

MARXIST FORUM

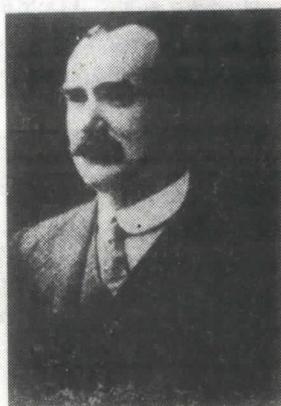
REBUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL



Eoin MacNeill



P.H. Pearse



James Connolly

INSIDE:

TROTSKY,
LENIN
& RADEK
ON
EASTER
1916



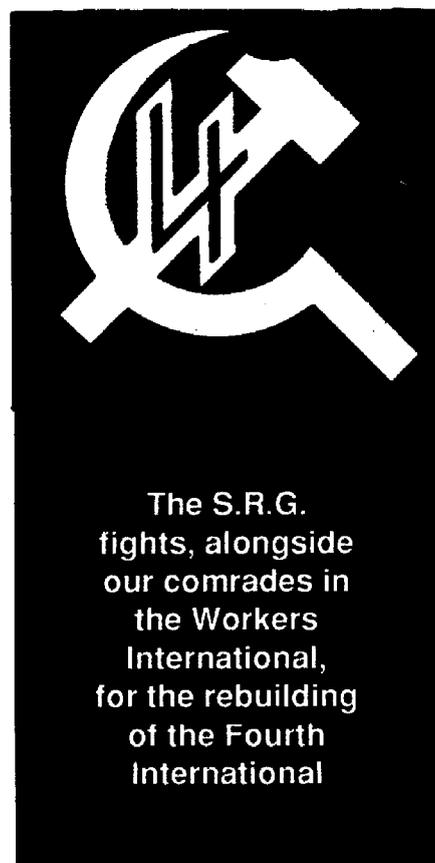
Above: The flag of the Irish Republic which was flown over the G.P.O. 1916

Socialist Revolutionary Group of Ireland

MARXIST FORUM

Spring 1990

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P.O. BOX NO. 426
BELFAST BT13 1SE

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE
**Socialist Revolutionary
Group of Ireland**

EDITORIAL

Marxism is based on the historical, revolutionary role of the working class but Marxists do not confine their political analysis to movements and actions within that class. It is essential to understand the relationship of all classes and their political parties as specific expressions of consciousness when confronted with the needs of capital in this epoch.

while not ignoring the role of the individual in history, the main influences in shaping peoples lives under capitalism are not bureaucrats or people with power. The essential, dominant factor is the force of capital, produced by men, yet alienated from them in a structure with its own laws of motion. And it is inevitable as imperialism, the highest form of capitalist development, lurches deeper into decay that all its agencies, including political parties, reflect that decay.

In Ireland, all the characteristics of this corrupt, capitalist, system and its incurable crisis are displayed in the inability of the ruling class to exist without intensified attacks on the living conditions of the working class and increased loss of democratic rights. And it is the attempts to maintain control over the Northern working class in this developing crisis that lie behind the current series of meetings involving the Unionist Parties, the Social, Democratic and Labour Party, and the British Government through the Secretary of State, Peter Brooke. The political methods advocated by these parties may differ but their social interests are the same.

However, this next stage of the strategy of the Anglo Irish Agreement, in line with imperialisms requirements, is producing deep divisions and disarray within Unionism, the traditional representatives of the ruling class in the North. Its hold over the Protestant working class is severely threatened and the dramatic about-turn on the Anglo-Irish Agreement represents its last-ditch attempts to cling to positions of influence and power as the material base for its existence is eroded.

From a position of total, violent opposition to the Agreement, including the boycotting of all contacts with British ministers and Government bodies and the personal and physical abuse of a Secretary of State, Paisley and Molyneaux have taken the first steps towards the restoration of a devolved administration at Stormont. This will involve a power-sharing arrangement with John Hume and the S.D.L.P., without reducing or eliminating the essential basis of the Agreement - Dublin collaboration with Westminster.

The actions of the Unionist leaders is a response to the pressure from all levels within their parties, but especially from local councillors, and is also an attempt to curb the defections to the newly formed constituency branches of the British Conservative Party.

Mirroring the changes in the Northern Ireland economy the leadership of Unionism has moved from members of the ruling class to the current petty bourgeois composition. As the ability to dispense favours and privilege diminishes the opportunities increase to break sections of the Protestant working class from its reactionary ideology to revolutionary socialism.

The six-county parliament and partition that Britain established in 1921 was a compromise as different sections of

the ruling class conflicted over how best to maintain capitalism in Ireland. The uneven development of capitalism in Ireland had produced a strong Unionist bourgeoisie in the north but the southern Irish capitalist class was too weak to develop independently of monopoly capitalism.

The Unionist bourgeoisie insisted on maintaining direct control over its interests but layers of British imperialism were prepared to reach agreement with native Irish interests and their representatives. All of the political parties-including, most forcefully, Sinn Fein - had demonstrated that they were no threat to the continuation of capitalist exploitation through private ownership.

Stormont administered an artificial statelet dependant on sectarian polarization for its survival. The gerrymandered electoral boundaries, discrimination, and repressive legislation were an integral part, necessary for its continuance, and could not be challenged without challenging the very existence of the state.

But, whilst Stormont stood for Protestant privilege and the oppression of the nationalist people, this privilege was qualified. The division of the working class allowed massive economic exploitation and the majority of the Protestant working class suffered living standards amongst the worst in Western Europe.

Lying at the heart of Unionism was its ability to dispense favours in houses and jobs. The control of local authorities was essential to this and reinforced the ferocity of Unionist opposition to the Civil Rights Campaign of the late 1960's which had a central demand of one person, one vote in local authority elections. The widening of the franchise inevitably meant the overthrow of Unionist control in many councils.

But this loss of control was extended even further when Westminster, after being forced to concede the general voting principle and faced with the prospect of non-Unionist controlled local administrations, severely restricted the powers of local authorities. Government appointed Boards were established to administer the important areas of Health, Education and Housing: an essential component of Unionism's base was gone.

With the loss of the traditional industries the native Unionist bourgeoisie was a declining force and the dissolving of Stormont in 1972 and its replacement by Direct Rule from London signalled the end of its political usefulness to imperialism. Now, the rapid decline of the Northern Ireland economy, particularly its manufacturing base, in the face of the deepening world economic crisis of capitalism erodes the central factor, of Unionism, job discrimination.

However, as the Unionist Parties, under their petty bourgeois leadership, scramble for the images of power they have still an important role to play in maintaining class rule in Ireland. The talks between the political parties and the British Secretary of State are supported by both the U.S.A. and Dublin governments. Their purpose is to prepare the implementing of the political structures necessary for the disciplining of the working class in this period of worsening economic crisis.

A bankrupt six-county economy is artificially maintained for political reasons by Britain and threatens to collapse in the face of the European Single Market. Massive state support grants to industry are not compensating for the steady loss of manufacturing jobs but are creating a facade, cultivated

by the bourgeois media, of service industries mainly consisting of low-paid, part time jobs.

