, Desmond Fennell, though it actually dates back to the Liberal Unionist Leader, Thomas MacKnight. However, its most developed, "proletarian" form was presented by the ultra-Stalinist (and formerly Chauvinist) Irish Communist Organisation. (Now the British and Irish Communists Organisation).

The Half-Hearted Theory.

Before the position of the B.I.C.O. is analysed (we need not trouble with the petty bourgeois confusions of Fennell, or of Conor Cruise O'Brien), it is well that a position between that and the traditional one be considered. The "League for a Workers' Republic" declared until recently that the Protestants of Northern Ireland are not yet a nation, but a "nationality". The L.W.R. did not attempt to define this concept in depth. Nonetheless, it insisted that such a community had the right to self-determination.

This theory depends on several demonstrably false assumptions. Firstly, the term "nationality" seems to have been used generally by the Marxists theoreticians interchangeably with the term "nation". The only time the concept has been given a distinctive form was in Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question* in the first long quotation therefrom given in Appendix I. Here he applies the word to the

communities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire that, in 1848 allowed themselves, in their backwardness, to be used to help smash the bourgeois national revolutions of the Germans and the Magyars. These latter were "nations", the others "nationalities". This is all there is on which to base an analysis.

But it is a starting point. To analyse "nationality", it must be related as a **similar social phenomenon** to the better defined "nation". This is, of course, the product of the development of capitalism among a certain community. It is created by that people's destruction of all possible barriers to the forming of a single home commodity market. This involves the development of a common language used in a single **geographical area** over a certain amount of **uninterrupted time** to give the community, the developing nation, its final characteristic—a common **psychology manifested in its culture**. This process does not stop with the end of the classic, European, bourgeois revolutions. All that has happened is that, in Asia and Africa the leadership for such a development is taken from the essentially unenterprising anti-national capitalist class by petty bourgeois pre-capitalist elements (artisans, intellectuals, peasants) in the communities concerned. As a final point, in these circumstances, the objectively bourgeois struggle to build a nation has to "grow over" into the struggle for workers' power.

What, then would a "nationality" be? If it has any validity at all it must be based on a previous stage of historical development to that from which a nation grows. In other words; it is a retarded, "pre-capitalist", phenomenon. But there is more to it than that. Because it is retarded, (really through no fault of its own) its political activities tend to handicap the development of neighbouring communities into nations. Because its development is stunted the nationality's leadership (usually feudal barons or tribal chiefs) will use its position to thwart the socio-economic process that will cause its obsolescence. The Croats and the Czechs looked to Czarist Russia to help defeat the actual self-determination of the Germans and Magyars in 1848. In the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Irish looked to feudal Spain and absolutist France to oppose the rise of the English nation. (Once again, this was not conscious malevolence, except on the part of many of the leaders of the Irish nationality). In the twentieth century the Ibos of Nigeria have allied with Portugal and South Africa to maintain their separation from the developing Nigerian nation. From this, two more facts emerge. In the first place, a nationality cannot have the right to self-determination until the material basis that is the necessity of its existence as a **nationality** has been destroyed. Ideally, this should mean the triumph of the national capitalist revolution and its destruction of the feudal limits in its subjects' nationalities. (Marx urged such a course on the 1848 revolutionaries in Austria.) Indeed this did happen with the classical French revolution, though elsewhere (as with the British capitalists against the Irish) it was precisely the opposite method that stimulated the national struggle. In any case,

and for what cause a nationality has broken with its past, a triumphant bourgeoisie cannot grant self-determination for developing nations under its control, it wants the largest possible market for itself alone (Even the liberating French revolution was not ready to lose control over the Flemings and the Rhenish Germans). Only where the national struggle has "grown over" into the working class struggle can its protagonists both destroy the basis for opposition from subject nationalities and then offer the nation developing accordingly the right to self-determination. But here again, self-determination will mean usually peaceable, rather than enforced, unity.

The second point is that the idea that the Protestants of Northern Ireland are a nationality is an anachronism. Ireland has gone beyond the stage of development expressed by "the nationality" when Protestant separatism began to develop.

The Ulster Protestant community had maintained itself as a capitalist society. Once the institutions developed and maintained by the peculiar (and peculiarly obnoxious) form of Ulster Protestant industrial capitalism have been removed, Northern Ireland cannot survive for long by itself as a workers' state, nor develop as a separate nation. But more of this anon.

The "Two Nations" Concept

The theory of the B.I.C.O. must be taken more seriously than that associated with the L.W.R. The bourgeoisie of the Republic is likely to sell out on its traditional territorial claim for the north-east. In addition, the petty bourgeois Republican movements will probably fail to make the most of their opportunities. Thirdly, the possibility of a Communist movement taking the lead and bringing the present struggle to success by leading it into proletarian power is not yet more than a possibility. Accordingly, the B.I.C.O.'s "two nations" theory may well influence many workers demoralised by defeat in the national struggle.

In what does the theory consist? It must be said that most of its defenders are inclined to put forward simply as a bourgeois counter to the nationalism of the Republic. But it does have a form more in keeping with proletarian rhetoric. This goes briefly as follows:

1. The Northern Irish Protestants are a distinct nation.
2. They have, therefore, the right to self-determination.
3. The denial of this right by the Irish Catholics is what divides the working class in Ireland — Catholic and Protestant.
4. It is in the interests of the capitalists both of Ireland and England to stabilise Ireland by uniting it probably under a semi-Fascist type of government.
5. There is no prospect of developing the present pseudo-national revolution into a Socialist revolution according to the theory of permanent revolution. There is no mass Marxist vanguard to lead it. The petty-bourgeois interest—notably the peasants—that are necessary for this are just not there to be mobilised; the Irish revolution will have to be a "purely Socialist" one in

which the industrially militant Protestant workers will play a major role (after they have been weaned from Unionism by the Catholic workers' recognition of their separate national status).

The Nation and Ulster Protestantism.

This argument can be faulted in several aspects. Each point is inaccurate in some ways. First is the question as to whether the Protestants of Ulster are a nation distinct primarily from the other inhabitants of Ireland, but also from the other inhabitants of the British Isles. Certainly the Unionists can claim attributes that correspond formally to a number of Stalin's distinguishing points.

Their community is certainly one of language and a nation. Admittedly, the first aspect, in Stalin's sense ("We are referring, of course, to the colloquial language of the people and not to the official government language:" present author's emphasis) is shared by all the peoples of the British Isles. As to the second fact, there is an area (the Belfast "Pale" east of the River Bann) which is recognisably Protestant, albeit with "Catholic" enclaves, such as Falls Road and the Glens of Antrim.

But there are other points in Stalin's definition that need more consideration. Are the Protestants an historically-evolved stable community? What is the nature of their common economic life and "psychological make-up, manifested in a community of culture"? It may certainly be argued that the Protestants "evolved historically" from Colon-Races. They were drawn originally from two, rather than one developing nations—the Scots and the English—whose rulers had to unite to hold their lands against the Irish natives, and finally in 1834, to hold their industries against disturbance. Whether this is sufficient for the definition is another matter.

The really doubtful points are those of "stability", "economic life" and "psychology vested in culture". They also happen to be the ones most qualitatively important for the "two-nation-mongers" case. As we have seen, the three points analysed already are, though valid, so slight as to mean that, were the other points as slight, there would be no basis for Unionist feeling in Northern Ireland. However, the psychological, economic and stability factors have to be taken into consideration before judgment may be made on the nature of the Northern Protestant community. And, in particular, the first two are critically important factors in the community's feelings of separateness from the rest of the Irish people. The history of their development is limited to, and clarified by, the question of the existence of the third factor in any nation: the stability of the community.

Stability

The stability factor is by far and away the most doubtful in the development in the Northern Irish Protestant community. The formalists will object; have not the Protestants of the north-east been settled for 370 years? But, for Marxists, communal stability is more than just living in the same place for a long period. (If it were not so the claims of some nationalists that the "Golden Age" Irish

formed a nation would be true.) Its existence as an aspect of a nation is bound up with concrete matters that produce such an entity. Central amongst these is the creation of a home commodity market; in this task, stability is obviously necessary. Such a market cannot be developed in conditions of warfare, either civil or inter-state, within its prospective area. The nation of the English made its appearance on the world scene early; with its insular position, it could consolidate its capitalist economy without excessive foreign interference. The nation of the Germans had its growth retarded for over a century by the Thirty Years War.

The central fact that prevents the Ulster Protestants from being a nation is this; whereas the communal nature of the nation develops in stability, their sense of community grew out of the opposite. As will be shown, they possessed a common economic life, in a sense, but it was developed and maintained not on the home market of their community but on the Common Market of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and on the empire thereof. Thus, the bourgeoisie was able to maintain its prosperity by methods that would be suicide elsewhere: the maintenance of feuds and divisions within its workforce. In short, the unity of the Ulster Protestants in distinction to the Irish Catholics is based on instability; when the community (or at that time, the two, Anglican and Dissenter, communities) was at its most stable, its presbyterian elements were in the vanguard of the Irish national revolution—as a part of the developing Irish nation. This stability was weakened by the influx of cheap, Catholic labour from the west into a relatively homogeneous Protestant population to help reduce the wages of the workers therein. On the instability resulting, the distinctiveness of a united Protestant community thrived. The split between the two parts of the Irish nation was encouraged by the Protestant industrialists' need for cheap labour to enable them to rationalise their concerns, and, later, to maximise their profits. They were not unique in their use of religion to this end: only more successful than most due to their lack of dependence on their home market. This communal division was complemented by the unity of Anglicans and Dissenters. It was finally given an expression, in state form by the creation of Northern Ireland (again in the longest period of active instability that Ulster had yet seen). It is for this reason that the Ulster Protestants cannot be called a genuine nation.

More about "Stability"

Up to date the B.I.C.O. has never really tried to analyse the decisive period (the first half of the nineteenth century). Its only contribution to understanding it is to be found in the Organisation's publication, **The Two Irish Nations, A Reply to Michael Farrell**. At the bottom of page 13, they refer to a passage in his attack on the theory, "New Nations for Old"—**Northern Star**, No. 5, in which he correctly, if sketchily, enough refers the Protestant—Catholic communal division less to the Home Rule Bills than to the Tory seizure of leadership in the Presbyterian Synod in 1829. Here is what the

Organisation has to say:—

"Like other Nationalist [everyone who doesn't agree with the B.I.C.O. is, for it, automatically a Nationalist—Author] propagandists [Farrell] implies that Cooke's triumph brought about the triumph of Orangeism and Toryism in the Presbyterian community. Cooke himself was a Tory and supported the landlord interest. That did not make his triumph in the theological controversy a triumph for Toryism and Landlordism.

"Montgomery's principle of Church organisation might be called anarchist. His theology was a transitional ideology between Christianity and agnosticism. The adoption of his position would have led to the fragmentation of Presbyterianism. Cooke triumphed as the spokesman of the orthodox Presbyterianism. Though Cooke was personally a Tory and Montgomery was personally a radical these were not the issues in their theological controversy. The Presbyterian Assembly remained liberal and anti-landlord in politics.

"Orangeism and Cooke's leadership of the theological triumph over the Arian offensive are put on a par with economics in causing the change in the politics of the Ulster bourgeoisie from nationalist Separatism to Unionism. But isn't it sufficient cause that (quoting Farrell) 'the North's industry actually prospered under the Union' (p. 25) 'Belfast had become part of the British industrial economy' (p. 26)—**The Two Irish Nations** p.p. 13-14.

The facts to reply to this (though it wasn't conceived as such at the time, being prepared 2 years before the above) is to be found in our comrade, D. R. O'Connor Lysaght's pamphlet "**The Making of Northern Ireland**". In it is shown that Cooke's "triumph in the theological controversy" did not occur in a vacuum: that there is very tangible objective evidence to explain its meaning, rather than the B.I.C.O.'s impressionistic one.

To summarise: both Farrell and the B.I.C.O. are wrong when they state that 'the North's industry prospered under the Union'—at least as far as the first quarter of the Union's period goes. In fact, the developing industrial economy of Ulster was in a major crisis in the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century. A major change-over was having to be made from cotton to linen and from a partially home-based industry to an all-factory one. In these circumstances, the stresses on the economy were critical, and were increased by the fact that the weavers were discontented and had shown a determined activism in pursuit of their needs in the 1810s. Northern Irish industry was saved by three factors: Firstly, only closeness of the north-east to the Scottish coal-field could prevent a collapse equivalent to that suffered concurrently with Irish industry outside the province. Secondly, the large market of England (and even more of its empire) provided a greater opportunity for a rationalised Ulster industry than an Irish home market impoverished by landlordism.

And, thirdly, there was religion. It wasn't entirely the rise of Dr. Cooke that was decisive here, it was, also, the civil rights agitation

of Daniel O'Connell (albeit supported by many surviving Protestant United Irish leaders) with its emphasis on Catholic rights. It was, too, that the Presbyterian Church was subsidised by the state whereas the Catholic wasn't (again by O'Connell's intervention). But the subjective circumstances were favourable to answer the objective needs of the industrialists. Cooke was the leader of a tendency in Ulster Presbyterianism not just to tighten up matters theologically but to revive the use of religion to keep the people quiet. (This idea had been having one of its periodic revivals throughout Europe since the French Revolution). That he defeated "theological anarchy," was not gratuitous: the greater the theological anarchy, the greater the radicalism. Protestantism itself was originally theological anarchy compared to Catholicism. The people who supported him knew what they were doing—and it wasn't for good theology's sake. What it was, was for what happened in the years to come: two Tory M.P.s for Belfast under the reformed (bourgeois) franchise, the admission of Presbyterians to the Orange Order, sectarian riot in Belfast, regularly, from 1835 and "The North's industry prospering under the Union" All these are rather more definite expressions of political feeling than are generalised remarks about the continuing "Liberalism" of the Presbyterian Assembly (which was always outdone by the liberalism of Montgomery and those who seceded with him, anyway.)