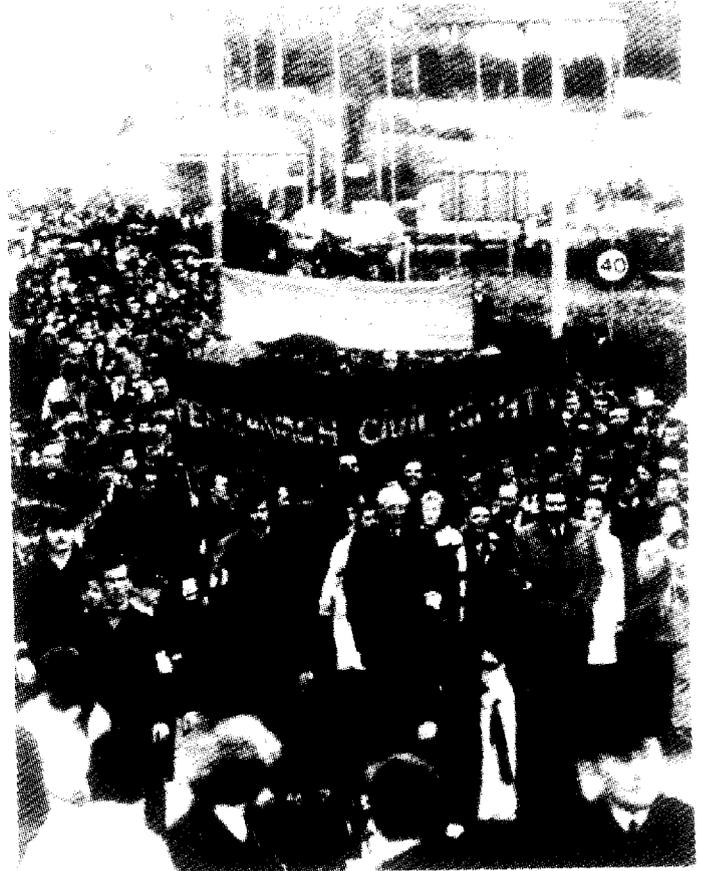
The demand of capital for the increased economic repression of the working class produces new forms of attack such as increased casualization of labour and the replacement of trade union negotiated wages and conditions by personal contracts.

The period when imperialism was making a net profit in the six counties and was able to export large amounts of capital for speculative investment ended in the 1960's. But the statelet cannot be abandoned; the control of the working class is necessary inside the overall strategy of stability.

As the talks about a devolved Stormont develop, their essential aim is, therefore, the tying of the Protestant and Catholic working classes to the state through the Unionist and S.D.L.P. leadership.

By prostrating themselves before the structures of imperialism and refusing to wage a fight on such issues as extradition, media bans, job discrimination, the right of assembly, and the Prevention of Terrorism Act and linking them to unemployment, low pay and emigration they have allowed the petty bourgeois leadership to maintain an element of control over the working class.

But the working class is not defeated. And the next period in Ireland is certain to produce sharp, and even violent class conflicts. The fight for the independence of the working class is central to the tasks of the Socialist Revolutionary Group in the fight with our comrades in the Workers International for the re-building of the Fourth International.



The struggle of the last 20 years 'objectively part of the struggle for socialism'.

ERRATUM

EDITORIAL : The following should be inserted as the third paragraph from the end:
But the responsibility for the absence of a workers movement fighting for the independence of the working class and its organisations from the state lies with the spineless reformist leadership of the Trades Union and labour movement.

Journal of The Socialist Revolutionary Group of Ireland



Marxist Forum will be published bi-monthly
Special Rates (Sterling or Punts)

	4 Issues	8 Issues
Ireland & Britain	£5.00	£10.00
Europe	£6.50	£12.00
Elsewhere in World	£7.50	£15.00

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NEW WORKERS INTERNATIONAL FORMED

A resolution to found the Workers International to rebuild the Fourth International was carried overwhelmingly at a conference on the unity of the workers of eastern and western Europe in Budapest on 14-15 APRIL, 1990.

The Conference was called by the Preparatory Committee for an International Conference of Trotskyists whose work, together with the great changes in the class struggle and in the crisis of Stalinism internationally, had made possible the establishment of the new Workers International.

With the setting up of the Workers International the Preparatory Committee ceases to exist. The Socialist Revolutionary Group of Ireland was proud to be represented at this Conference and voted for the formation of the Workers International. We reprint the call for the Conference.

Our Conference will take place in a situation transformed by the actions of millions of working people in eastern Europe.

At the centre of the 'post-war settlement' between Stalinism and world capitalism was the division of Europe: this division is being broken down by the powerful offensive of the working class throughout eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, seen most graphically in the tearing down of the Berlin Wall.

The capitalist class and the Stalinist bureaucracy are seeking a new form of collaboration, which will enable them to defeat this growing offensive of the working class.

The European working class is a mighty force — the oldest working class in the world, product of the birth of capitalism. The central problems of the world working class find their most concentrated expression in Europe: it is here that the fight to unite the social revolution against capitalism and the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy is centred.

Throughout 1989, the European working class showed its power as it overthrew a series of hated Stalinist governments — in eastern Germany, Romania, Czechoslovakia. The powerful strike movements of the Soviet miners, the British miners' strike of 1984-85, and the strikes by Spanish and Greek workers in defence of living standards and basic rights are expressions of this same power.

But the struggles are far from over. In eastern Europe, despite the downfall of these regimes, despite some changes in personnel, despite certain

changes in the form of government, the old state apparatus remains essentially intact. The Stalinist bureaucracy, striving to retain its power and its privileges, has been joined by openly pro-capitalist elements. So the bureaucracy's true nature as an agency of imperialism in the working-class movement has been revealed . . . and a section of it opens the door directly to capitalist restoration.

For example: in the British miners' strike of 1984-85, the Polish government sold coal to the Thatcher government which was trying to break the strike. Today, the Polish government — supposedly under a new, 'democratic' leadership — seeks even closer collaboration with the same Thatcher government which is making all-out attacks on the wages, living conditions and organisations of British workers.

In east Germany the old Stalinist government has gone, but the new one refuses to disband the state security police, the Stasi, which has murdered and repressed tens of thousands.

In western Europe as a whole, the organisations and historical gains of the working class — its right to belong to trades unions, its right to strike — are continually threatened by the ruling class.

The voice of the working class is stifled, and its power to act as an independent force continually undermined, by its existing organisations and leaderships, whether they call themselves 'communist' 'socialist' or 'labour.'

For decades the 'unions' that existed in the USSR and eastern Europe were unions in name only — part of the Stalinist-controlled states; instruments to preserve a brutal dictatorship over the working class.

In capitalist countries such as Britain, the state, in alliance with the labour and trade union leaders,

has introduced a battery of laws which make strike action increasingly difficult. More and more the trade union leaders become the policemen of the unions. This leadership collaborates with the state, enabling it to assume powers to regulate the internal life of the unions — control of funds, elections etc.

The same is true of the political parties that claim to represent the workers in both eastern and western Europe.

The Stalinist parties in eastern Europe are rightly hated by millions who have experienced their corruption and repression for the last 40 years, and in the USSR for even longer.

Last year, millions of workers throughout the world were shocked by the exposure of the murder, torture and violence these parties have systematically employed to suppress the working class.

In capitalist Europe also, such parties — calling themselves Communist or socialist — have long since ceased to represent the interests of the working class. They have sought every means possible to undermine the independence and fighting capacity of the working class. When in government, such parties have organised the attacks on the working class.

Everywhere workers face the same problems: the use of scab labour to undermine wages and conditions, attacks on the unions, the super-exploitation of immigrant workers, the oppression of nationalities (Irish, Basques, Albanians in Kosovo), mass unemployment . . . even the pollution of the atmosphere created by uncontrolled capitalist investment and bureaucratic command. But that is not all.

The working class of Europe and the world urgently requires political parties that are independent of the state, under the control of the workers themselves and able to provide answers to their most urgent problems.

These parties must be internationalist, part of a single international workers' organisation. Why? First, because the working class confronts big business, the multi-national companies and banks, which are international in character.

Second, because the Stalinist bureaucracy and the capitalists operate internationally, each on their own behalf, and together, against the working class. Such an international party cannot emerge ready-made. It must be based on the entire historical experience of the international workers' movement.

The Fourth International represents the gains of the entire historical past of the working class. This is why it is the mortal enemy of Stalinism, which reserved its harshest blows for the Fourth International. Our Preparatory Committee has called this Conference as part of the fight for the continuity of the Fourth International.