"Community of Economic Life"?

But this fact not only negates the national nature of the Northern Irish Protestants, it also weakens the validity of the points on which their national nature is claimed to depend. The first of these is, of course, its form as a "Community of Economic Life". Actually, this description would be more aptly described as a part of such. After 1801, the twin facts of union and rack-rent landlordism operated, to drive a wedge between the two communities in the country. On the one hand, the industrial bourgeoisie of the south was handicapped by the poverty of its potential "home market", by the loss of potential supplies of capital through the move of landlords to the centre of the Union government, and by its lack of supplies of raw material for the production of capital goods. In the north-east its counterparts had used Ulster custom and absence from economic penal legislation to provide a stronger base for more developed industrial growth. After the union, they were closer to the sources of their raw materials and were able to use the religious differences among their employees to good effect to maintain and increase their rate of exploitation. So the former died (with some exceptions): the latter thrived.

But the ability to divide the population of Ulster was dependent on its bourgeoisie's lack of dependence on that population as a home market. Here it was aided by a unique historical fact: its position on the periphery of the first industrial capitalist country ("the workshop") of the world. Already, England's capitalistic pre-eminence had enabled to expand and consolidate itself: to merge politically with the nation of the Scots and to keep the Welsh divided—north.

south and central. In addition, it was able to expand overseas to build up the largest colonial empire of any European power. These facts helped to provide an expanding market, far more satisfactory to the Ulster Protestant industrialists than the population either of Ulster or of impoverished Ireland as a whole. In their province, as had been shown, the larger market enabled them to depend, happily, on the instability of what would otherwise have been their home market. Bigotry, Unionism and British-Colonialism marched hand in hand.

A "British" Nation"?

A case might be made that, as a result of this historical development, what has transpired is a single nation of the Protestant British Isles. After all, it is "historically evolved", and the various aspects of its communal life are in existence. Even the "psychology based in a common (Protestant) culture" is present, as it is in the Ulster Protestant community. Taken as a whole, the factor of communal "stability" exists to a greater extent than it does there.

The B.I.C.O. will answer this, of course, by pointing to the readiness of the Unionists to rebel against the British Crown in 1914. But this proves nothing. Regional risings are not unknown in the early days of nations. Compared to the Vendée, the seriousness of the Ulster separate "national" claim was minimal. Its British Unionist allies had a more than 50-50 chance of winning the next General Election. It had immense support in the British (Professional) Army, and, probably (as the Larne gun-running showed) in the British Navy. When the Ulster Volunteers went to war, finally, they fought for the power that they had defied but recently. No doubt, they were subjectively serious. But, by itself, seriousness proves nothing.

It was Craigavon, after all, who warned the Unionists that they would lose their position if they ever actually turned their guns on the British Army. The current Ulster militancy is based on a similar bluff—magnified by 60 years, by the continuance of the fact that since 1798 because of its identification with British Imperialism the community has never known military defeat (thus any North—South war would be likely to be shorter than many imagine unless the British returned).

But, whatever it may have seemed at the time, the vision of a British nation is somewhat thread-bare now. With the rise of a challenge to Britain's monopoly position from the new capitalist powers of (especially) Germany and the U.S.A. its expansion as a unit began to be checked. The last move in its growth was to allow the Irish tenants to buy their own land and thus eliminate a major cause of alienation between them and the rest of the British population. However, the completion of this occurred only after the First World War had weakened British Imperialism and after the Irish majority had successfully asserted its separation, at last, from the Union.

Since then, the process has continued. The break-up of the British Empire whose colonial super-profits provided the mortar binding

together the "United Kingdom", its vulnerability to the crises of capitalism, have created centrifugal tendencies within the remaining Union. The junior partners in the British Imperial-Joint Stock Company are preparing to jump clear from its inevitable crash: Scotland and Wales are becoming restive. This, though a petty bourgeois manifestation, has already shown a working class potential, against the bankruptcy of the official British Labour Party. In Northern Ireland, for the first time in living memory, or beyond, "The Twelfth" of 1971 saw more of the Province's distinctive Red Hand than of the Union Jack. However, this is of less significance than it seems (or than the Welsh and Scottish nationalist movements). The Protestant people of Northern Ireland have recently lost their Parliament and are likely to get it back; at the same time, they have a share of the Union's Welfare State. (This conceals a real colonial exploitation but the same exploitation exists in the Republic and without the welfare benefits). A true national movement would have to break with the latter, and to threaten the already unstable status quo. Only if the British government rocks the boat itself (and it has had to do so to a degree unthinkable a decade ago) might the Red Hands express a separatist reality—and such a reality would soon find from expediency or from military weakness, that it is part of Ireland. (But it need not worry. British Imperialism will play safe and choose Ian Paisley or even Craig before its obedient servant, Jack Lynch, to keep order in the Six Counties). In short, the Northern Irish Protestants' "community of economic life" is based historically not on their home market, but on the market of the whole British Isles and, even more, on that provided by the British Empire. As this market has declined (and, with it, Ulster industry) the tie has become that of a pensioner to his paymaster, but still the basis has been one of Imperialism. **The nature of the "community of economic life" that helped distinguish the Ulster Protestants from the other people of Ireland is one of colonial and, later, imperial exploitation such as Socialists cannot condone and must destroy.**

The Community of Culture

Partly because of this fact, the defence of Protestant Ulster's "psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture" is similarly indefensible. Even were the Ulster Protestants a nation, the form of its culture would hinder its right to self-determination rather than otherwise. To a Socialist "national culture" is not something to be defended regardless of its content. For example, the burning of widows was for years part of the culture of the Hindus. A socialist government of India (had such a thing been possible in the early 19th century) would have destroyed this practice far more ruthlessly than the British colonial regime did. On this, Lenin had useful things to say:—

"There are two nations in every modern nation—we say to all nationalist socialists. There is the Great Russian culture of the Purishkeviches, Guchkovs and Struves—but there is also the Great Russian

culture typified in the names of Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov. There are the same two cultures in the Ukraine as there are in Germany, in France, in England, among the Jews, and so forth . . ." "Critical Remarks on the National Question" in **Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism**. p. 25.

Now the culture of the Ulster Protestants is not entirely retrogressive. They have a liberal side to their rhetoric when they care to. They have a considerable repertoire of folk songs (based, mainly on "Taig" tunes). Nonetheless (and all too many of the lyrics of the said folk songs bear this out) the outstanding forces in the culture of this people are, respectively, imperialism and the Protestant religion. This fact is shown well in what, on the B.I.C.O.'s terms, is the Manifesto of the Ulster National Liberation Movement, the Ulster Covenant of 1912. Strangely enough (or is it?) the B.I.C.O. does not quote it in its pamphlet on the period; **The Home Rule Crisis**. However, it is relevant here:—

"Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive to our civil and religious freedom, destructive to our citizenship and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we whose names are under-written, men of Ulster, loyal subjects to His Gracious Majesty, King George V, humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant, throughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland."

The imperialistic aspect of this is based on the "provincial" industry's historic dependence on the British Empire. Accordingly, as has been shown, until recently Ulster was "British" (the only part of the British Isles to so style itself), its flag the Union Jack, rather than the Red Hand, its M.P.s at Westminster the first to defend the British Empire, the last to accept its retreat. It boasted itself to be the major supplier of officers for Britain's armies. (The remainder of the Irish tended to be "conscripted by hunger" into the rank and file).

What this has meant is shown most visibly (because completely spontaneously) to-day by the liberal New Ulster Movement in its pamphlet, **Two Ireland or One?** It is useful because it points up the essential bourgeois argument for continuing partition, but there are more specific grounds for considering it here. It points out the divisions between north and south caused by "The commemoration of historical figures and events". It continues:

" . . . In 1965 the Northern Ireland government was widely, and reasonably, criticised for naming the new town in North Armagh 'Craigavon' But the following year there were no criticisms when the government of the Republic renamed all the Dublin

railway stations after 1916 leaders. For, however heroic the 1916 rising may have seen to the majority in the Republic, there are many in the North who see it as a stab in the back.

“ . . . Unionists have never imagined that William III, Carson or Craigavon could be all-Ireland heroes, but many nationalists seem to think that the leaders of anti-British rebellions such as Wolfe Tone and Patrick Pearse could be accepted as heroes by Irishmen of the British tradition”.

“In a united Ireland, institutions serving the island as a whole would have to remain carefully neutral as between the two traditions. This would have quite wide-ranging effects. The Irish post office could no longer issue stamps commemorating nationalist leaders or if it did, they would have to be scrupulously balanced by another set commemorating unionists. The state could not officially celebrate the anniversaries of anti-British risings in the way that the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 rising was celebrated—because in a United Ireland there would be too many people for whom such events were to be deplored, not extolled. The Irish army’s annual parade at the grave of Wolfe Tone would need reconsideration, because Wolfe Tone, though a Protestant, was not the sort of person whom Irishmen in the British tradition could accept as a hero of their own. In practice there would be two possibilities: either the parade could be dropped, or it could be matched by a parade to the tomb of some Unionist worthy like Carson”—*Two Irelands or One?* pp. 8-9.

Now the point is two-fold; both that the N.U.M. can see no discrepancy between Carson and Craig on the one hand and Pearse and Tone on the other and that it could do nothing about it if it did without going back to the eighteenth century.

The fact is that, for a serious anti-imperialist, Ulster Unionist history does not produce any adequate counterpart to the Republicans (let alone the few Socialists) of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (The B.I.C.O., along with such of their historian creditors as the sophisticated Unionist, Hugh Shearman, would claim Tone as a Unionist, or at least an Ulster “national” hero, but this is essentially an intellectual, not a popular, view.) Certainly before then, in world terms, the progressive side is, generally, that of Protestantism. Certainly the battle of the Boyne was a victory for the better society. (Larkin was one of those who recognised this; in Belfast, in 1907, he organised a non-sectarian celebration of the Battle of the Boyne: an example that B.I.C.O. and the Workers Association might consider emulating). However, since the Protestant industrialists threw their lot in with Britain, their cause has not just been one of King Billy’s “Civil and Religious Liberties” superior to those of an Irish Republic but what was, until the appearance of European Fascism, the most brutally racist predatory force the world has ever seen: the British Empire. Carson and Craig, with all their virtues, were conscious upholders of this system. Tone and Pearse, with all their vices (and here the Unionists have friends among the Jesuits) were its opponents. If the 1916 Rising was “a stab in the back” it was to the Empire,

that so richly deserved it—not to the Ulster Protestants. (As a matter of fact, its planners took care not to involve the north-east in the greater rising that they prepared.) That Unionists could identify with the British Empire so as to bleed when it is wounded exposes their creed for what it is.

Even thus now, when the British Empire is, politically, a memory, and as has been shown, rebellion against England is in the air, its would-be leaders invoke the examples of colon rather than anti-colonial revolt, of “Old Smitty” and Golda Maier rather than of the Africans and Arabs who oppose them. Significantly, the only African they can stand (or could until he denounced them) has been General Idi Amin.

But more important than the imperial factor is that of the Protestant religion. Again this plays a bigger role in Northern Ireland consciousness than in the more secular consciousness of Britain as a whole. It has been encouraged by the Protestant bourgeoisie’s need to divide its work-force and by its ability to do this without having to worry about its home market. It is still maintained by the special privileges given Protestant workers in the distribution of jobs, by the actual geographical constitution of Northern Ireland, with its Catholic one-third of the population a permanent (but, as such, permanently, until recently, impotent) threat to the majority, and, indeed, by the opposing sectarianism of the leaders of the minority—lay and clerical—and successive Governments of the Republic.

This last fact has encouraged many people who should know better to dismiss Protestant sectarianism against that of the Catholics. After all Protestantism compared to Catholicism is a progressive force: the ideology of the bourgeoisie against that of the feudal nobles. As an historical fact, this is true enough, but it is no more than an historical fact. By the time of the French revolution, the bourgeoisie had passed from freedom of interpretation of the Bible to simple free-thought. Today, Catholic sectarianism cannot be defeated, by the dogmas of Luther and Calvin, but by the methods of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, in the struggle for Socialism and against (among much else) *all* religious superstition.

As a final point on the matter, it is worth noticing that, until now, those (such as Ernest Blythe, Desmond Fennell and Joseph Foyle) who are readiest to accede to the Protestant claims have also been those who are most ready to maintain the confessional nature of the twenty-six county state. Most recently John K. Feeney joined their ranks. It was in keeping, they claimed, with the psychology of the people. (In reality it was because the Catholic Church was very useful in disciplining the work-force.) Again, it is clear, psychological-cultural differences based on a conscious acceptance of *imperialism* and of *religious superstition* are unacceptable to Socialists.

The Nature of the Ulster Protestants—and the work force

It is established then that the Protestants of Northern Ireland are not a distinct nation; their community lacks stability and its most

distinctive features are those that must be liquidated. But, comes the cry, if they are not a nation, then what are they?

There is no immediate short answer to this question. As has been seen, the Northern Irish Protestants have been described variously as a "part of a nation", a "nation in themselves" and a "nationality". In particular, the workers amongst them have been described simply as a "proletariat", a "labour aristocracy", and as a "caste".

It is necessary to adapt Stalin's definition to what is the Northern Irish Protestant community; we have:—

"An historically evolved community of language, territory and economic life, with a psychological-cultural make-up arising out of its instability as an entity."

It is not a nation, it is not a nationality; nor is it a colon-community such as those of Israel, Algeria-Francaise, and White South Africa. Only in the first of these cases does the community concerned have a home territory in which it is in the majority, and, here, the fact of its recent establishment against the Arabs gives it the colon instability that the other colon-people possess. Hence, the proletarians of all the peoples listed constitute a conscious counter-revolutionary caste, divided from the workers of the subject races.

In Northern Ireland, the land question is not acute as in Israel or South Africa. Although in most of Ulster a similar situation did prevail, the Protestant community possessed, from the beginning, a heartland east of the River Bann and north of the Mountains of Mourne—from which it was never in serious danger of being dislodged. This original stability has provided, behind the instability developed as a necessity for industrialism, a certain reserve. On this, at certain moments in time (notably 1907, 1919 and 1932), the Protestant working class could draw to join its Catholic fellows against their bourgeois co-religionists. Such solidarity has been unthinkable in South Africa.

Nonetheless, such instances have remained few and far between, partly because the actuality of Irish national bourgeois society must repel any genuine democrat, let alone Socialist, but partly also, because the Protestant workers do constitute a Labour aristocracy. There has been some objection to this description. How, it has been asked, can there be a labour aristocracy constituted by the majority of a working class? The answer is very simple: this majority is merely part of a generally privileged proletarian minority of the workers of the world. It is made acutely aware of this fact by its position *vis-a-vis* the Irish Catholic working class. The differentiation between the two, though quantitatively small, is made significant by the Protestants' role as outpost of British power. The Protestant industrialists' share of the British economic community did benefit their working class co-religionists and the benefit was further magnified by the advantages given the latter *vis-a-vis* their Catholic fellows.

So the Protestant workers became conscious aristocrats, partners in the system described by Friedrich Engels:—

"During the period of England's industrial monopoly the English

working class have, to a certain extent shared in the benefits of the monopoly. These benefits were very unequally parcelled out amongst them; the privileged minority pocketed most, but even the great mass had, at least, a temporary share now and then. And that is the reason why, since the dying out of Owenism, there has been no socialism in England." — England in 1845 and in 1885," quoted in the Preface to the English edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England in Marx and Engels on Britain*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1962, p. 31.

More specifically Engels wrote in the same article: "The engineers, the carpenters and joiners, the bricklayers, are each of them a power, to that extent that, as in the case of the bricklayers and bricklayers' labourers, they can even successfully resist the introduction of machinery. That their condition has remarkably improved since 1848 there can be no doubt, and the best proof of this is in the fact that for more than fifteen years not only have their employers been with them, but they with their employers, upon exceedingly good terms. They form an aristocracy among the working class; they have succeeded in enforcing for themselves a relatively comfortable position, and they accept it as final. They are the model working men of Messrs. Leone Levi and Giffen, and they are very nice people indeed nowadays to deal with for any sensible capitalist in particular and for the whole capitalist class in general." — *Ibid.* p. 28.

Lenin, who has been accused of revising Engels on this was equally specific. After quoting Engels, he writes:—

"This clearly shows the causes and effects. The causes are: (1) Exploitation of the whole world by this country; (2) its monopolist position in the world market; (3) its colonial monopoly. The effects are: (1) A section of the British proletariat becomes bourgeois; (2) a section of the proletariat allows itself to be led by men bought by, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie." V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970, p. 103.

Later, he expanded this further:—"Comrades emphasise the point that the aristocracy of labour is stronger in Britain than in any other country. That is really the case. After all, it has existed in Britain not for decades but for a century. In Britain the bourgeoisie, which has had more experience, democratic experience, managed to bribe the workers and to create among them a big stratum, bigger there than in any other country, but which is not so big when compared with the broad masses of the workers. This stratum is thoroughly imbued with bourgeois prejudices and pursues a definitely bourgeois policy." From *The Second Congress of the Communist International, Verbatim Report, 1921*. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 37, p. 236.

This is a very good description of the effects of Empire on the Northern Irish working-class with the additional point that, in political matters, the "section of the proletariat (that) allows itself to be led by men and bought by, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie" and to a greater degree than in Britain as a whole (as it was only part of it)

was coincidental with the skilled Protestants. Their leaders liquidated completely into the Unionist Party. The Catholics have tended to support leaders whose opportunism is a little more hypocritical.

In industrial matters, the Northern Irish Protestant worker was less complacent. But the constant threat to his job from the Catholic of the Falls enabled his employer to redress the balance.

Survival of Superstructure

It is established then, that the Northern Irish Protestants are not a distinct nation; their community lacks stability and its most distinctive features are those that have to be destroyed by Socialists. However (and here the B.I.C.O.'s second point is to be considered), the after-effects of such differences can persist after their basis have ended. Despite the destruction of the Northern Irish Protestants' actual distinctions, the *subjective* distrust between the communities in Northern Ireland may survive it.

In such a case, the proposals made below should help to weaken the fears. Beyond this, it is a matter of strategy whether force be used (and of course how force be used; the use of individual bombs, a la Kevin Street, destroyed Stormont. It could not and cannot unite Ireland). But, all things being equal, it will still probably be best to put Protestants out of their agony (politically) rather than trying to con them by "recognising their right to self-determination" and hoping for world, European or just British Isles socialist revolution to subsume the problem that Irish socialists funk.

The Workers and Partition

The B.I.C.O.'s claim that what is dividing the Protestant and Catholic workers in the Six Counties is the Republic's claim to that area is untrue. The Republic claims Northern Ireland as part of the Irish nation and certainly contributes somewhat thereby to the divisions between the workers (especially considering the social and political nature of the Republic). However, the imperial and religious factors are the basic divides. In particular, the claim to Northern Ireland would not have the power it has if the *workers* of the Republic had not accepted it. And part of the reason why they accepted it was that they recognised that Northern Ireland was founded on an anti-worker reaction to be maintained by an artificial but permanent threat to the Protestant state from the Catholic third of the population. Even were the Protestants a distinct nation there is a clear case in this matter, at least for Northern Ireland's surrender to the Republic, of the Catholic border areas. The B.I.C.O. does not admit even this.

The B.I.C.O.'s fourth point is that the bourgeoisies of Britain, Catholic Ireland and Protestant Ireland are planning to reunite Ireland despite the wishes of the Protestants. This would be true were the Irish Republican bourgeoisie a force as powerful as the bourgeoisie of capitalism's heroic period. As it is, British imperialism would like, *in theory*, to unite colony and neo-colony in one colony and the

Northern Irish bourgeoisie would probably not have any objections provided the resulting 32 county government was able to keep order and capitalist prosperity. But the bankrupt Irish national capitalists would have to be paid (and paid regularly) to take Northern Ireland off Britain's hands, as Harold Wilson has recognised openly. This is scarcely helpful at a time of economic crisis. Paisley would be cheaper.

Finally, it is true that due to years of organisational neglect the prospects for the national revolution to "grow over" into the Socialist revolution are not bright. The peasantry has been bought: it is not the peasantry of Vietnam or Bengal. Nonetheless it can and, in places, does, play a progressive role in land leagues, fishery agitations and co-operatives. Another sector of the petty bourgeoisie that could be mobilised behind the workers includes the students. The unemployed is, also, a political reserve. And in the north-east there exists what amounts to a state of "people's war". It may be that *if* the situation were to become less intense, *if* full civil rights could be granted without decisive Unionist objection and the government of the Republic recognised the border, then in 10 years working class unity might be such as to provide a purely "factory oriented" Socialist revolution. But, leaving aside the "ifs" (in particular the unlikelihood of the communal long-term Unionist acceptance of Civil rights in a Six County framework), it is not by any means certain that the workers of the 32 counties of Ireland will be, in 10 years' time, either more numerous or more revolutionary than they are now. It is infinitely more probable that, with the B.I.C.O.'s other policy (support for Irish entry into the E.E.C.) being followed, the Irish workers' position in 1982 will be objectively weaker than it is in 1972.

In any case, there are three positive reasons for supporting the struggle for national unification. In the first place, it is *objectively* against British imperialism (that this imperialism would like *subjectively* to reunite Ireland does not alter this; the terms on which it wants unification are not feasible). Thus, the Irish national struggle is, once again, helping the struggle of British workers against their bosses. This has been shown most definitely by the hollowness of Heath's threats against the striking coalminers. The troops he would like to use against them are held down in Ulster. Secondly, for revolutionary Socialists not to participate in the national struggle (however unsuccessfully) will deprive them of a major immediate weapon and leave that cause in the hands of a Republican movement that is unlikely to increase in numbers or in competence. Thirdly, and at the least, there is a good chance of winning from the Northern Irish state, if only as compromise, the Counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone and other, mainly Nationalist border areas. This would reduce cause for working-class division in what would be left of Northern Ireland, while giving Irish national capitalism a number of headaches, either military, under correct leadership (the areas concerned may not long accept Leinster House rule), or economic (it will be taking on the poorest area of the United

Kingdom—without a subsidy). Perhaps for this reason, Fennell and the Northern capitalist bourgeois vanguard—the S.D.L.P.—have rejected such a new partition in favour of an Anglo-Irish condominium, which would, in practice, be very like the Green Paper's "Council of Ireland".

The Workers' Association

It is not enough for a revolutionary Socialist to announce support for a struggle. He must have a clear programme to show him how he should act in such support.

Believing itself to be an organisation of Scientific Socialists, the B.I.C.O. eventually (and not before time) got around to concocting a front organisation for itself on the Two-Nations issue in August of 1971. This "Workers' Association for the Democratic Settlement of the National Conflict in Ireland" has been, so far, the B.I.C.O.'s greatest success in the matter of front organisations, mainly because no other group aspiring to Scientific Socialism has been prepared to support such an organisation. The Workers' Association is composed of assorted Social Democrats of the NILP variety, orthodox (C.P.-style) Stalinites and, of course, B.I.C.O. In this front of the blind, inevitably, B.I.C.O. is the king.

What, then, are the demands entrusted by the B.I.C.O. to its W.A.? As the latter has grown to the stage where it is able to begin to play an agitational role, it is well to examine them in detail. Already the R.M.G. has made its criticisms of the "Two Nations" outlook at W. A. public meetings at the G.P.O. Dublin. However, these were in the form of leaflets and were necessarily brief. Here the W. A. demands can be examined in depth.

They are two in number:—

"Full recognition of the right of the Ulster Protestant nation to remain within the U.K. state;

"Full recognition and accordance of the democratic rights of the Catholic minority in the Northern Ireland/U.K. state, and of the Protestant minority in the Southern Ireland state."

And the W.A. states: "This policy is one and indivisible." These demands have already been considered. One trouble is that they are based partly on a number of assumptions that can only be proven over a long period (i.e., that the working class, or, rather, more specifically, the *proletariat*, north and south will be stronger, more united, and more revolutionary in ten years' time if the national claims are renounced). However there are some ascertainable points on which the basis for the demands can and should be examined.

"The full recognition of the right of the Ulster Protestant nation to remain within the U.K. state" is not in fact denied by the Irish bourgeoisie apart from a small section of it. (And this section is decreasing; the bombing of the C.I.E.'s Russell Court Hotel was probably the result of a failure to come across with the usual protection money.) Basically Northern Ireland would be an embarrassment to 26-county Capitalism, as it is now to British Imperial Capitalism.

But there is more to it than this. In a recent issue of its bulletin,

Two Nations, the W.A. puts forward as an *immediate* demand the Republic's open recognition of Northern Ireland. But such recognition could only lead to immediate strengthening of dissident Republicanism both in the Republic and the North-East. And such a strengthening would be used as an excuse to bring out special powers that if used would be in hand for use against industrial and social dissatisfaction. This is happening anyway, and revolutionary Socialists are prepared to accept it as a risk that will be overcome if the struggle for national unification is fought to victory. But the Workers' Association, with its essentially economist perspective of a revolution based on purely working-class demands, cannot be so sanguine. What it is demanding will mean, in the Republic, an immediate reduction in democratic rights whatever about their revival with the alternate revolution. (The B.I.C.O. is getting round this by denying in *Communist Comment* 8/12/72 that the Republic is democratic at all!)

But there are further points to add. The second demand (for democratic rights north and south) is badly worded if it is not just dishonest. In the first place "democratic rights for the Catholic nation" means totally different things for Marxists and for Northern Irish non-Marxists. For Marxists it means including *the right to secession*: there can be no ambivalence. However, this is not so clear in the minds of people without the Marxist international outlook who understand democratic rights as existing only inside the borders of the established states. In so far as the Workers' Association (or the B.I.C.O.) have tried to clarify this matter, they have done so in the direction of accepting the petty bourgeois misconceptions rather than for standing unequivocally for the revolutionary interpretation. Nor is this necessarily a purely theoretical approach. If the R.M.G. is proven correct and, yet, at the same time, the current national struggle is defeated, there will be eventually a demand in the border areas for secession into the Republic as there was in 1921.

The matter of Protestant rights in the Republic is, again, a demand, put in a very ambivalent manner. A genuine democratic organisation would not demand simply rights for Protestants in a Catholic state. The traditional democratic demand again recognised by the founders of Marxism—is for a *secular* state, without any religious influence (of *any sort*) in legislation. To demand Protestant civil rights *per se* is probably the result of an analysis that accepts religion as a valid cultural basis for nationality. It ignores the claims of Jews, Atheists and non-practising Catholics. In practice it means attacks only on those spheres of Catholic power that the Church itself is willing to renounce, and to ignore the vital one: religious control of schools. After all, in the Republic, segregated education does not hurt the Protestants: it benefits them. It developed, originally, under pressure from the said Protestants; and it was maintained in Northern Ireland, as much under Protestant as under Catholic pressure. (Indeed, in this matter, the Northern Irish State has little to learn from the Republic; the latter has never appointed a Priest to be

Minister for Education: Northern Ireland has appointed a pastor.)

There is more to it than this. In the mid-sixties, there were straws in the wind stimulated by the fifties crisis in Irish industry and the need for better technical (of its nature, non-clerical) education, to compete with the rest of the world. The outstanding figure representing this trend (so outstanding that he has been practically canonised by the would-be Irish Liberals) was Donoch O'Malley, the Minister for Education. His death in 1968 was held by the impressionists to have been the sign for the clerical counter-attack. In fact, the growth of unemployment conspired with the Irish bourgeoisie's permanent need for the clergy as a socially stabilising force to provide the reason for the blockage of the puny developments towards secularism. The outstanding example of this was the surrender of the long-planned community schools to clerical control.