We are convinced that only a United Workers' States of Europe could provide the basis for the unity of the working class and the solution of its basic problems. Such a union of workers' states would be able to plan the use of the resources of the entire continent to satisfy human needs. We raise this perspective against Gorbachev's 'common European home' with the imperialists.

The bringing down of the Berlin Wall signifies that the re-unification of Europe is underway. Will this re-unification be carried out in the interests of the working class or of the capitalist monopolies and those labour leaders who serve their interests? This is the question.

The bankers and industrialists who rule the lives of millions in the capitalist west now have their eyes on the resources of Soviet Union and eastern Europe.

The governments of these countries — however 'democratic' they may pretend to be — already operate ever more openly as representatives of capitalist institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. In return for loans, the IMF insists that the standard of living of the working class be slashed: through inflation, wage reductions, destruction of state benefits.

These attacks require the imposition of dictatorship on the working class. That is why, east and west, we defend every basic democratic and working class right gained in past struggles.

For the right to assembly! For the right to strike! For freedom of speech! For freedom of the press! For free trades unions! For free movement throughout Europe and internationally, without restriction! Freedom for all framed prisoners and political prisoners, jailed for fighting for the interests of the working class, for defending democratic rights and the self-determination of nations!

The Conference is called by those fighting for the continuity of the Fourth International through its re-building. But it is not restricted to those who agree with us on this issue. We want to see represented all individuals and organisations who:

- are genuine fighters for the independent interests of the working class and fight to defend its past gains
- struggle for the right of all nations to self-determination
- recognise this fight is international in character, and is inseparable from a fight against the discredited leaderships of the working class.

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND

Dear Comrades,

This letter is written from a communist viewpoint in a genuine attempt to raise some of the questions that must be resolved in the course of building the revolutionary Marxist party in Ireland.

You will have been deeply shaken by the momentous events of last year in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe. The cornerstone of your political conviction rested in the belief that the hope of the world against the evils of capitalism lay in the Soviet Union and the "socialist countries."

But what were your thoughts as you watched the Chinese students singing the Internationale and being gunned down by their "Communist" rulers? Have you been able to reconcile your political education with the revelations of corruption as the Polish, Czech and East German governments fell?

When Gorbachev sends the Red Army to massacre the working class of Georgia and attempts to starve the Lithuanian people into submission do you wonder how this corresponds to Lenin's teachings on the rights of secession from the U.S.S.R.?

Did you join the Communist Party to defend the decadent lifestyle and opulence of the Ceausescu family? The answer to this last question is obviously no, and yet for decades anyone who dared to criticize any of the regimes of the Warsaw Pact was denounced as an agent of imperialism.

The National Executive Committee of your Party tries to explain away the crimes of the bureaucratic caste in these countries as "mistakes". It says that it is "some of the policies and practices of some Communist leaders that have been discredited."

Is this the Marxist way of analysing social processes? Can the tens of thousands locked away in Ceausescu's mental institutions or the bodies in Tiananmen Square be dismissed as "mistakes"?

Your National Executive is still proclaiming the "socialism" of Eastern Europe. In blatant contradiction to the newspaper reports and television pictures of millions forced to queue every day for the minimum necessities of life and with prostitution a growing and accepted way of earning a living your leadership still boasts of the "achievements of socialism".

Surely what is involved is nothing less than the degeneration of communism, the betrayal of the ideals of the October revolution.

You will know that Marxism seeks to explain events by analysing their origins and development. Is it not then a fact that as the Communist Party of Ireland faithfully supported every action of these Stalinist leaders over the years that the policies of the C.P.I. cannot be unconnected to this degeneration?

You will now, no doubt, be aware of Stalin's wave of terror in the 1930's. Millions of Soviet citizens, including tens of thousands of old Bolsheviks and their supporters were

killed; they were either executed, starved to death or perished in the slave camps.

But did you know that your party's press and leadership of the time obscenely covered up for these atrocities?

And you will also now be aware that the Hungarian uprising of 1956 was not a CIA-inspired plot as your party claimed at the time. The C.P.I. defended the slaughter of the Hungarian working class and those now in the leadership supported the suppression of the Czechoslovakian workers in 1968.

Your present National Chairman in 1981, when justifying his support for the military coup and wave of bloody terror against the Polish workers, likened the Solidarity free trade union to what he called the "fascist" Ulster Workers' Council.

You may not agree with me that the C.P.I.'s past support for the Stalinist suppression of the workers of Eastern Europe is a reflection of the long-term degeneration of the party but can there be a proper discussion on the events of the last year in isolation from the party's history on these events?

I believe that on the basis of its formal affiliation to the October Revolution the C.P.I. has been able to attract honest militants to its ranks, But these militants become confused when faced with the reality of peaceful co-existence.

Many of you will remember the long strike by cement workers in the twenty-six counties in 1970. The strikers were joined by rank and file trade unionists, including C.P.I. members, in attempting, mostly successfully, to stop the importation of blackleg cement.

BALTIC EXCHANGE CHAMBERS,
24, ST. MARY AXE,
LONDON, E.C.3.

24th April, 1970.

M HENRY THOMPSON,
Cnl Importer, Moville, Co. Donegal, SIRE.

In alt with
POLISH COALING & TRADING CO., LTD.

M.V. "FRANCE" C/P, 6.4.70 Cement - Gdynia /Moville 520 tons Polish Portland Cement corresponding to B.S. 12/1958 @ 160/-, per metric ton. C & P Moville	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: right;">£4,160</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> </tr> </table>		£4,160	-	-						
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Invoice showing proof of Polish Stalinists scabbing.

Behind their backs the "socialist" Government of Poland was scabbing on the strikers and sending cement through the little used port of Moville, Co. Donegal. When the C.P.I. leaders were presented with the evidence, including copies of the Invoice and Bill of Lading, they denounced them as forgeries.

Can a Marxist movement be built in Ireland with these methods? Obviously not. But it can only be built by analysing what the lies and cover-ups, which objectively aid imperialism, reveal about the class character of the C.P.I. leadership.

The class enemy have declared that what is happening in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe is "the end of Marxism, the failure of socialism". We Trotskyists vigorously refute this. It is not socialism but Stalinism that is exploding.

Stalinism did not vanish with Stalin's death. It is embodied in the bureaucratic castes and in the theories of socialism in one country and peaceful co-existence. "Socialism in one country has always, in practice, meant socialism in no other country and finds its expression in Gorbachev's promotion of the status quo, "one world, two systems".

In the past when Trotskyists criticized the bureaucratic

dictatorships we were accused of helping the cause of capitalist restoration. But it is, of course, the Stalinist bureaucracy which has opened the door to the monopolies, prepared the way for the attempted pauperisation of the working class of Eastern Europe and put at risk the conquests of the October Revolution.