There are still some faltering moves towards the secular state, the formal recognition of the Catholic Church's special position has been removed from the Irish Constitution; hints have been made on *Ne Temere*. The classic issue on which Protestants felt their rights denied in the Republic is due partly to the appetites raised by the "wind of change" in the mid-sixties; but also due to the Hierarchy's need to assert to everyone that it is not in the way of unity, now that unity (or at least *discussions* thereon) is on the agenda. If it didn't assert this, the more determined Republicans might start investigating its role too carefully. They nearly did this during the Civil War, but defeat and demoralisation set in: now the circumstances are more favourable. To end the current struggle can only remove an actual goad to civil rights for all in a secular society. z

In other words, and although it may have the best intentions in the world, the Workers' Association is a Liberal rather than a truly Democratic body. The distinction is important. Liberalism was historically the ideology of a rising bourgeoisie, strong and confident enough to carry out a liberating role. Its period of dominance did not, then, last very long. Today Liberalism is, even in Western Europe, a minority creed representing either the most brutally reactionary elements among the businessmen or (as in England) small groups of non-Socialist do-gooders. The first alternative occurs where the historical base was never strong enough for its tasks—which remained as mere aspirations. The second occurred where the bourgeoisie had exhausted its tasks and passed on. Democracy refers to the nature of the tasks to be carried out originally under Liberalism but, eventually, and today only, as part of the proletarian revolution.

In its self-defeating practically contradictory demands, the Workers' Association clearly has more in common with present-day Liberalism of the British variety than with any form of true proletarian democracy.

Having said this, it should be stated that the ranks of the Two-Nation cultists include, besides the inevitable trendies and opportunists, a number of potentially useful revolutionaries, who have been attracted to the idea by the Economism that has historically developed

along with, though in over-reaction to, Irish Republicanism. For these people, the fact that the Unionist population of Northern Ireland has a proletarian basis gives it a legitimacy that is not to be denied easily. The horror of the tactics of Kevin Street does not help clear their brains. It is to be hoped that this pamphlet may prove more effective.

However, a more serious Scientific Socialist cannot follow the B.I.C.O.'s example (in many other matters besides the Workers' Association). As has been shown, the real Communist position is one of *defence* and *support* of the struggle for Irish national unification. However, this is to be distinguished from the support given by such figures as Blaney, Boland or Ted Kennedy, or indeed, by the authorities in Kevin Street and Gardiner Place. The struggle in Ireland is not simply that of one of the peoples of the British Isles against another; it is part of the struggle of all the workers of the islands to take state power: itself part of the world struggle for Socialism.

These two tasks are not contradictory. As Marx pointed out, the British workers cannot be free while they support (however passively) those who oppress and help divide the Irish. At the same time, as will be shown, the Scientific Socialist's international outlook does provide a strategy for achieving national unification that is alternative to that of the traditional Republican. And this strategy is unlike the other in one important fact: it can deliver the goods. It was under capitalist conditions that the development of the Irish nation was stunted and its unification prevented. Nothing that capitalism has done or is likely to do has changed or is likely to change this fact. Thus the policies of Redmond, of Griffith and of Liam Lynch have failed to achieve even their limited aims through betrayal by the capitalists and (in Lynch's case) through lack of enthusiasm by the Irish workers. Only a mobilised Irish working class can achieve the unity of the Irish nation. And, once this is achieved, only the international proletariat can ensure for the Irish people the fullest development of their human potential.

The Communist Strategy

What, then, is the Communist strategy? It is one most precisely designed to mobilise for revolution the workers of Ireland and elsewhere. In other words, the Scientific Socialist cannot let the process of Permanent Revolution develop by itself, as otherwise it will not develop very far. Permanent Revolution must be carried out by a vanguard Socialist Party of the Bolshevik type.

And, again, such a Party must have a programme to express its strategy and to win the workers to it. It must combine the demands that the "national" bourgeoisie make, but never mean, with those that can alone achieve these aims by mobilising the Irish workers to take state power and the workers abroad to feel their strength for this task.

Thus it should not be necessary to say that any set of demands to be made by Marxists concerning the state of Northern Ireland

must include the unconditional release of political prisoners and the evacuation of British troops. However, these will remain no more than demands during the pleasure of British imperialism unless backed by other points in the programme of action.

The proposal made by the petty bourgeoisie that was nearest to a revolutionary scheme was the creation of an alternative Ulster assembly to Stormont in the shape, variously, of the "Assembly of the Northern Irish People", "Dáil Uladh" and the "Parliament of the Streets". No Scientific Socialist could avoid participating in the one of these with the most revolutionary potential. As matters were recently, this appeared to be the N.I.C.R.A. body, unless (as it seems to be) it is absorbed by Stalinite action. As this has failed to appear, and unless the Northern Resistance Committee fails, (as, indeed, it now seems to have done) to let it off the ground, the second best would certainly have been Dáil Uladh. The S.D.L.P.'s assembly of placemen could always be seen as no more than an attempt by the Catholic establishment to defuse the situation.

But the choice of assembly is merely the beginning for the Scientific Socialist. There can be no question of subordinating his group to what can only be a petty-bourgeois centre of dual power. Such a body is merely the base from which the working class can advance. But to do so its party must keep its freedom of action within it.

As a first essential to such freedom, the party must have a share of control, over a military force guided by *working class politics*. It is obviously unlikely that either of the claimants to the title of "Irish Republican Army" can fulfil this role, though individuals or units of these may liquidate into it. Further description of such an organisation—a new Citizen Army—must be hypothetical.

Backed by an Irish Citizen Army, the Party must carry out a *political* strategy distinctive from that of the petty bourgeois leaders of the alternative assembly. It goes without saying that there can be no question of it accepting posts in the alternative administration that the assembly will establish. The Socialists must fight within that body for the policies that will mobilise the workers to continue the revolution, despite Stormont, Leinster House, and indeed the alternative assembly itself.

Such a mobilisation has two aspects. Firstly, it is using the national struggle to precipitate the thirty-two county industrial struggle that would otherwise develop too late for success. Secondly, only Socialist mobilisation can offer the Ulster Protestants something *visibly* better than they know.

With these facts in mind, Socialists in the area under the alternative assembly must urge conscription of wealth including the nationalisation of large factories and estates under workers' control and the nationalisation of credit. In case the assembly does not do this the propaganda must be geared to move the workers in the area to seize the property concerned.

At the same time, the demand for the abolition of unemployment must be raised in the liberated area. The Scientific Socialists must

demand that work be available for all under the assembly without any loss of pay. This matter is particularly important in that the area where people are likely to give their allegiance to an "anti-Stormont", is the one area in Ireland where the people most need a policy against unemployment. On the other hand, the Protestants' allegiance to "their" Parliament has been based on a superior expectation of jobs in conditions where there are few jobs. Thus, there can be no haggling. The ultimatum must be given; either jobs for all, or the Assembly of Ulster is forced into oblivion by the Soviet of Ulster.

But the revolution cannot proceed on a purely provincial level. If it does not spread to the rest of Ireland, at some stage, it will fail. Thus in the Republic, the party must move to involve the working class *as a class*, in the fashion that will advance the Permanent Revolution. Pressure must be brought by trade unionists in the Republic for a general strike for the release of internees and the withdrawal of British troops. More immediately relevant, to the twenty-six county force, is the demand for the seizure of concerns owned by British and Unionist firms, by the Government or (as in practice it will have to be) by the workers themselves. This proposal has been criticised as "encouraging nationalism" in the Irish working class. Certainly, if that class were poised to seize *all* the factories in its country, to limit its vision to those of one group would be a retrograde act. But, it is not apparent that the Irish workers in general are yet as militant as to put mass seizures on the cards without the stimulus of the unification issue. Factory seizures are never to be refused except for a very good reason.

Finally, for the Party, there can be no surrender to religious superstition—north or south. The alternative assembly (and Dáil Éireann) must be pressed to repeal and to maintain in non-existence laws regulating private morals (contraception, divorce, homosexuality, abortion), the demand must be made for a fully secular education system—throughout the 32 counties. The demands must be raised, too, for the nationalisation of clerical property (in the Emmet tradition) and for the removal of such clerical privileges as the right to act as Registrar of Marriages. These are important matters. Whatever the present chances of national unification, they are not improved by the maintenance of the confessional state, with its divisive effects. And this is quite apart from the fact that the proposed secular reforms *in themselves* are excellent.

Finally, Scientific Socialists must show by their example that the national struggle is merely part of the international fight for Socialism. In the centre of this demonstration will be their organisation's affiliation to the Fourth International. Already sections of this body have begun to show their solidarity with the Irish; more will follow. Such actions must be publicised in Ireland. And the indivisibility of the fight of the Irish workers with that of the workers of the world must be emphasised in propaganda.

Secondly, it should be recognised that with the decline of the British Empire the objective economic preconditions for a Socialist

Revolution in Britain are better than ever before. It is the subjective factors that have deteriorated since 1920; most notably the labour bureaucracy. Engels' prophecy is at last coming true:

"The English working class will lose (its) privileged position; it will find itself generally—the privileged and leading minority not excepted—on a level with its fellow workers abroad. And that is the reason why there will be Socialism again in England." Engels, *op. cit.* p. 31.

The strikes against the Industrial Relations Bill and, more importantly, the Plessey and U.C.S. "work-ins" are all straws in the wind; expressions of a working class trying desperately to overthrow the limits imposed on it by bureaucratic and demagogic leaders. If it does achieve state power, in the real sense, before Ireland, the Irish Scientific Socialist will immediately become a unionist (that is, a *unionist in the literal sense*, of course; not in the traditional economic-political-social sense). In doing this, the Socialist will have to break ruthlessly with many of his or her Republican allies of the previous day.

The danger will not come from the honest Republicans. It will be presented, rather, by a form of Menshevism of the post-October 1917 variety. The temptation will be offered to deny the reality of a British revolution; to find faults in its operations and to damn it accordingly. In such circumstances, again, it becomes clear that the Fourth International must encourage its members in their international duty. And again, it becomes clear that choosing which International is, thus, more than an academic exercise.

Communism and Republicanism

But what can Communism offer the Republican? Why should he be prepared to adopt the method and discipline that is so alien to him? If he accepts, he will have to broaden his horizons, geographically at least. He will have to recognise more than that the struggle for Irish national unity affects, and is affected by, struggles all over the world. There has always been a tendency in Irish Republicanism to do this. But if he wishes to do more than ally with the Marxist party, he will have, ultimately to accept that his national aims are subordinate to those of the proletariat of the world, particularly in the matters that have been shown.

Again, it can be said that this does not mean that Republicans cannot ally with the Irish section of the Fourth International, nor, indeed, that they cannot joint it, if they are prepared to submit to the discipline required by its programme. What it does mean is that such discipline is not, *primarily*, directed towards the aims desired by Republicans and may come into conflict with such aims, sooner or later.

For a Republican's acceptance of Communist leadership and discipline, only one thing can be offered in return: the fact that, in so far as national unity and prosperity can be ensured, the

Communist method alone can ensure them. As Connolly pointed out, it is only the working class that can carry through the fight for Irish freedom. This class will not carry through the struggle unless tangible benefits are offered it for doing so. And in its demand for such benefits it is becoming increasingly impatient with the claims of other classes that Republicans have traditionally (and mistakenly) sought to conciliate.

All these facts (though the last one less than the others) are becoming commonplace to Republicans. But they may still ask why the struggle should be international and, most of all, they may object to the Communist's denial of their central belief: the actual existence of the living Irish nation.

The first point is answered easily enough. Once again, many Republicans are studying the experiences of foreign national revolutionaries, as Connolly did in 1915. They are thus paying tribute, however unconscious, to international experience. What is more, the heroes of the New Republicans are Communists of sorts: Mao Tse Tung, Guevarra and Castro, and Giap and Ho Chi Minh. In simple terms of *national liberation* the achievements of such men outdo anything that can be shown by the advocates of "pure" physical force (or, even, physical force + social democracy).

There is a further point to internationalism in that the later developments in such countries as China, Algeria, Cuba and Vietnam emphasise the limitations of national victories. China is making its peace with the U.S.A., once stigmatised as the "main imperialism" from which all evil emerged. Algeria has lapsed into being a French neo-colony. Cuba's failure to spread the revolution throughout Latin America is leaving it dependent upon the U.S.S.R. at the cost of its own industrialisation. Many Castroite cadres in South America are taking the hint and moving towards the Fourth International. In Vietnam escalation has meant that the anti-imperialist struggle has spread throughout Indo-China. All these examples have lessons for the Irish. It is not going to be a satisfactory situation in Ireland if the revolution there fails to spread to other European countries.

The issue of the collective nature of the people of the thirty-two counties of Ireland is one on which there may be more ground for dispute between the Republicans and Communists. Admittedly, the latter do not agree with the claim that there is *more* than one nation in Ireland. But they do not agree, either, that there is as much as one. Taking the definition of Stalin and Lenin as the yardstick for the concept, they see *the people of Ireland as a whole develop toward nationhood*.

The Republican may deny the Bolshevik definition. In this case, he should offer a better one. If he accepts it, he will have to prove Ireland's *present* nationhood.

But, by itself, such an approach is too scholastic. By denying the *present* existence of an Irish nation, the Communist does not deny its future existence. Rather, and as one of his tasks, he is working to achieve such an entity, as no capitalist force can now

do. He is working for unity of the island (a conditional task and, as has been shown, one that may be achieved only within one post-revolutionary state of the British Isles). Also, he is working to develop all national cultural characteristics, of course in so far as they do not interfere with working-class state power or its international future. In his latter task, he can scarcely be less successful than the national capitalists; by the elimination of the commodity system, the needs of private trading will no longer sacrifice national culture to imperialism. More than this, the Government of the Irish Workers' Republic will use its freedom from imperial pressures to develop the progressive culture of its land.

Thus opposition to Internationalism and Communism is opposition to forces that are necessary to achieve Irish nationality. This may be denied; if so, a case has still to be made to argue against it. Simple denial is merely evidence of fear; of actual lack of confidence in the possibility of the Irish nation that will arise as an integral entity within the classless stateless society.

APPENDIX I

COMMUNISTS ON THE NATION

Scientific Socialism—Marxism—is international in scope, both in its aims and in the objective circumstances for achieving them. This does not mean that a revolution can only be successful if it is carried out at one moment on an international scale. Leon Trotsky has been, most often, reported, inaccurately, as arguing this. However, he made his position to the contrary quite clear.

"We had a socialist revolution in the Soviet Union. I participated in it. The Socialist revolution signifies the seizure of power by a revolutionary class, by the proletariat. Of course, it cannot be accomplished simultaneously in all countries. Some historic time is given for every country by its conditions. A socialist revolution is not only possible but inevitable in every country. What I affirm is that it is impossible to construct a socialist society in the environment of a capitalist world." "On the Eve of World War II"—Interview 23.7.'39, from *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-1939)*, New York, 1969 Merit Publishers.

Subsequently Trotsky reinforced this statement:

"Help comes to him who helps himself. Workers must develop the revolutionary struggle in every country, colonial or imperialist, where favourable conditions have been established, and through this set an example for the workers of other countries. Only initiative and activity, resoluteness and boldness can give reality to the call 'Workers of the world, unite'."—*Manifesto on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution*, 1940.

What proletarian internationalism does mean is that socialist revolutionaries in each country strive against developing the national demands of their working classes into policies complete in them-

selves, or into spheres where they will alienate the workers of other nations from true internationalism. Lenin, the great authority on this, wrote in "Critical Remarks on the National Question":

"Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the 'most just', purest, most inspired and civilized brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism, the amalgamation of all nations in the higher unity, a unity that is growing before our eyes with every mile of railway line that is built, with every international trust, and every workers' association that is formed (an association that is international in its economic activities as well as in its ideas and aims).

"The principle of nationality is historically inevitable in bourgeois society and, taking this society into due account, the Marxist fully recognises the historic legitimacy of national movements. But to prevent this recognition from becoming an apologia of nationalism, it must be strictly limited to what is progressive in such movements, in order that this recognition may not lead to bourgeois ideology obscuring proletarian consciousness.

"The awakening of the masses from feudal lethargy, and their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nation are progressive. Hence, it is the Marxist's bounden duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democracy on all aspects of the national question. This task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the 'positive' activity of the bourgeoisie striving to fortify nationalism.

"To throw off the feudal yoke, all national oppression, and all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat as a democratic force, and is certainly in the interests of the proletarian class struggle, which is obscured and retarded by bickering on the national question. But to go beyond these strictly limited and definite historical limits in helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie. There is a borderline here, which is often very slight. . . ."—*Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism*, pp. 27-28, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1967.

Later, in his article, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", he deals with the matter again:

"The proletariat . . . while recognising equality and equal rights to a national state . . . values above all and places foremost the alliance of the proletarians of all nations, and assesses any national demand, any national preparation, from the angle of the workers' class struggle."

And: "The International's resolution reproduces the most essential and fundamental propositions in this point of view: on the one hand, the absolutely direct, unequivocal recognition of the full right of all nations to self-determination, on the other hand, the equally unambiguous appeal to the workers for international unity in their class

struggle.”

And for James Connolly:

“Under Socialism, states, territories or provinces will exist only as geographical expressions, and have no existence as sources of governmental power, though they may be seats of administrative bodies.”—*Socialism Made Easy*, Plough Book Service, 1971, p. 40.

What does this mean in practice? Connolly never defined his concept of a nation. (He seems to have confused “Nation” with “Race”.) Lenin accepted (indeed, he may even have inspired) J. V. Stalin’s definition:

“A historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture”

“ . . . like every other historical phenomenon (it) is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.”

This cannot develop before the rise of capitalism. As Lenin remarked: “Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human intercourse. Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes and, lastly, for the establishment of a close connection between the market and each and every proprietor, big or little, and between seller and buyer.

“Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of national states, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The most profound economic factors drive towards the goal and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilised world, the national state is typical and normal for the capitalist period.”—Lenin op cit. pp. 46-47.

But economic differences—the law of combined and uneven development—mean that all nations do not appear at the same moment in time. To quote Stalin again:

“The British, French, Germans, Italians and others formed themselves into nations at the time of the victorious advances of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity.

“But the formation of nations in these instances at the same time signified their conversion into independent national states. The British, French, and other nations at the same time, British, French, etc., states. Ireland, which did not participate in this process does not alter the general picture.

“Matters proceeded somewhat differently in Eastern Europe. While in the West the nations developed into states, in the East multi-national states were formed, each consisting of several nationalities. Such are Austria-Hungary and Russia. In Austria, the Germans proved to be politically the most developed, and they took it upon themselves to amalgamate the Austrian nationalities into a state. In Hungary, the most adapted for state organisation were the Magyars—the kernel of the Hungarian nationalities—and it was they who united Hungary. In Russia, the role of the welder of nationalities was assumed by the Great Russians, who were headed by an aristocratic military bureaucracy, which had been historically formed and was powerful and well organised.

“Such was the case in the East. This peculiar method of formation of states could take place only where feudalism had not yet been eliminated, where capitalism was feebly developed, where the nationalities which had been forced into the background had not yet been able to consolidate themselves economically into integrated nations.

“But capitalism also began to develop in the Eastern states. Trade and means of communication were developing. Large towns were springing up. The nations were becoming economically consolidated. Capitalism, erupting into the tranquil life of the ousted nationalities, was arousing them and stirring them into action. The development of the press and the theatre, the activity of the Reichstag (Austria) and of the Duma (Russia) were helping to strengthen ‘national sentiments’. The intelligentsia that had arisen was being imbued with ‘the national idea’ and was acting in the same direction.

“But the ousted nations, aroused to independent life, could no longer shape themselves into independent national states, they encountered the powerful resistance of the ruling strata of the dominant nations, which had long ago assumed the control of the state. They were too late!

“In this way the Czechs, Poles, etc., formed themselves into nations in Austria; the Croats, etc., in Hungary; the Letts, the Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, etc., in Russia. What had been an exception in Western Europe (Ireland) became the rule in the East.

“In the West, Ireland responded to its exceptional position by a national movement. In the East, the awakened nations were bound to respond in the same fashion.”

Similarly, in Asia, national demands were made after the appearance of the Western European nation-state.

“The revolutions in Russia, Persia, Turkey and China, the Balkan wars—such is the chain of world events of *our* period in our ‘Orient’. And only a blind man could fail to see in this chain of events the awakening of a *whole series* of bourgeois-democratic national movements which strive to create nationally independent and nationally uniform states.”—Lenin op. cit. p. 56.

The stimulus for the Asiatic national movements and for the subsequent struggles that they had to fight was not the growth of capital-

ism within a multi-nation state, but of course, the development of the capitalism of established national capitalist states into imperialism. As Lenin wrote in his analysis of this phenomena:

"The characteristic feature of the period under review is the final partition of the globe—final, not in the sense that a *repartition* is impossible, on the contrary, repartitions are possible and inevitable—but in the sense that the colonial policy of the capitalist countries has completed the seizure of the unoccupied territories on our planet." —*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, p. 90, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1969.

The reasons for this are simple:

"The principal feature of the latest stage of capitalism is the domination of monopolist combines of the big capitalists. These monopolies are most firmly established when *all* the sources of raw materials are captured by one group, and we have seen with what zeal the international capitalist combines exert every effort to make it impossible for their rivals to compete with them by buying up, for example, iron ore fields, oil fields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives the monopolies complete guarantee against all contingencies in the struggle with competitors, including the contingency that the latter will defend themselves by means of a law establishing a state monopoly. The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate is the struggle for the acquisition of colonies." P. 98.

"Finance capital is interested not only in the already discovered sources of raw materials but also in potential sources, because present-day technical development is extremely rapid, and land which is useless today may be made fertile tomorrow if new methods are applied (to devise these new methods a big bank can equip a special expedition of engineers, agricultural experts, etc.), and if large amounts of capital are invested. This also applies to prospecting for minerals, to new methods of working up and utilising raw materials, etc., etc. Hence the inexorable striving of finance capital to enlarge its economic territory and even its territory in general. In the same way that the trusts capitalise their property at two or three times its value, taking into account its 'potential' (and not present) profits and the further results of monopoly, so finance capital strives in general to seize the largest possible amount of land of all kinds in all places, and by every means, taking into account potential sources of raw materials and fearing to be left behind in the fierce struggle for the last scraps of undivided territory, or for the recognition of those that have already been divided.

"The interests pursued in exporting capital also give an impetus to the conquest of colonies, for in the colonial market it is easier to employ monopolist methods (and sometimes they are the only methods that can be employed) to eliminate competition, to make sure of contracts to secure the necessary connections, etc." Ibid, pp

99-100.

This process was described also, by Leon Trotsky in his article "The Nation and the Economy". (This was denounced by Lenin for its form but its content is relevant.):

"France and Germany in the past period approached a type of nation state. By no means did this prevent their policy of colonialism, nor their present plans to extend their respective frontiers to the Rhine and the Somme. An independent Hungary, Bohemia or Poland will, in exactly the same way, seek an outlet to the sea by means of the violation of the rights of other nations, as Italy is seeking to do at the expense of the Serbs and as the Serbs themselves are seeking at the expense of the Albanians. National democracy is awakened by capitalism which strives to weld as many elements of nations as possible into one economic unit. But it is this very capitalism which strives everywhere it sets down its roots to expand the limits of the internal market as widely as possible, to create as many favourable outlets as possible to the world market, to impose its domination over regions with an agrarian type of economy. The national principle is for national capitalism neither an absolute idea nor the final crowning of the edifice. It is only the springboard for a new leap—in the direction of world domination. At the present stage of development, the national idea appears as a banner of struggle against feudalism, particularist barbarism or foreign military aggression. In the long term, by creating a self-sufficient psychology of national egoism, it becomes itself a tool of capitalist enslavement of weaker nations: an indispensable tool of imperialist barbarism." *Nashe Slovo* 3.7.15. Reproduced in *Marxist Review* No. 2, January-February, 1973.

With these facts in mind:

"There is every sign that imperialism will leave its successor, Socialism, a heritage of *less* democratic frontiers, a number of annexations in Europe and in other parts of the world. Is it to be supposed that victorious socialism, restoring and implementing full democracy all along the line, will refrain from *democratically* demarcating state frontiers and ignore the sympathies of the population?" —Lenin, *Question of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism*, pp. 128-129.

In fact, the Socialist must distinguish between nations. In the World Wars of the twentieth century, the leading participants (apart, by its socialist Government, from the U.S.S.R. in the Second World War) were all struggling equally as oppressors (as Trotsky pointed out above). But at the same time, there were nations such as the Irish, the Arabs, and the Chinese (and, indeed, many of the oppressor nations that had the misfortune to be occupied such as the French) whose struggles were on a different level: they were oppressed nations struggling against imperialism (in the first cases) and to complete (or renew) the tasks of historically-bourgeois revolutions. Such struggles had to be supported, albeit conditionally.

"Limitations of freedom of movement, disenfranchisement, sup-

pression of language, restriction of schools, and other forms of repression affect the workers no less, if not more than the bourgeoisie. Such a state of affairs can only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations. There can be no possibility of a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tartar or Jewish worker if he is not allowed to use his native language at meetings and lectures, and if his schools are closed down.

"But the policy of national repression is dangerous to the cause of the proletariat also on another account. It diverts the attention of large strata of the population from social questions, questions of the class struggle, to national questions, questions 'common' to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And this creates a favourable soil for lying-propaganda regarding 'harmony of interests', for glossing over the class interests of the proletariat and for the intellectual enslavement of the workers. This creates a serious obstacle to the work of uniting the workers of all nationalities. If a considerable proportion of the Polish workers are still in intellectual bondage to the bourgeois nationalists, if they still stand aloof from the international labour movement, it is chiefly because the age-long anti-Polish policy of the 'powers that be' creates the soil for, and hinders the emancipation of the workers from this bondage.

"But the policy of repression does not stop here. It not infrequently passes from a 'system' of *oppression* to a 'system' of *inciting* nations against each other, to a 'system' of massacres and pogroms. Of course, the latter is not everywhere and always possible, but where it is possible—in the absence of elementary civil rights—it frequently assumes horrifying proportions and threatens to drown the cause of unity of workers in blood and tears. The Caucasus and South Russia furnish numerous examples of 'Divide and Rule'—such is the purpose of the policy of inciting nations against each other. And where such a policy succeeds it is tremendous evil for the proletariat and a serious obstacle to the work of uniting the workers of all the nationalities in the state.

"But the workers are interested in the complete amalgamation of all their comrades into a single international army, in their speedy and final emancipation from intellectual subjections to the bourgeoisie, and in the full and free development of the intellectual forces of their brothers, whatever the nation to which they belong.

"The workers therefore combat and will continue to combat the policy of national oppression in all its forms, subtle or crude, as also the policy of inciting nations against each other in all its forms."

Thus Stalin (*Marxism and the National Question*). Lenin is equally definite:

"In their fear of playing into the hands of the bourgeois nationalism of oppressed nations, people play into the hands not merely of the bourgeois but of the reactionary nationalism of the *oppressor* nation."—Lenin op. cit. p. 10.