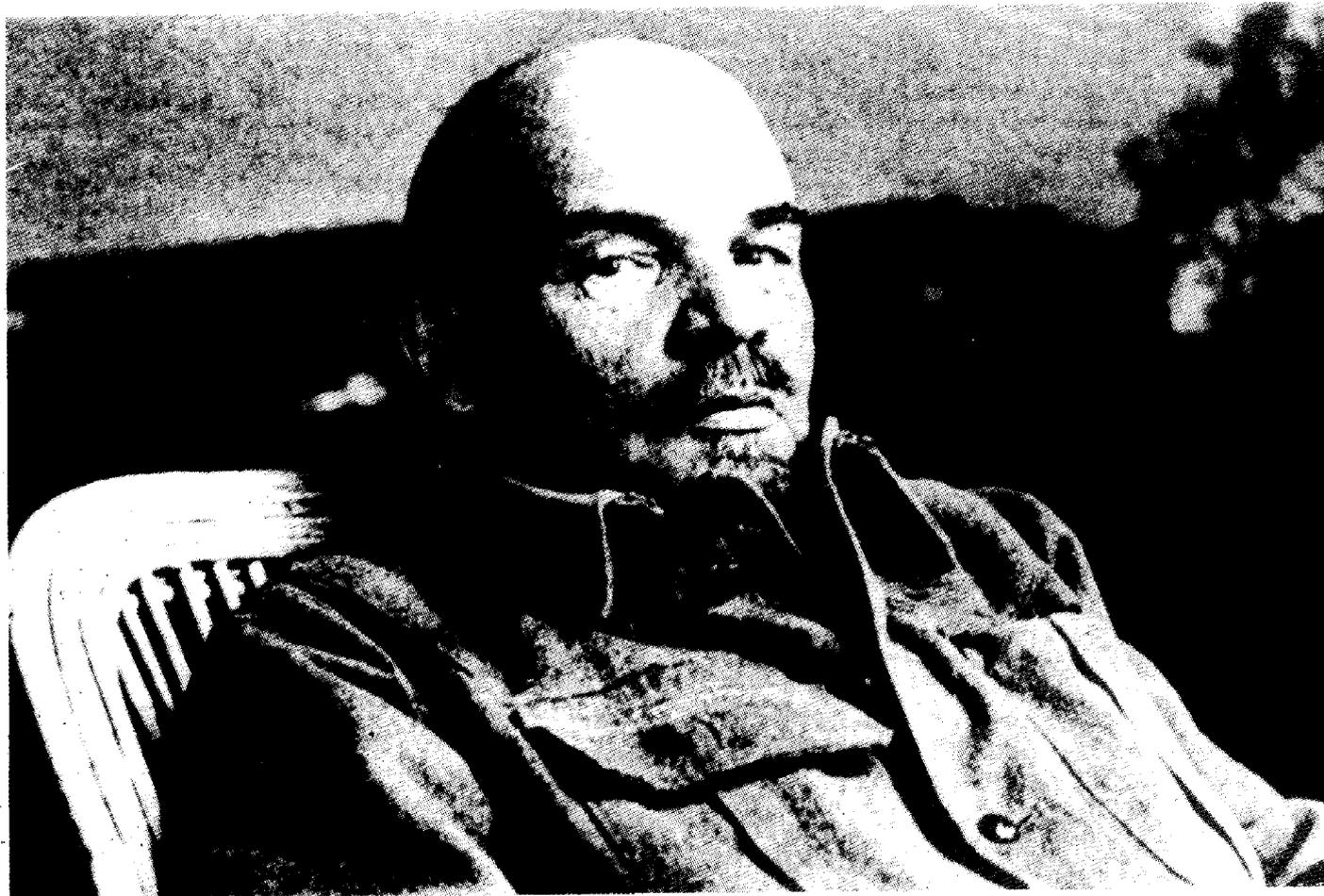
Most of you will have joined the Communist Party because you wished to defend and extend the gains of 1917. How can this be done to-day?. The responsibility for it lies not solely with the Soviet workers but involves the international working class.

But the fight against imperialism also involves a fight against the Stalinist leaderships of the Communist Parties of the world.

It is more than 50 years since Trotsky and his followers recorded the final abandonment of Marxism by the Stalinists and proceeded to found the Fourth International. It is among the followers of Lenin and Trotsky, in the fight to build the Fourth International, that the fight for Marxism is to-day concentrated.

If you really want to be a communist it is your responsibility to raise these issues and fight for clarification. We are more than willing to help in this necessary discussion.

Yours fraternally,
JOHN STEELE,
Socialist Revolutionary Group of Ireland.



Lenin, although he was a dying man, took up the fight against the growing bureaucracy. He appealed to Trotsky to join him in his last struggle.

WHAT IS MARXISM?

This article was written a few years ago by a Republican prisoner. Its contents formed the framework for education classes in the jail and the author was part of the group of prisoners who wrote the important book "Questions of History, Part 1". Published by Sinn Fein Education Dept., this dealt with the period from Wolfe Tone to the Republican Congress (1934). Part 2 has yet to be published. The emphasis in the article is as in the original.

The very first obstacle one usually encounters when mention is made of Marxism is, But what has that to do with Ireland? Why is that? When we analyse the latter question we may find it is due to our militaristic heritage. I never cease to wonder at such insular thinking. Throughout our history we witness courageous struggles/wars but all have failed! Why?

It could possibly be because "Ireland has never received from republicanism what is most needed, namely a coherent, constantly developing social and political philosophy. We have never been blessed with those who can flesh out the basic premises of republicanism to provide a rationale for consistent political as well as military action through time: Sean O Hegarty;" If our aim is to create a socialist republic then it is imperative that we engage in a revolutionary struggle and not solely a national liberation war which expressed itself through a political and cultural nationalism. A revolutionary struggle will entail correcting past errors which ... resulted in the neglect of political action as one means of promoting Irish unity ... This neglect in turn prevented republicans from assuming a position of leadership in social life from which the people could be organised and their political consciousness aroused. It is essential, in recognising the above statement, that we as committed republican socialists become fully aware that the transition to socialism, to a socialist republic, requires demands of leadership of all involved in the struggle and in permanent tension with the need for mass action and popular control so as to breathe life into the revolutionary process and to keep the movement honest and with the people, ie "radical", thus safeguarding a repeat of 1922 or any compromise of our goal.

Another objection one commonly encounters against Marxism is its internationalist blend. Why? Is it that our ideal of socialism is of a national variety, ie Nazi? If not, then it is international. We have much to learn from looking towards other countries, especially third world countries. When we look upon our comrades in Nicaragua we can learn how they successfully involved themselves in the dual function of military resistance whilst furnishing the leadership necessary to raise the level of awareness among the people.

Because of our concentration on militarism we had for too long been wandering in a political wilderness, isolated from the daily life and concerns of the nation. We were unable to challenge or offer a viable alternative to the existing state in Ireland. This in turn weakened the appeal and credibility of the movement as a whole... Because we lacked a contemporary social and political philosophy and we were thus unable to think or act outside the military sphere and this in turn destroyed the possibility of welding the people together on a broad front of integrated military and political action.

The Sandinistas are presently involved in the process of trying to give their cadres a theoretical grounding in the Marxist tradition as a necessary under-girding for their practice. Unfortunately the most readily available version of that tradition lies twisted out of recognisable shape in Eastern Europe and it is usually the degenerative form which is thrown up to those who propagate in favour of a sound social and political philosophy. But we should be aware of this and struggle as the Nicaraguans do in order to find our own voice on the terrain of Marxism. We need to study our history and our present reality as Marxists. "We have to study marxism as Nicaraguans," said the Nicaraguan writer and activist Ricardo Morales Aviles.

But to the question of What is Marxism? Basically it is a social and political philosophy. All doctrines or principles are inter-related and altogether forming an independent and largely self-sufficient intellectual structure. Some of the doctrines are basic, others of lesser importance while sharing a way of looking at and reacting to the world. Marxists differ in many matters of interpretation and evaluation, as in republicanism, but like all intellectual structures it must be subject to change with the advance of knowledge and understanding.

Marxism embraces a theory of the history and destiny of humanity which is simple in its main outline and certainly far-reaching in its implications. It is a theory unlike mysticism, endowed with reason, but like all such theories it cannot be proved in any precise or scientific fashion. It is a guide to life and social practice and in the long run its validity can only be judged by its fruits. Marxism is not a mere theory. It is a guide to action. It does not merely seek to explain the world but to change the world and for revolutionary Marxists there exists no gap between theory and practice. The essence of Marxism lies in the party of the working class, the highest expression of the unity of thought and action, theory and practice. The best, the most advanced of the workers uniting in a revolutionary party which leads the oppressed people and class to the overthrow of the old order. This is the very essence of Marxism. Connolly was beginning to understand that in 1916. The experience of the class struggle and the fight against imperialism, and the treachery of the socialist leaders in 1914 were teaching him his greatest lesson! (Marx, Engels and Lenin on Ireland).