"If we do not want to betray socialism we *must* support *every* revolt against our chief enemy, the bourgeoisie of the big states,

provided it is not the revolt of a reactionary class. By refusing to support the revolt of annexed regions we become objectively, annexationists. It is precisely in the 'era of imperialism', which is the era of nascent social revolution, that the proletariat will today give especially vigorous support to any revolt of the annexed regions so that tomorrow or simultaneously, it may attack the bourgeoisie of the 'great' power that is weakened by the revolt." Ibid. p. 137.

"In my writings on the national question I have already said that an abstract presentation of the question of nationalism in general is of no use at all. A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation." Ibid. p. 168.

And Trotsky agrees:

"Social Democracy stands always and everywhere for the interests of economic development and opposes all political measures capable of holding it back. However, it understands economic development, not as a self-sufficient, extra-social, productive-technical process, but as the basis for the development of human society into its class groupings, with a national, political superstructure, etc. This viewpoint leads in the last analysis, not to insuring for local or national capitalism success over the capitalism of other places and countries, but to insuring the historic progress and systematic growth of man's power over nature. The class struggle of the proletariat itself is the most important factor ensuring the further development of the productive forces—by leading them out of the imperialist blind alley into the broad arena of socialism. A state of nationalities and national groups which exists through force (Russia and Austria are examples) may, without doubt for a certain time, develop the productive forces by creating for them a broader internal market. But, by generating the bitter struggle of national groups for influence on the state power, or by working 'separatist' tendencies—that is the struggle for separation from that power—such a state paralyses the class struggle of the proletariat as the most important force of economic and of general historic progress. The workers are deeply interested in the elimination of all artificial frontiers and barriers in the greatest possible extension of a free area of development. But they cannot buy this aim for a kind of price which, above all, disorganises their own historic movement, and thus weakens and lays low the most important force in contemporary society." *The Nation and the Economy*—I.

On this basis both Lenin and Trotsky could approve the Easter Rising. Lenin approved on several occasions the participation of Socialists in national struggles.

"K. Kautsky . . . opposed Rosa Luxemburg and proved that her materialism was extremely 'one-sided' . . . according to Kautsky, the International could not at the time make the independence of Poland a point of its programme; but the Polish socialists were fully entitled to put forward such a demand. From the socialist's point of view it was undoubtedly a mistake to ignore the tasks of national

liberation in a situation where national oppression existed.”—Lenin op. cit. p. 82.

“The working class should be the last to make a fetish of the national question, since the development of capitalism does not necessarily awaken *all* nations to independent life. But to brush aside the mass national struggles once they have started, and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means, in effect, pandering to *nationalistic* prejudices, that is recognising ‘one’s own nation’ as a model nation or, we would add, possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state.”—Ibid. p. 87.

“We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat’s great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise *every* popular movement against *every single disaster* imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crises.” Ibid. p. 162.

To defeat the reactionary tendencies that exist in the national claims of even an oppressed nation, Lenin declared:

“A Social-Democrat from a small nation must emphasise in his agitation the *second* word in our general formula: ‘voluntary *integration*’ of nations. He may, without failing in his duties as an internationalist, be in favour of *both* the political independence of his nation and its integration with the neighbouring states of X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must act first *against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation, consider the whole and the general, subordinate the particular to the general interest.” Ibid. p. 152.

In his 1915 article quoted above, Trotsky put forward the call for a United States of Europe in a desperate attempt to encourage internationalism on the part of the national movements of the workers.

Connolly can be seen not to have opposed this line (as some have claimed he did): he made it clear that the Irish national revolt was but the beginning of a European Socialist one:

“Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord.”—*Irish Worker*, 8th August, 1914.

In the second place, the revolutionary socialist in the oppressed country has a duty to maintain the democratic nature of that country’s national struggle.

“The proletariat demands a democracy that *rules out* the forcible retention of any one of the nations within the bounds of the state. In order not to infringe the right to self-determination, therefore, we are duty-bound . . . to vote for the right of the seceding region to decide the question itself.”—Lenin, op. cit. p. 9.

“The right to secession presupposes the settlement of the question by a parliament (Diet, referendum, etc.) of the *seceding* region, not by a central parliament.”—Ibid. p. 100.

“By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the *possibility* of abolishing national oppression—the possibility becomes reality only—‘only’!—with the establishment of full democracy

in all spheres, including the delineation of state frontiers in accordance with the ‘sympathies’ of the population, including complete freedom to secede. And this, in turn will serve as a basis for developing the *practical* elimination of even the slightest national friction and the least national mistrust, for an accelerated drawing together and fusion of nations that will be completed when the state *withers* away.”—p. 130.

“The national programme of working class democracy is: absolutely no privileges for any one nation or any one language; the solution of the problem of the political self-determination of nations, that is, their separation as states by completely free, democratic methods; the promulgation of a law for the whole state by virtue of which any measure (rural, urban or communal, etc., etc.) introducing privilege of any kind for one of the nations and militating against the equality of nations or the rights of a national minority shall be declared illegal and ineffective, and any citizen of the state shall have the right to demand that such a measure be annulled as unconstitutional, and that those who attempt to put it into effect be punished”—p. 15.

Accordingly—

“The bourgeois nationalism of *any* oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed *against* oppression, and it is this content that we *unconditionally* support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness, we fight against the tendency of the Polish bourgeois to oppress the Jews, etc., etc.”—p. 62.

In the last resort application of the principles of self-determination are dependent on the Marxist analysis of the specific circumstances of their spheres of action:

“There can be no question of the Marxists of any country drawing up their national programme without taking into account all these general historical and concrete state conditions.”—Lenin, Ibid. p. 52.

“The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small part* of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected. It is possible that the republican movement in one country may be merely an instrument of the clerical or financial monarchist intrigues of other countries; if so, we must not support this particular, concrete movement, but it would be ridiculous to delete the demand for a republic from the programme of international Social-Democracy on these grounds.”—Ibid. p. 146.

“No democratic demand can fail to give rise to abuses, unless the specific is subordinated to the general; we are not obliged to support either ‘any’ struggle for independence or ‘any’ republican or anti-clerical movement. Secondly, *no* formula for the struggle against national oppression can fail to suffer from the same ‘shortcoming’.”—Ibid. p. 154.

It is in the manner defined above that Marxists must formulate their tasks in reference to the national question in Ireland.

APPENDIX II

DOCUMENTS OF THE LEFT OPPOSITION (Y.S.) AND R.M.G. ON THE IRISH NATIONAL QUESTION

A.—DOCUMENT PRESENTED TO THE SOCIALIST
LABOUR ALLIANCE' BELFAST CONFERENCE, JUNE 1971
BY D. R. O'CONNOR-LYSAGHT

PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE QUESTION OF THE PROTESTANTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern-Irish Protestant question is, for the Irish "national" bourgeoisie, merely a disagreeable hangover from the struggle that it concluded to its own satisfaction in December 1921. For Revolutionary Socialists, it is a problem that, handled correctly, can give the initial impetus to the achievement of the Workers' Republic, and, if necessary, could spread into Britain the revolution that created it.

As a problem, it is an acid test for anyone claiming to operate the Marxist method. The issues concerned cannot be clarified by a mechanical reference to the case histories of Scientific Socialism. Only Connolly had to face a problem similar to (because the same as) this. The Russians and the Germans had to deal with the straight issue of a metropolitan power's exploitation to its colonies: The Americans Debs and deLeon had a similar matter. Only the Scot, John Maclean, in his handling of the problem of the break-up of a metropolitan power (the United Kingdom) into its component nations (England and Scotland) had to deal with anything of any likeness, and his solution is still arguably invalid.

The Problem about the Protestants of Northern Ireland is this: a colonial community bearing certain of the stigmata of a nation insists that it has the right to adhere politically to the metropolitan imperial power in defiance of the claims of the majority on the island where they both dwell. For Marxists, there are two immediate questions to answer: is this community in itself a distinct "nation" and, if so, so what?

The scientific description of the "nation" was formulated by J. V. Stalin, during his Bolshevik period in his personal masterpiece *Marxism and the National Question* (1913): "A nation is an historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."

How many of these features are seen in the Protestant Ulstermen? To begin, their community certainly "evolved" historically. It has existed (or part of it with most claims to be a nation: the area east of the River Bann: the "Belfast Pale") for some 300 years.

As to its "stability", that is a matter deserving more scrutiny later. It possesses "community of language" certainly in Stalin's sense ("We are referring, of course, to the colloquial language of the

people and not to the official government language") but so do all the people of the British Isles.

It does have "community of territory" in the East European sense in that there is an area (the aforesaid "Pale") which is recognisably a "Protestant" area, albeit with "foreign" (i.e., Catholic) enclaves (The Falls Road, the Glens of Antrim).

"Community of Economic Life" exists also amongst the Protestants of the North-East of Ireland. Here is one particular difference separating them from their neighbours elsewhere in the island. In his work Stalin goes into the matter at length:

"The bourgeoisie plays the leading role (in the national movement). The chief problem for the young bourgeoisie is the problem of the market. Its aim is to sell its goods and to emerge victorious from competition with the bourgeoisie of another nationality. Hence its desire to secure its "own" its "home" market. The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism."

In Ireland the twin facts of union and rack-rent landlordism operated, after 1801, to drive a wedge between the two communities in the country. On the one hand, the industrial bourgeoisie of the south, handicapped by the poverty of its potential 'home' market and lacking supplies of raw materials for producing capital goods gave up the ghost (with a few exceptions). In the North-East its counterparts were closer to the sources of their raw materials and were able to use the religious differences amongst their employees to good effect to maintain and increase their rate of exploitation. Their loss of a viable 'home' market was made up (as, in similar circumstances, those of Scotland and Wales were made up) by their participation in that of England, and, as the 19th century progressed, in that of the British Raj. This provided the formal economic basis for their hostility to the claims of their opposite numbers in the south for "Home Rule" or for anything that might "open the floodgates" and destroy the empire. The later development of Irish nationalism, with its culmination in the Lemass protectionism of the 1930's, gave the Protestant industrialists a definite justification of their stand. Of course, by contracting out of the Irish national struggle, they had allowed it to develop as it did. But it is at this point that the last factor making up the nation appears.

The psychological make-up of the Ulster Protestants, as manifested in a community of culture was encouraged to develop during the 19th century in a manner different from that of the Irish Catholic majority. As with the economic factor, this was a turn away from the trend of the 18th century. It had been encouraged by the scabberiness of the Catholics against the northern front of the '98 rising, compared with rumours of atrocities against Protestants in other areas. Later, religious division amongst the plebians was a useful force for the bosses to use to maintain profits at a time of depression and rationalisation. In turn, this trend was maintained by the Catholic sectarian development of Irish nationalism from O'Connell (and, in particular, from the Emancipation Act) onwards. And this continued, in turn stimu-

lated by the North-Eastern Protestants' refusal to continue in the tradition of '98. By 1886, Ulster industrialism was, in its way, even more dependent on the Catholic Church than the gombeen-men of that religion. The latter could have continued their economic role without their clergy, but at a time of increasing labour militancy (culminating in a Lib-Lab candidate for North Belfast in 1885), the industrial bosses feared continuing religious unity and took the opportunity of the Home Rule Bill to divide their workers again. How far this was conscious, it is hard to say. Once again the criminal bigotry, of all sections of the Irish national movement (including such so-called 'non-denominational' bodies as Sinn Fein, the I.R.A., and the Labour and Communist parties) has fed the belief amongst the Ulster Protestants that Home Rule means, automatically, 'Rome Rule'. This again, has encouraged the 'Prods' to maintain their own form of superstition.

But there is more to the north-eastern culture than Religion. The fact that the economy was more dependent on the British raj than those of the other nations and ur-nations of Britain resulted in a corresponding popular paranoia about that raj that exceeded that of the said communities. The Flag of Protestant Ulster is the Union Jack rather than the Red Hand. The Unionists are "British": the only people in the British Isles that actually described themselves as such. After the First World War, Belfast had the largest (and most proletarian) membership of the British Empire Union in the United Kingdom. At Westminster, from their incorporation the Ulster Unionist M.P.s were the vanguard of imperialism.

Of course, there is an exception to all this loyalty: the two years (1912-1914) when Ulster looked like having to defend its separation from the Catholic south even against the armed forces of that Empire to which it proclaimed its loyalty. But the apparent exception does but prove the rule. The fact remains that when, at last, the Ulster Volunteers went to war they did so in defence of the entity that they had been formed to oppose. But this might have been mere accident, until one remembers that they had the support of nearly half (and an increasing number at that) of the British M.P.s, a large section of the Army and large minorities in the Dominions (especially Canada). All these would (and at the Curragh, did) defend Ulster's 'right' and saved it from having to fight. Battle would be its last resource—and would come only as a prelude to wide-spread imperial civil war. By August 1914, the Unionists were winning without a shot being fired.

Of course, there are other attributes to the culture of the Ulster Protestants. They have a liberal side to their rhetoric when they care to use it. They have a considerable repertoire of folk songs (mainly based on "Taig" tunes). Nonetheless these are secondary to the outstanding forces in the Orange psychology—Imperialism and the Protestant religion.

It is the nature of the economic and psychological factors in the Ulster Protestant community that makes its stability as a separate unit

less than is usual for a true nation. On this subject, it is worth recalling what Stalin has to say in his work:

"... It is unquestionable that the great empires of Cyrus and Alexander could not be called nations, although they came to be constituted historically and were formed out of different tribes and races. They were not nations, but casual and loosely-connected conglomerations of groups, which fell apart or joined together depending upon the victories or defeats of this or that conqueror."

"Thus, a nation is not a casual or ephemeral conglomeration, but a stable community of people."

The examples quoted might seem to be a far cry from the small, compact, Belfast Pale. However, the subject has more in common with the Persian and Hellenic Empires than appears at first sight. For, whatever about the Ulster Protestants' claim to be a separate nation, it is certainly true that, on the data given, they (or rather, those around Belfast) can (and do) claim to be part of the nation, not of Ireland but of Britain. This claim has been upheld, though less, recently, than before, by their leaders.