Class is a concept which is absolutely fundamental to Marxist thinking. It is a relationship of exploitation. It is the social expression of the fact of exploitation, the way in which exploitation is embodied in a social structure, and by exploitation is meant the appropriation of part of the product of labour of others in a commodity producing society. This is the appropriation of what Marx called "surplus value". Class is essentially a relationship and "a particular class is a group of persons

in a community identified by their position in the whole system of social production defined above all by their relationship" primarily in terms of the degree of control "to the conditions of production" that is to say to the means and labour of production, and to other classes.

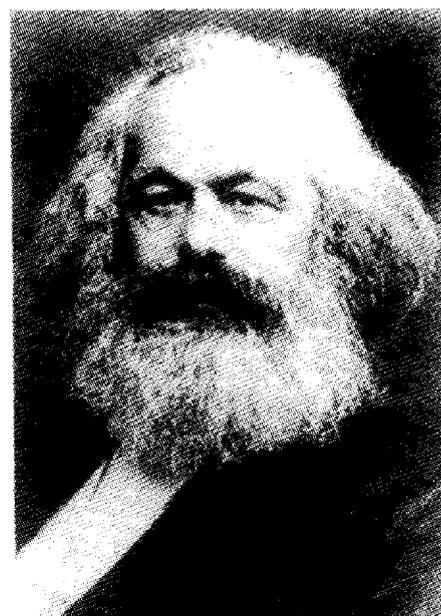
When we analyse class in the Irish context we find it is Brit and multi-national neo-imperialism who are in control of the means of production. The relationship of the working class north and south, nationalists and loyalists, is one of exploiter and exploited. James Connolly, himself a scientific socialist, was well aware of this prior to the geographical partition of Ireland. In his appeal to the working class he wrote: "Men and women consider! If your lot is a difficult one now, subject as you are to the rule of a gang who keep up the fires of religious bigotry in order to divide the workers and make united progress impossible; if your lot is a difficult one, even when supported by the progressive and tolerant forces of all Ireland; how difficult and intolerable it will be when you are cut off from Ireland and yet are regarded as alien to Great Britain and left at the tender mercies of a class that knows no mercy, of a mob poisoned by ignorant hatred of everything national and democratic . . ." (James Connolly, Selected Works).

How sensible Connolly's appeal seems to some of us now! We who have sixty years in which to reflect should ask, why did the working class in the Six counties not heed Connolly, not to fight in their own interests rather than side with their class enemies? Individuals constituting a given class may or may not be wholly or partly conscious of their own identity and common interest as a class and they may or may not feel antagonism towards members of other classes as such class conflict ("class struggle") is essentially the fundamental relationship between classes involving exploitation and resistance to it. But not necessarily, either class consciousness or collective activity in common, political or otherwise, although their features are likely to supervene when a class has reached a certain stage of development and become what Marx called "a class for itself" - the slaves of antiquity "and of later times" fit perfectly into this scheme. Not only do Marx and Engels refer repeatedly to ancient slaves as a class; in a whole series of passages the slave in antiquity is given precisely the position of the free-wage worker under capitalism and of the serf in medieval times, as the relationship involving class conflict, the essence of which is exploitation, the appropriation of a surplus from the primary producer, proletariat, serf or slave. That is the essence of class. This theoretical position removes all difficulties in regarding slaves as a class. It is also strikingly helpful in the modern world. Its application to Ireland is obvious. The fact that the Irish working class, north and south, are very far from being uniformly self-conscious of a political unit becomes irrelevant. What is of significance, however, is that the governments concerned are overwhelmingly on the side of the exploiting class and are eager, insofar that government can fulfil its objective without driving itself out of office at the next election, to keep up the profits that go primarily to the exploiter class while keeping down the wages of workers.

Marxist theory concerns the doctrine that all civilisation up to now rests on and at the same time is completed by the exploitation of human beings. This according to Marxism came, not when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden but when labour became productive enough to make it worthwhile for one human being to enslave another. Looking back into history we find the Celts held slaves but not as property slaves - ie wealth was not measured by how many slaves were possessed. In fact slaves became an integral part of the clan and were held in common.

"Property" whatever the physical form only became capital in the economic sense when it was used to employ workers who in the course of producing things also produced surplus value" (Introduction to Marxism - Emile Burns).

With that act, society was split into exploiters and exploited. Marxists, however, do not hanker for the paradise lost of primitive communism. Civilisation was impossible without exploitation. Unless the few rose on the backs of the many we could not have had learning, art and culture. But original sin was at work all the



Marx and Engels the founders of scientific socialism, and Lenin the leader of the first workers' state.

same. Civilisation was necessarily tainted. Societies were inevitably divided against themselves. Individuals were ineluctably dehumanised. All this was inevitable. That is to say, so long as the productivity of human labour was so low that civilisation could flourish only if social surplus was concentrated in the hands of a few, so luxury, wealth and civilisation at one pole were necessarily matched by poverty, misery and degradation at the other.



'The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour. They cannot be dissevered.'
James Connolly (1869 - 1916)

It was into such a world that capitalism was born - capitalism, the latest and most developed form of exploitative class society, a society based not on slavery but on free wage labour, a society in which the social surplus is appropriated by the owners of the means of production in the form of profit, interest and rent. It turned out that this capitalism was incomparably the most productive and in that sense progressive, society the world has ever seen, so much so indeed that for the first time ever it made possible a society in which exploitation and the concentration of the surplus in the hands of a few was no longer a necessary condition for civilisation. Now humanity faced a great divide, a prospect without precedent. Would it go forward to a new and higher non-exploitative form of civilisation or would it fail to seize the new opportunities opening up before it? Marx himself had no doubt about the answer. From his earliest writings he believed that while capitalism was performing miracles in developing society's productive forces it would never be able to make use of them for the benefit of the workers who, he thought, were on the way to becoming the majority of the population. There were, according to Marx, inherent contradictions between the rapidly growing forces of production and the prevailing social relations of production based on private ownership of the means of production. This contradiction takes the form of increasingly severe economic crises and in these crises there broke out an epidemic that in all

earlier epochs would have seemed an absurdity - the epidemic of over-production (Marx - Communist Manifesto).

Such crises push the workers further into a state of insecurity and misery. What happens is that there is over-production. Therefore new production declines and workers are unemployed. Their unemployment means a further decline in the market demand so more factories slow down production sooner or later and Marx tended to think sooner. The workers would become conscious of their real class interest, organise themselves into a revolutionary force, seize power from the capitalists and begin the transition to a communist society from which exploitation and classes would finally be abolished. It hasn't worked out that way. Workers in the more developed countries were able to make enough gains by struggle within the system to forestall the emergence of a revolutionary consciousness. A significant part of those gains came at the expense of dependent and exploited countries of the third world which were thereby prevented from using their resources for their own independent development. This has taken on a new dimension in the past few decades, with the increasing export of capital from advanced countries to less developed areas, in particular those which in the absence of democracy can be subjected to a high degree of control and coercion over the workforce. As a result the centre of revolutionary struggle shifted from the advanced countries to the retarded parts of the capitalist world. This explains the origins and general character of all the major revolutions - Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua etc - of the twentieth century. In none of these countries were the proletariat in Marx's sense sufficiently large or politically developed to lead the revolution or shape the post-revolutionary society. These tasks were assumed by tightly organised revolutionary parties drawn from various segments of the population and without any clear class base.

In the course of subsequent development new ruling groups with increasingly class-like characteristics emerged, no longer dominated and programmed by the economic power and narrow class interests of former exploiters. These new regimes were able to legitimise their rule through introducing basic reforms affecting land ownership, employment rights, social security, education, and health favourable to the interests of the masses, without, however, renouncing their privileged positions or committing themselves to policies aimed at the eventual achievement of an egalitarian, classless society. Clearly, if we view these past revolutionary societies in the context of the Marxist world view sketched above, they represent progress compared to what went before but still look less like the decisive break with the past many Marxists once thought the Russian Revolution would prove to be.