But the creation of a British community was a process that was based on a certain historically short-term situation: Britain's role as the first industrial capitalist country ("the workshop") of the world. Even before this, of course, England had intervened to slow down (in the second case, to halt) the development of two peoples (The Irish and the Welsh) towards nationhood. However its capitalistic pre-eminence enabled it to continue to expand and consolidate itself: to merge politically with the nation of the Scots, to keep the Welsh divided amongst themselves, to thwart the development of a united Irish nation and, as its crowning achievement, to win to its active support a major section of the Irish national vanguard of '98. Had its monopoly position in the capitalist world not been challenged by Germany and the U.S.A. it might even have been able to win over the rest of the Irish despite the religious problem (and the Irish clergy would not have opposed a merger) and the bitterness created the famine.

But, as its empire breaks up, so, too, does the British community. Scotland is now restive. So is Wales, though because of its lack of the economic factor it is not yet a full nation. Northern Ireland is dependent for its identity, now, on British bribes (covering actual exploitation) its puppet regime and religious vendetta. Of these, it is significant of the present political trends in Britain, that Stormont is regarded as something to be preserved. The founders of the sub-state accepted it reluctantly. Of the other two factors, the British welfare state is contracting and, in any case, can be countered by a Socialist analysis of the actuality of imperialism's exploitation of the Six Counties. The religious divide looms as wide as ever, due, as we have seen, to the incompetence and downright malice of bourgeois and petty bourgeois (including so-called Socialist) political movements on both sides of the border. Here, again, a scientific Socialist policy that does not funk the question of religion will play a major

role in winning the Protestant workers.

Thus the Northern Ireland Protestants do not constitute a separate nation, or part of a nation separate from the majority of the Irish people. It is rather a part of an unformed Irish nation that had its growth stunted when its original bourgeois revolution was smashed and of which the establishment will be one function of the coming Socialist revolution.

There are several corollaries to all this. In the first place, the fact that Ulster Protestants do not constitute a nation as such means that, similarly, the claim that the Irish Catholics on their own form a nation must be rejected for the same reasons. Until the present decade (the 1970's) it was notable that those readiest to accept the separation of Northern Ireland—including such as Ernest Blythe and Desmond Fennell—were also those who were most prepared to accept the confessional nature of the twenty-six county state as being most in keeping with the national 'psychology' (in reality because the Catholic Church is useful to discipline the workforce). Again, it must be asserted that, after 1800, not only did the Northern Protestant psychology change, the Irish Catholic psychology did so too. The latter became less Gaelic and more Catholic-Jansenist. Even without the presence of the Protestants, an 18th century Gaelic Irish Republic would in matters of faith and morals, have been freer than the modern 26-County State. In short the 26 County community is merely a section of an unformed national community that has had the fate to fall under the influence of what is called "the One Catholic and Apostolic Church" And vice versa, as has been shown, the Ulster Protestants have been diverted similarly by sectarian Protestantism and imperialism.

Secondly, the statement of the Socialists' duty to complete the formation of the nation will undoubtedly cause disagreement on the ultra-left. After all, we want international Socialism, we can't have "Socialism" in one country (or in one nation,) etc. For such as these, it is worth recalling that Connolly anticipated the end of "states, territories and regions", under Socialism, but not "nations", that indeed he insisted on the impossibility of having "internationalism" without "nationalism", and, of course, that he saw the Irish national revolution as the first sign in the world Socialist revolution.

Further, the actual Government of the first Workers' Republic of the world passed at the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1921) a resolution stating its aims to be "The elimination of actual national inequality . . . (b) . . . a stubborn and persistent struggle against all survivals of national oppression and colonial slavery" amongst the 30,000,000 soviet citizens "consisting principally of Turkic peoples . . . who have not passed through a capitalist development, who do not or practically do not, possess an industrial proletariat of their own, who in the majority of cases preserve the pastoral and patriarchal tribal form of life . . . or who have not yet progressed completely beyond a semi-patriarchal, semi-feudal form of life (i.e. all those whose claims to national status were

dubious) . . . but who have already been drawn into the common current of Soviet development." To do this the government was to encourage a development of co-operatives, and also, in common with the better developed nations "to help them (a) to develop and consolidate their own Soviet state system in forms consistent with the national social conditions of these peoples: (b) to develop and consolidate their own courts, administrative bodies, economic organs, functioning in the native language and recruited from among local people acquainted with the customs and psychology of the local population (c) to develop a press, schools, theatres, clubs and cultural and educational institutions generally, functioning in the native language, and (d) to organise and develop an extensive system of courses and schools both for general education and for vocational and technical training given in the native languages (mainly for the unformed nations enumerated above) in order to accelerate the training of native cadres of skilled working men and Soviet and Party workers in all spheres of administration, and particularly in the sphere of education". In other words, clearly, Soviet policy was to develop national characteristics in so far as they did not clash with working-class power.

Of course the development of a nation under Socialist government is different from its development under capitalism in one aspect: the economic community that it possesses will be merely a part of an overall economic community (unless Ireland is as unlucky as Russia in the failure of the Revolution to spread). But what will be developed after the revolution will still be a recognisable nation.

The third corollary is that of the League for a Workers' Republic's definition of Northern Ireland as a "nationality", distinct from a nation. Presumably this coincides with the definition given above, but since the League has failed to date (29.5.71) to clarify its definition beyond saying that a "nationality is an undeveloped nation" it is uncertain.

Analysis is useful only if it forms the basis for future action. Thus, the Socialist Labour Alliance must be offered a possible strategy as well as the theoretical base for it. Such a strategy should be based on 6 points:

1. Full support for workers' struggles north and south. A campaign must be carried out for all working-class demands, against redundancy and unemployment. The long-term aim must be a general strike which, unlike those of 1918-1920, will involve the Ulster Protestant working-class, as well as the workers elsewhere.

This point should not be necessary to mention as part of a strategy for a Socialist Labour Alliance. However, as it should be part of such a strategy, it should not be ignored here.

2. In propaganda work, much more should be done about the economic effects of imperialism in the republic. What has been achieved on that subject, so far, is remarkably scrappy.

A study group should be set up to produce such a report, and link it to the Common Market issue, the subjective facts of the matter, etc.

3. The issue of religion is the major cultural cause of division between the two parts of Ireland. Revolutionary Socialists must attack it not only because of this but because Revolutionary Socialism is, of its nature, secular, or it is nothing.

Certainly there must be freedom for all outside the movement itself to practice their peculiar individual forms of superstition. However, the movement must insist that for itself it can accept these only as forms of superstition such as its members must overcome and which it can allow to survive in public life only on its own terms. (It is, of course, true that from its inception the People's Democracy has been carrying out this task. But against the P.D. it must be pointed out that it has often tended (as in the Belfast-Dublin march of April 1969) to concentrate on that particular matter to the exclusion of the problems at the economic basis of society. The first two points (above) will operate to avoid this danger).

As the major part of the struggle against religious superstition, it is proposed that the following 5 Secular Proposals be adopted by the Conference as Alliance policy:

- a) End of denominational (i.e., non-secular) education north and south
- b) Expropriation of all religious property without compensation, north and south
- c) Withdrawal from Bunreacht na hEireann of articles 41 (on the Family) 42 (on Property) and 44 (on Religion)
- d) Repeal of legislation in the Republic that forbids contraception, adult homosexual activity, divorce and abortion
- e) Ending of the right of a priest to carry out the function of a State Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

4. The above three points will contribute greatly to the weakening of Northern Irish Protestant separatism. Nonetheless, the question must be asked whether or not it will be principled and/or necessary to give formal recognition to the validity of this separatism, if only to carry out Lenin's formula: "disunion for the purpose of union".

The Protestants of the Belfast "Pale" are not a nation. They may be what the L.W.R. describes as a "nationality". Should they be allowed the right to self-determination?

The question is one of tactics: how is such a right likely to affect the Irish revolution and its continuance abroad? In the long run, and with the policies already enumerated, it would not make much difference: it could only be a dangerous red herring. As has been shown, the objective factors weakening the solidarity of the Ulster Protestant community are operating and must be encouraged.

But matters cannot be left to the development of these factors, simply because there are pressures working to prolong the agonising survival of the community.

First of these is British capitalism. Now that, economically, the Republic is qualitatively as subordinate to Britain as Northern Ireland, its natural instinct is to reunite the country. But this would cause too many security problems on Britain's flank. Irish capitalism

cannot afford (if it ever could) to maintain the declining economy of the North East. Politically it is unattractive not only to the Protestants but to increasing numbers of Catholics. Reunification of Ireland under capitalism (i.e. under Britain) would weaken that capitalism.

Nor is it likely that Britain can establish that liberal bourgeois state in Northern Ireland that it has promised. Northern Ireland was designed as a state divided within itself. A normal bourgeois democracy needs greater unity than it has enjoyed. Economic decline, clerical dominance in the Republic, the crisis of leadership in Irish Socialism and over a century of "Divide and Profit" tactics by the Protestant industrialists have combined to ensure that the largest single political force amongst the Ulster Protestants is Paisleyism. Britain can do one of three things: it can continued the *status quo*, with either Republicanism or Paisleyism. It is not difficult to see which is the most likely.

In these circumstances, anything that can at least neutralise enough Protestants is worth trying, and it is purely in this spirit (the spirit of Lenin dealing with the Moujiks) that one must consider allowing self-determination to the "Pale" of Belfast. Of course, it must be stressed that self-determination cannot mean surrender either to Paisleyism or to British imperialism—nor can it be applied in Northern Ireland *per se*.

It is arguable that such limited (but Bolshevik) terms of self-determination would lack sufficient credibility to win enough of the Protestants from Paisleyism. On this matter however, it can be pointed out that it should be taken in conjunction with the other proposals listed.

Accordingly, more investigation should be done into this matter and more discussion should be instituted through the theoretical journals available to the Alliance, particularly the *Northern Star* (as this is most involved in the areas concerned).

5. The probability that, despite eleventh hour attempts, Paisleyism will triumph in Northern Ireland (for the time being) means that the Alliance must struggle to provide Socialist Leadership for the Republican areas. It must warn the inhabitants of these areas of the facts of the political situation, point out why the policies sponsored by Gardiner Place, Kevin Street and the various terrorist groups, cannot achieve even the reunification of Ireland, and emphasise, once more, Connolly's dictum: "Nationalism without Socialism is national recreancy". It must prepare the Northern Ireland Catholic areas for the revival of the barricades, and, for the immediate transformation of the new communes into Soviets. The Southern branches of the Alliance should give their comrades all possible help in this. Two definite proposals can be made immediately.

Firstly, members of the Alliance should prepare to get training in using arms.

Secondly, a pamphlet explaining the failure of the insurrection of August 1969 (basically a failure to escalate intensively and exten-

sively) should be prepared and published as soon as possible.

6. At all times the Alliance should remember and should try to explain that the Irish national revolution is but the beginning of an uninterrupted international revolution, and that its fate is bound up with its spreading.

SUMMARY

1. Because of the instability of the factors providing its distinct character, the Northern Irish Protestant community is not a nation but rather a part of the unformed nation of the Irish.

2. The particular characteristics that gave the Protestants their "national" appearance (namely British capitalism and religious superstition) are being eroded, or are likely to be eroded by the international decline of imperialism and religion.

3. The British Government, because of its capitalist nature, cannot hasten this process, however much it may desire to do so. In practice it can only make matters worse and is likely, unchecked, to have to prepare a Paisleyite-Fascist dictatorship.

4. Only a Socialist movement can reunite the country as part (perhaps a catalytic part) of the process of Permanent Revolution.

5. The question of Protestant self-determination is a matter of pure tactics to be considered only in connection with the overall Socialist strategy.

6. This strategy will include struggles against capitalism, against religious superstition, and against the petty bourgeois aspects of Republicanism. All these struggles are described above in detail.

B.—BASIS FOR A STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

(passed at Dublin Conference of the S.L.A., October, 1971)

1. The Northern Irish situation is a natural product of British Imperialism's hold on Ireland.
2. The rulers of Britain had to control Ireland through their exploitation of the differences between the ruling classes in Ulster and those in the other provinces of Ireland. Of this exploitation, the political expression is Partition.
3. In the North-East, the bourgeoisie has had its power based on the British market and on the weakening of its workers by its fomenting of religious differences, through work preferences, etc. This system won its ultimate political expression by the 2-1

Protestant-Catholic ratio formalised by Partition. All this has meant—

- (a) A united Protestant bourgeoisie (and a class of united, mainly Protestant, landowners).
 - (b) A subordinate class of Catholic gombeenmen with aspirations that veer uneasily between joining their fellows in the 26 Counties, and achieving equality with the Protestants in the 6.
 - (c) A Protestant working class, with a disproportionate percentage of skilled workers, and with the attitudes of a labour aristocracy, due to their special work-place privileges. These include first refusals of jobs, last to be redundant, etc. It has a progressive record economically but its gains, thereby, have always tended to be nullified by its backwardness due to its special position.
 - (d) A Catholic working class, at the bottom of the scale and, as such veering between passive conservatism and genuine militancy (itself divided between, politically, Republican abstentionism and, economically, industrial action).
4. In the twenty-six county Republic, bourgeois rule has been less complicated. Nonetheless, it has its own specific peculiarities. Its *essential international position* is *neo-colonial*, rather than *metropolitan*. Nonetheless its peculiar geographic closeness to its colonial overlord has led the traditional bourgeois revolution to have more of its tasks completed than in similar countries. In the Republic of Ireland, the tasks of the peasant anti-feudal revolution have been carried out in a specifically bourgeois form due to British capitalism's need for greater security to its west and to its ability to buy the hope of this security through its colonial profits. The nearness of British industry has provided a route which Irish industrial radicalism has used and thus weakened its force in its homeland. These two facts have enabled the *bourgeois* state power to maintain itself as a recognisably *democratic* power. On the other hand, the task of *national unification* has not been and cannot be achieved and the forms of bourgeois democracy cannot be extended to include that of a fully secular state; the Church's special position is necessary to the special position of Irish capitalism and British imperialism.
- In particular, this last, cultural, matter has reacted badly on the national unification question by proving to Ulster Protestants their fear: "Home Rule is Rome Rule".
5. The developments of the past fifty years have made major quantitative changes in this basic situation—
 - (a) As the imperialist snake feeds on its own tail, the centrifugal forces become increasingly powerful against it. This is seen in the colonial revolution.