The basic dilemma posed by capitalism thus remains unresolved: humanity now has the means to eliminate its age-old division of exploiter and exploited, but it seems as far from achieving this elusive goal. In the advanced countries there are no signs of an emerging homogeneous proletarian majority. Stagnation and demoralisation deepen. New revolutionary impulses have yet to appear in the under-developed countries. On the other hand the absolute need for revolutionary change is growing. No system is more telling than the emergence of liberation theology and movements giving practical expression to this need are taking shape. If allowed to develop

according to their inner logic these movements would soon generate a series of inter-related and interacting revolutions radically transforming global outlook.

But free development according to inner logic is precisely what is being denied to these revolutionary movements. The barriers of course are being created and continuously strengthened by the entrenched and enormously powerful classes especially in the core capitalist countries that benefit from the continuation of the exploitative relationships of the global status quo.

This is the underlying situation that dominates the contemporary world scene. Everything and everybody is involved, even those who think they can opt out; theirs is simply the passive way of supporting the status quo. How should Marxists react?

The answer is not to be found in Marx any more than we can hope to find the answer to our specific problems in Marx, but it is helpful - and maybe it is even the essence of being a marxist - to ask how Marx himself would react if he were alive. The answer could be that we must do everything within our power to give aid and comfort to revolutionary forces that are striving to overthrow the global system of capitalism, exploitation under present circumstances. These forces practically exist only in the under-developed countries and since what is

barring their progress and in many cases threatening their very existence is the counter-revolutionary policies of the ruling classes. This means doing everything we can to frustrate their policies in the short term and to change them in the long term. It also means (1) a whole-hearted willingness to make tactical alliances with anybody and everybody anywhere, in the advanced countries, in the under-developed countries, in the post-revolutionary societies - who share our short-term goals and (2) a determined effort to convert all those we can reach to our long-term goals.

It is necessary to be clear about what kinds of actions and aims make sense. We cannot make capitalism work against exploitation - that is the bottom. But if the victims of exploitation are determined, conscious and well organised enough they can impose limits on exploitation and oblige the exploiters to make concessions. Strong unions can give real benefits to workers; bourgeois democracy is not altogether a sham and can be employed tactically. There are periods, providing the revolutionary leadership exists, when the democratic process can be used to force governments to meet at least some of the most urgent needs of the majority, ie work, housing, health care etc. It isn't easy, and such gains are always precarious under capitalism.

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Reply to "WHAT IS MARXISM?"

by Robert Martin

The Socialist Revolutionary Group has many differences with the concept of Marxism as expounded in the previous article. But it would be very wrong to restrict the criticisms to an analysis of conclusions, that is, to merely refute a wrong opinion and counterpose our political standpoint. I believe that it is essential to attempt to understand the way in which the ideas in the article were reached and what factors shaped the views.

Written in the difficult, restrictive conditions of jail, "What is Marxism?" is an honest attempt to get to grips with Marxism by someone representing the most class-conscious elements of the Republican Movement. It reflects both the theoretical weakness of the workers' movement in Ireland and the isolation of the working class organizations from many of the important struggles against imperialism.

As an active participant in these struggles and attempting to reach a theoretical understanding of the events; the writer understands that the so-called "Marxism" of the Communist Party of Ireland and the Workers Party which preaches the peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism in Ireland does not correspond to his own experiences. He is therefore forced to restrict his analysis of Marxism within the theoretical limits of republicanism and this is reflected in the article.

"What is Marxism?" begins by looking at the reasons behind what is called the "Failure" of "courageous struggles/wars" in Ireland. This is an early indication of the discontent (now deeper and more widespread) within the rank and file of the Republican movement as Sinn Fein policies were moving to the right. Faced with mobilising the support generated by the 1981 Hunger Strikes or concentrating on their electoral policy, the reformist politics of the Adams leadership were driving the movement down the latter road.

The dilemma of those in the Republican movement calling themselves Marxists is then highlighted. "Ireland has never received from Republicanism what is most needed, namely a coherent, constantly developing social and political philosophy."

But it is not sufficient, not the Marxist way, just to accept this statement as a factual truth. It misses out the conflict and contradictions which exist inside Irish Republicanism and which have surfaced at crucial historic periods - most significantly prior to the 1934 Republican Congress and, albeit in a more distorted form, in 1970.

There have always been those in the Republican movement who advocated "a revolutionary struggle and not solely a national liberation war which expressed itself through a political and cultural nationalism". But they inevitably came into conflict with the limits imposed on the struggle by the class character of Sinn Fein.

"What is Marxism?" correctly states that the theory of class and class struggle is fundamental to Marxism thinking and that the central idea in this theory is exploitation. However, it fails to link this conception to the author's criticisms of Republicanism.

As politics is concentrated economics, all political

parties have a class character, expressing economic interests. They are, and cannot help but be, expressions of and instruments in the class struggle, serving the interests of either the ruling class or the working class. Their class character is determined not by their social composition but by which of the two major classes they serve.

When Marxists define Sinn Fein as a petty-bourgeois party we do not mean that they serve the interests of the petty bourgeoisie (or middle-class): the middle class has no independent class interests. We mean, rather, that they manipulate between the classes. They speak for socialism and the working class but their programme reflects the interests of capitalism and the nationalist bourgeoisie.

The anachronism of Sinn Fein is that the Irish native Ruling class has proved unable, in this epoch of finance capital, to develop a national capitalism against the monopolies. Sinn Fein is given life mainly by the inability of imperialism to concede many fundamental aspects of bourgeois democracy, including the unity of the nation.

The article is correct to emphasise the essential internationalism of Marxism and the independent thinking of the author is revealed when he states that the Marxist tradition has been "twisted out of recognisable shape in Eastern Europe." But, while the idealization of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan revolution is understandable, particularly at the time when the article was written, it displays a straying from the Marxist method of analysis.

The Sandinistas tied themselves to the Stalinist theory of revolution in stages; first the bourgeois democratic revolution and then, at some indefinable stage in the future, the second stage, socialism, would be implemented. The first stage involved an alliance with all so-called "progressive" forces in strengthening the bourgeois state. While the Reagan Government gave financial and military aid to the "contras" the Sandinistas continued paying the foreign debt to U.S. Banks.

Inherent in this Popular Front policy was the necessity to attack any movement advocating the independence of the working class. The Sandinistas physically repressed both the Trotskyists of the Simon Bolivar Brigade and advanced workers who were demanding the nationalization of the land and workers control.

As with Sinn Fein, it is the class character of the Sandinistas which made them defend the capitalist state. In the era of the decay of capitalism the most elementary democratic rights of the working class are under attack. And, as with Ireland the completion of the tasks of national liberation and democratic revolution in Nicaragua can only be achieved under the leadership of the working class.

The references to Nicaragua and liberation theology highlight what I believe is a major weakness in the "what is Marxism?" article, the separation of correct theoretical analysis from actual practice. There is an obvious contradiction between a belief in the Sandinistas ability to develop Marxism and the section which correctly, says that "the essence of

Marxism lies in the party of the working class, the highest expression of the unity of thought and action, theory and practice. The best, the most advanced of the workers uniting in a revolutionary party which leads the oppressed people and class to the overthrow of the old order."

This concept of a vanguard party of professional revolutionaries was, of course, developed by Lenin and led to his most characteristic and unique achievement, the Bolshevik Party. It finds its expression to-day in the fight of the Workers International to rebuild the Fourth International.

While I would dispute that Connolly was beginning to understand in 1916 the need for a revolutionary party his life's work was based on Marxism and the leading role of the working class in the era of imperialism. The quote from Connolly taken along with the question "Why did the working class in the Six Counties not heed Connolly to fight in their own interests rather than side with their class enemies?" is refreshingly clear.

This method, of analysing workers in struggle against the bosses, contrasts sharply with the predominant Republican view which sees the Protestant working class in the Six Counties as inherently sectarian because they are not attracted to the Republican brand of nationalism, based on the degenerate capitalist system.