But nearer the British metropolis, the whole unity of the "United Kingdom" is beginning to be pulled apart by centrifugal tendencies. The bourgeoisies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, long junior partners in "British Imperialism" are becoming increasingly aware of this imperialism's deficiencies, through their most sensitive area: their pockets. The workers of these countries became aware, too, of the weakness of the all British political-Labour movement. These facts provide a greater basis than before for Scottish and Welsh nationalisms and for the "U.D.I." tendency in Ulster Unionism. (But Ulster U.D.I. is too dependent on Irish and British complacency to be practical in the immediate future.)

- (b) At the same time, the original one of these petty- bourgeois national forces, that of Ireland, has discovered its limitations and has renounced its virginal dreams of independent capitalism equal to that of Britain. It is prepared to accept neo-colonial status.
 - (c) As the fact of scientific expansion (not the uses to which it is put) continues, so too, does the fact of the decline of religion. These facts encourage moves by the bourgeoisies concerned toward a federal system for the British Isles.
6. In the last twenty-five years, as a result of the short-term revival of capitalism by its use of Keynesian economics, further temporary factors have been added to those mentioned above:
- (a) In the Republic, collaboration with British imperialism has resulted in a mushroom growth of small industry, mainly outposts of metropolitan imperialist firms, invited to Ireland by promises of cheap labour. This has had a certain, limited, political result in increased industrial militancy and a turn towards *formally* independent politics by many workers. But with the present imperialist contraction, the base (and thence, the expression) of this is not likely to survive for long.
 - (b) In Northern Ireland, the same factors have cushioned the collapse of the traditional industries.
More important, the area's share in the British Welfare State has cushioned the traditional economic rivalry between "Prod" and "Taig". For the latter it has stimulated a more confident approach to its problems, expressed in the civil rights movement. For the former it has enabled it to keep Paisleyism up to now as a purely *religious-political* phenomena outside its industrial organisation.
Here, again, the new crisis of imperialism, expressed, politically, by the Heath regime in Britain can only reduce the cushioning effect of Northern Irish welfare politics.
 - (c) In the Republic, the need for trained technicians to man the new hot-house industries encouraged the bourgeoisie

to attempt to take more control of education from the Church. This was most fully expressed by the policies of the late Donach O'Malley. For a time it seemed as if home rule might not be Rome Rule.

With the decline of industry, and the resulting increase in unemployment, the state is no longer so keen to educate workers. An unemployed technician represents more waste than an unemployed "navvy". On the other hand, Mother Church has to be boosted for her traditional role as disciplinarian.

- 7. Accordingly, and after two years of spasmodic fighting in the North, it is possible to make several conclusions:
 - (a) As of now, the prospects of achieving a united 32 County Secular Socialist Workers' Republic on the basis of economic demands (never very good) are getting worse and will continue to get worse for the foreseeable future.
 - (b) The prospects of a federal "solution" to the problems of the British Isles remains on the cards. What is being removed from them (and what may well prevent federalism from being achieved) is the prospect of a United Ireland being included in this solution. Economically (a United Ireland would, still, have to be subsidised), militarily (a United Ireland would now mean war between the two communities, this wouldn't help Britain's security), politically among the Northern Irish Protestants (in the British Conservative Party, and in Heath himself, the cause of Paisley has increased and is increasing) there is a logic in the present situation. It impels the imperialists towards a continuance of partition with a Paisleyite regime in the North-East and a more rigorous form of conservatism in the South.
 - (c) In these circumstances, to call for peace and unity among the workers is simply to mouth slogans. Under Paisleyite pressure the I.C.T.U. has had to postpone its proposed peace conference. The Socialist has to fight; he has to choose between two groups of workers. The fact that one lot call themselves "Protestants" and the other, "Catholics" should not deter him any more than the fact that in South Africa there are white workers who vote Nationalist. The Catholics could just as well be Buddhists compared to the relevancy of the fact that they are supporting anti-imperialists, while the U.V.F. is fighting on the side of the imperialists. However unpleasant this is, it is a fact that it is on the arms of the Republican movement that the civil disobedience campaign and the prospects of an alternative parliament depend. (In any case, as has been clear from the response, the civil disobedience campaign is just as "sectarian" as the armed struggle.) Only an all-Irish national

fight, using arms, can defeat Paisley or any fellow-Fuhrers in the Republic.

- (d) Having said that, it must be insisted that the Republicans, though courageous, are very much a second-best compared with what ought to be leading the national struggle: a secular Socialist vanguard movement of the working class. Without such leadership, the struggle is likely to be defeated.

8. What then must be the policies of the Socialist Movement? Here they are:

- (a) Build an Irish citizen army, pending this all support to the fighters of the Republican and Socialist movements in their military fight against British Imperialism.
- (b) Demand the unconditional evacuation of British troops and the release of all internees and political prisoners.
- (c) Call on workers to agitate in their places of work and trade unions for a demand that a general strike will be called by the I.C.T.U. for these aims. Call on the British working class to come out in support; in return give all possible support to the British workers in their struggles on Clyde-side, against the Industrial Relations Act, against entry into the E.E.C. Call on all European workers to strike against British entry into the E.E.C. as long as its rulers oppose Ireland. That the I.C.T.U. ceases its collaboration with the colonial and neo-colonial regimes, North and South.
- (d) Demand the confiscation of British-owned factories and estates without compensation in the Republic, and of all large factories and estates in areas in the North wrested from imperialist control. If this demand is not implemented organise seizure.
- (e) Support the Conference of Civil Resistance in Omagh on October 17th and urge the establishment of a Parliament of the Streets and participate in this.
- (f) Demand the immediate removal of the religious interests from education, the repeal of all religious and moral clauses in the Irish Constitution; legalisation of contraception, abortion and homosexuality and the confiscation of all clerical property.
- (g) Reduce the hours of the working week without loss of pay, so as to increase the number of jobs available.
- (h) Recognise that only a 32 county Secular Socialist Workers' Republic can answer the problems posed by British Imperialism, and its stooge Irish capitalism, North and South. In turn such a state can only survive effectively as part of a United Socialist States of Europe, itself a preliminary to the classless, stateless society.

D. R. O'CONNOR LYSAGHT.

9/10/1971.

C.—DRAFT YOUNG SOCIALIST STATEMENT ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

(prepared for the Annual Conference of the Y. S., January, 1972).

The revolutionary movement in each nation must make the revolution in its own area, guided by the method of Scientific Socialism, applied to the characteristics of society within it and without.

To-day, revolution is coming on the agenda in country after country, despite the treachery of Social Democrats, Stalinites and other petty bourgeois leaderships trusted by the workers. Ireland is no exception to this development. Irish revolutionaries must not refuse to play their part in it—both for their own sakes and for those of the workers elsewhere. Their first duty is to analyse their situation the better to formulate a strategy by which they can change it.

Ireland is one of the countries which has not completed the tasks of its bourgeois revolution. This is shown in two main facts—the power of the Churches remains unchecked, and national unity has yet to be achieved. Any proletarian revolution has to take these into account and include the tasks of overcoming them among its aims. The workers' struggle for State power must, if it is to be successful, involve the struggle to complete national unification. At this time, the escalation of the war in Northern Ireland has made the struggle for national unification one of crucial immediate importance.

Some so-called Marxists put forward the industrial struggle as a counterpoise to the national issue. Such an outlook, expressed in practice, can only result in the same type of fiasco that has beset the Irish working class since the murder of Connolly.

Already, after two years of inconclusive fighting in Northern Ireland, there are signs that such a disaster is likely to occur. On the one hand, Kevin Boland has served up his political stew on the single issue of national unity, and has been very successful in his work. On the other hand, various individuals in the Irish working class movement, most notably Conor Cruise O'Brien and the I.C.O., are putting forward policies of pacifism. These can lead not only to complete collapse in the national, but, through weakening and dividing the workers politically, to their complete defeat in the industrial struggle.

We insist that, if the cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, so too is the cause of Ireland the cause of labour. We declare that, to scab from the present national struggle, even if disguising this action as one of respecting the Ulster Protestant "nation" or "nationality", is as counter-revolutionary as to scab in the industrial field. Its basis is to be found in attempts to "tail after" the POLITICALLY most backward section of the Irish working class: the Ulster Unionist proletariat. There can be no question of recognising "the democratic validity of the Northern Irish state", nor of recognising the right to self-determination of the Northern Protestant community until the major factors on which its distinctive character is based have been

eliminated.

On the other hand, and if the present struggle is defeated, national unification may not be at all time and under all circumstances, the immediate priority for revolutionaries. Other strategies may be needed to begin the decisive fight for workers' state power on an industrial, purely twenty-six county, level, and to spread it, while it processes, into the struggle for unification.

In the meantime the formula must be: Socialist leadership of the National Struggle. On the one hand the struggle itself must be stepped up to weaken the bourgeois state powers—north and south. On the other hand, it must be given increasingly SOCIALIST AND INTERNATIONALIST slogans: Opposition to redundancies, the seizure of British and Unionist-owned firms and estates in the south and of all major firms and estates in the areas under the rule of the "Parliament of the Streets", appeals to foreign comrades to co-operate in opposition to British rule in Ireland, as part of their own anti-capitalist struggles, hostility to religious superstition, are some of the weapons in the Socialist's armoury. Above all, the building of a Citizen Army (always necessary before the workers can take power) is now an immediate task, not only to oppose the British, the U.V.F., the Irish Army and the F.C.A., but to supersede the petty bourgeois I.R.A.s.

The Irish National Revolution must be made to grow over into the uninterrupted Socialist Revolution.

D.—BRITISH ARMY—OUT! CAPITALISTS—OUT!

The Derry murders of 30th January have caused agitation in the Republic of Ireland. This is nothing new. What is new is that this agitation is at last taking a *working-class* form.

The Revolutionary Marxist Group welcomes this. It does not waste time regretting that workers are leaving factories for non-economic motives. It leaves such despair to the Social Democrats and to the sectarians. On the contrary it has *always* insisted that if the Irish Worker—North and South—is to achieve economic and social freedom in the immediate future, this will grow over from the struggle for the political freedom and unity of this nation. At the same time, it has stressed constantly that the national struggle will only be brought to success if it is fought within the struggle for the Workers' Republic and, eventually, for the classless, stateless society.

The latest crime of the British Army cannot be isolated. It comes immediately after An Taoiseach has justified his reputation as "Union Jack, the Bosses' Hack" by signing the Treaty of Rome. Under Capitalism any Irish Government would have had to do the same.

Irish capitalism is based on gombeenism, and hothouse and mushroom industry. It *cannot* break with the British market even when reminded that its own market is valuable to Britain. It *has to* accept any terms that Britain is willing to sign to enter Europe. Its Government *has to* remain passive when those whom it claims as its subjects are massacred by a foreign army on territory it claims as its own.

So, as in Tone's time, so today!—the cause of the Irish nation depends on those of no property. Any such will help the national cause only if they ignore the demands of the boss-class that they sacrifice their own interests to the good of all classes in the country. The Irish boss-class is a 5th Column in the national struggle. The Irish worker will help his country by helping himself.

Now—after all too long a wait!—the pre-revolutionary situation in Northern Ireland is causing spontaneous anti-capitalist activity from the workers in the Republic. Workers are striking in British-owned factory after British-owned factory. This tendency will solve nothing unless it is deepened and expanded. Let the workers return to their factories and take them for their own co-operatives, their own Soviets. Many good Republicans did this in the War of Independence (if they don't take them over now, they'll be forced into redundancy later), now let the job be finished! Let the workers elsewhere down tools in a general strike in solidarity with this action! At the same time, let a Citizens' Army be set up to protect this action and the action of the workers in the north-east. And this activity must be secular. Both wings of the Republican Movement and the I.C.T.U. as leaders of the economic and national struggles must make firm statements in favour of secular education, and against the sectarianism of many laws—north and south. This will help to reduce the hostility of the Ulster Protestant minority whose fears of "Rome Rule" are all too understandable when one looks at the diseased society that 50 years of partition has created in the twenty-six counties. Finally, let the workers of Ireland look to the workers of the world—not excluding those of Britain, of whom 20,000 marched last October in support of Ireland's freedom. Eventually our struggle is theirs!

TAKE OVER BRITISH FACTORIES.
STRIKE TO HOLD THEM FOR THE WORKERS.
FIGHT TO PROTECT THEM FOR THE WORKERS.
END SECTARIAN LAWS—NORTH AND SOUTH.
WORK WITH OUR OVERSEAS COMRADES FOR A
CLASSLESS STATELESS SOCIETY.

31/1/72.

Issued by the Revolutionary Marxist Group, c/o Plough Book Service, c/o 38 Clanawley Road, Dublin 5.

Title: Irish Nationalism British Imperialism

Organisation: Revolutionary Marxist Group

Author: Robert Dorn

Date: 1973

Downloaded from the Irish Left Archive.

Visit www.leftarchive.ie

The Irish Left Archive is provided as a non-commercial historical resource, open to all, and has reproduced this document as an accessible digital reference. Copyright remains with its original authors. If used on other sites, we would appreciate a link back and reference to the Irish Left Archive, in addition to the original creators. For re-publication, commercial, or other uses, please contact the original owners. If documents provided to the Irish Left Archive have been created for or added to other online archives, please inform us so sources can be credited.