Recently, for example, the "left" Republicans of the Irish Republican Socialist Party after a convoluted discussion in their paper have "equated the Harland and Wolff workforce, given its inherent sectarian structure, as a scab force antagonistic to the interests of the whole of the Irish working class".

It is noticeable that "What is Marxism?" omits any mention of Marx's emphasis on philosophy and dialectical materialism. This is interesting as it reflects the prevailing method in Ireland of idealism, that is of attempting to adapt the material world to ideals of "reason" and "freedom". Marx's outlook was a materialist one, seeing ideas and consciousness itself, as reflections of the material world which exists independently of human thinking. Dialectics sees the world, not as a quantity of fixed things or objects, defined and distinguished from one another by their external characteristics, but as a

series of mutually interconnected processes.

Marx grasped that socialism and the socialist movement are the products of the industrial working class created by the actual process of capitalism, and not the product of "reason". This materialist outlook is one of the fundamental bases of Marxism. For the working class to emancipate itself and the whole of humanity it is necessary to start from an objective understanding of its real position in society, and to grasp the actual material processes which drive capitalist society to crisis and revolution.

Marx thus says in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party". "The theories of the communist are not in any way based upon ideas or principles discovered or established by this or that universal reformer. They serve merely to express in general terms the concrete circumstances of an actually existing class struggle, of an historical movement that is going on under our very eyes".

There are other points raised in the article which need to be discussed and developed at length. Not least among these is the statement that "the centre of revolutionary struggle has shifted from the advanced countries to the retarded parts of the capitalist world". And the view that "Bourgeois democracy is not altogether a sham" raises the question of the class nature of democracy and why democratic rights are now under severe attack in all the advanced capitalist countries.

Hopefully, further articles in Marxist Forum will explore these issues. The important thing, as "What is Marxism?" stresses is to see Marxism as a guide to action and not as an academic dogma. Seeing Marxism as a unified revolutionary theory is in conflict with the methods of the pseudo-Marxists like Bew and Patterson who attempt to give a sophisticated left-wing gloss to the existing class structures in Ireland. Again from the Communist Manifesto:

"All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting the society at large to their conditions of appropriation. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of private property".

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Solidarity With Des Warren

Denis Warren was one of the pickets jailed at Shrewsbury following the national building workers' strike of 1972. His trial on conspiracy charges was part of the attempt by the Tory government of the day to destroy basic trade union rights.

The incoming Labour government of 1974 kept Des Warren in prison for the full three years of his sentence. Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, turned down the requests for his release. The TUC leadership refused to lift a finger and rejected demands for a general strike to free him. The leaders of the Communist Party, of which he was then a member, sabotaged the campaign.

Des suffered permanent injury to his health from drugs administered to him in jail and now needs daily medical care. A trust has been established to assist him and, importantly, Des would like to receive messages and letters from comrades involved in the class struggle. He developed a particular interest in Ireland and would like especially to hear from those incarcerated in the fight against British imperialism. Letters should be sent to

DES WARREN

c/o National Union of Miners

REDHILLS

Co. Durham.

We reprint below an excerpt from his book, "The Key to my Cell", which details the building workers strike and his imprisonment.



Photo taken in Leicester prison showing the effects of the liquid cosh.

EMERGENCE OF PRIVATE ARMIES

Now turn to General Sir Walter Walker who said: "Do you mean to say that if the situation spilled over into this country we would adopt the same weak-kneed, wet (shades of Thatcher), velvet-gloved, low profile we do in Northern Ireland? Of course we would not. If we are going to prevent London becoming like Belfast, then we must pull our finger out."

Then there is Colonel David Stirling, founder of the Special Air Services (SAS), who turned his hand to building a private army called Great Britain 75 for the express purpose of smashing the trade unions. In a secret memorandum to his fellow conspirators he stated: "I have talked to individuals of varying rank in the armed services and in the Territorial Army, local authorities, directors of some major companies and to some senior members of the late Conservative government."

To see where we are today, we have to trace the events since Paris 1968 when the Wilson government asked Kitson to make recommendations to defend British capitalism from "subversion". The reformists were confident that "their man" - based on his bloody record in Kenya and Malaya - would not be squeamish if the solution proved to be "distasteful". Successive governments have since used the north of Ireland to test and perfect the methods of mass repression when a Paris-type situation arose in Britain. And all the time they knew that it would be inevitable.

In each of the ten prisons I was kept in between December 1973 and August 1976 I noted that there were prison officers who had either been, or were going to do a stint, in the north of Ireland. It does not take much deduction to work out why. Both the army and the police have gained vast experience in policing methods, arrests, searches, torture and interrogation in the north, but what was lacking was on-the-job knowledge of running prisons like the Long Kesh and Armagh concentration camps. Although British officers are not lacking in the art of harassment, intimidation, victimisation, assault and drug abuse, they need to know how to handle large numbers of political prisoners as will be the situation in Britain in the event of a military coup. Hence the tours of duty to gain the necessary "knowhow" for when the time comes.

How can Communist Party members square this reality with the "peaceful road"? I did not resign from the CP to duck out of the fight for a socialist Britain, but in order to take up that fight in an organised, disciplined and theoretical manner.

How is it possible for the Communist Party to conduct a struggle against capitalism when they are advocating collaboration with the very forces which we have to defeat in order to go forward to socialism?

THE STRUGGLE IN IRELAND

Another very important factor in my decision to leave the Communist Party was its policy on Ireland. In March 1977 I had the chance to show my solidarity with the Republican movement when I was invited to the north to take part in a demonstration over the H-Block issue. I stayed for four days in the Turf Lodge and the Creggan in Derry. In Belfast I was at the home of an internee, his wife and five children, the youngest being a 14 year-

old girl. It was here that I learned of a particular experience that this family had undergone at the hands of the occupying forces when they came to arrest his daughter. This account left a deep impression on me because I had a 14 year-old daughter at the time and I could imagine the horror I would feel under similar circumstances.

In this area the army just go in with complete brutality to wreck homes and assault innocent people. What possible reason could they have to come to arrest a 14 year-old girl? Wherever we moved in the streets we were searched from head to toe by British soldiers. I had experienced this in prison, but here it was taking place as part of the daily oppression by the forces of the state.

In the street I stayed in Derry there were six men away - on the blanket in the British government's concentration camp. I had a conversation with a girl of 23 whose brother was also on the blanket and she gave me an account of her torture at the hands of the British interrogators. The torture lasted several days. She was ordered to sit on a chair that wasn't there and told to eat a ping-pong ball. All this is to humiliate the prisoner. They broke her wrist, her lower arm, her upper arm

and dislocated her shoulder. They knocked her to the ground and kneeled on her kidneys and she was also sexually assaulted.

How could I possibly square this reality with the cynical demand of the Communist Party for a Bill of Rights? It is so ludicrous that it isn't even worth wasting time or breath on. It is just an excuse for doing nothing. Does CP think that their Bill of Rights could be an exemption certificate for those who are pulled before the British torturers? Do they think a Bill of Rights in Britain will stop Thatcher from carrying out similar measures here? Don't they know that the ruling class has an Emergency Powers Act which can be invoked by the Privy Council to abolish all democratic rights and liberties and give complete powers to the state?

Under Thatcher we are losing a whole legion of rights - the right to a proper education, a health service, decent housing, social services and union rights. Will a Bill of Rights stop this Tory attack? It is plain to me that the only way forward to defend these rights is the socialist revolution and nothing else.



Young workers on the plinth in Trafalgar Square at the end of the Wigan March

FROM THE ARCHIVES

LESSONS OF THE EVENTS IN DUBLIN

by Leon Trotsky

Sir Roger Casement, formerly a prominent official in the British colonial service, but by conviction a revolutionary Irish nationalist who acted as intermediary between Germany and the rising in Ireland has been sentenced to death. "I prefer to be standing in the dock to being in the prosecutor's place," he cried before the sentence was passed on him, with its statement, in accordance with the time-honoured pious formula, that Casement was to be "hanged by the neck until dead," after which God was invited to have mercy on his soul.

Will the sentence be carried out? This question must be giving Asquith and Lloyd George some anxious hours. To execute Casement would mean making more difficult the situation of the opportunist, purely parliamentary Irish Nationalist Party led by Redmond, which is ready to sign in the blood of the Dublin rebels a new compromise with the government of the United Kingdom. Reprieving Casement, however, after so many executions have already taken place, would mean openly "showing indulgence to a highly placed traitor." British social-imperialists of the Hyndman type are strumming their demagogic tunes on this string, with real hooligan blood-lust. But however Casement's personal fate may be settled, the sentence passed on him marks the close of this dramatic episode of the rising in Ireland.

So far as the purely military operations of the rebels were concerned, the government, as we know, proved to be rather easily the master of the situation. A nationwide movement, such as the nationalist dreamers had conceived of, completely failed to occur. The Irish countryside did not rise. The Irish bourgeoisie, together with the upper, more influential stratum of the Irish intelligentsia, held aloof. Those who fought and died were urban workers, along with some revolutionary enthusiasts from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia.

The historical basis for a national revolution has disappeared even in backward Ireland. Insofar as the Irish movements in the last century were popular in character, they always drew their strength from the social antagonism between the rightless and starving pauper-farmers and their all-powerful British landlords. But whereas for the landlords Ireland was merely an object of exploitation by agrarian plundering, for British imperialism it was a necessary guarantee of domination of the seas. In a pamphlet written on the eve of the war, Casement, speculating on arousing Germany's interest, showed that an independent Ireland would mean "freedom of the seas" and a mortal blow to Britain's naval supremacy. This is true, inasmuch as an "independent" Ireland could exist only as an advance post of some imperialist state hostile to Britain, and as its naval base against British command of the seaways.

It was Gladstone who first set the military and imperial interests of Britain quite clearly higher than the interests of the Anglo-Irish landlords, and inaugurated a broad scheme of agrarian legislation whereby landlords' estates were trans-

ferred, through the instrumentality of the state, to the farmers of Ireland - with, of course, generous compensation to the landlords. Anyhow, after the land reforms of 1881-1903 the farmers were transformed into conservative petty proprietors, whose attention the green flag of national independence could no longer distract from their small holdings. The surplus of Ireland's educated population flowed away in their masses to the cities of Britain, as lawyers, journalists, shop assistants, and so on, and in this they were, in the main, lost to the "national cause." The independent Irish bourgeoisie of trade and industry, to the extent that such a class was formed in the last few decades, at once took up a fighting stance toward the young Irish proletariat, and thereby removed itself from the national-revolutionary camp into that of imperial possibilism and Irish "conciliation."

The young working class of Ireland, formed as it was in an atmosphere saturated with heroic memories of national rebellion, and coming into conflict with the egoistically narrow and imperially arrogant trade unionism of Britain, has naturally wavered between nationalism and syndicalism, and is always ready to link these two conceptions together in its revolutionary consciousness. It has attracted to itself some young intellectuals and certain nationalist enthusiasts, who, in their turn have brought about the ascendancy of the green flag over the red in the labour movement. Thus, the "national revolution," in Ireland too, has amounted in practice to a workers' revolt and Casement's markedly isolated position in the movement merely gives sharper emphasis to this fact.

In a wretched, shameful article Plekhanov wrote recently of the "harmfulness" of the Irish rising to the cause of freedom and rejoiced that the Irish people had "to their hon-



1937: Trotsky arrives in Mexico with his wife Natalya. he spent the rest of his life in Mexico building the Fourth International

our," understood this and had not supported the revolutionary madmen. Only given complete patriotic softening of the brain can one imagine that the Irish peasants declined to take part in the revolution out of regard for the international situation and thereby saved the "honour" of Ireland. Actually, they were guided merely by the blind egoism typical of farmers and their utter indifference to everything that happens beyond the bounds of their bits of land. For this reason and this alone they made possible the swift victory of the London government over the heroic defenders of the Dublin barricades.

The experiment of an Irish national rebellion, in which Casement represented, with undoubted personal courage, the outworn hopes and methods of the past, is over and done with. But the historical role of the Irish proletariat is only beginning. Already it has brought its class anger against militarism and imperialism into this rising, under an out-of-date flag. This anger will not now subside. On the contrary, it will find echoes all over Britain. Scottish soldiers smashed down the barricades of Dublin. But in Scotland itself the miners have rallied round the red flag raised by MacLean and his comrades.

The hangman's work done by Lloyd George will be sternly avenged by those very workers whom the Hendersons are now trying to chain to the bloody war chariot of imperialism.

Writing two months earlier in the Berner Tagwacht, Radek also had argued that the land reform in Ireland had removed the social base for an Irish national revolt. The following is excerpted from his analysis of the Easter Rising. (Emphasis as in the original)

THE SONG IS PLAYED OUT by Karl Radek

The thunder of cannon has solemnly laid to rest a spectre that has kept the rulers of Britain awake nights throughout history since the eighteenth century. As something that could endanger Britain's international position, *the Irish question is played out.*

The Irish question was an *agrarian question*. The nobility's hunger for cultivable land drove England to conquer Ireland. To this reason for the conquest later came an additional cause to maintain British rule over the emerald isle: an independent Ireland could endanger at any time *Britain's sea lanes* just as Britain itself endangers Germany's. Yet the oppression of Ireland by the landlords did not lessen, but became more intense, as it came to be accompanied by the suppression of any industrial development.

In the 1880's agrarian unrest surged fiercely across Ireland. The British bourgeoisie felt compelled to grant concessions to the Irish peasants. It was all the more able to do this now that it exploited the entire world. After the British bourgeoisie had granted Ireland a number of political concessions . . . it laid its axe against the roots of British landlord rule in Ireland . . .

The peasants, who had until then constituted the social basis of every anti-British movement, were appeased, and turned their attention to questions of agriculture and of farm-

ers' cooperative banks. "If such actions as boycott, mutilation of cattle, political murder, and refusal to pay rent have not entirely disappeared, they have not for some time been a factor in political life . . . Today, after the great land reform, the Catholic population of Ireland consists not of famished malcontents, but overwhelmingly of small farmers, who are inclined around the world to a calm and conservative attitude." So wrote Professor Dibellins in his basic treatise on Britain's problem in Ireland published as the war broke out. His assessment only confirms what we heard during the Dublin unrest from such a competent judge of Britain as Comrade T. Rothstein.

Meanwhile the Irish nationalist movement has acquired *a new social foundation*. The economic ascent of the Irish peasants also promoted the *development of the urban petty bourgeoisie*, the intellectuals, who serve the peasant population as lawyers, teachers, and journalists. Since the petty bourgeoisie suffers from the competition of British capital, intellectuals began to dream of the complete independence of the country, which would put the government into their hands. Indeed they began to agitate for the establishment of Irish as a national language, which is spoken by perhaps seven per cent of the population and remains at a medieval level of development. This movement, called "Sinn Fein", was a *purely urban petty-bougeois movement*, and although it caused considerable commotion, it had little social backing. When its hopes for German assistance led it to revolt, this amounted only to a putsch that the British government easily disposed of.

The extinguishing of the blaze in Ireland reveals an *aspect of the so-called national question*. A national movement only wields real power when strong class interests stand behind it. In *Poland*, when the nobility gave way to the bourgeoisie, the latter found possibilities for economic development in the Russian Empire, despite the tsarist knout. In the long run the Polish bourgeoisie too, would have been fettered by tsarism, but that would not be grounds for an effort to separate from Russia and establish a state, but for an attempt to be rid of tsarist rule. So it wanted to have nothing to do with an independence struggle.

As soon as the economic interests of the *Irish peasantry* no longer stood opposed to British domination, it deserted the banner of the independence struggle. The peasantry was content to struggle for *home rule*. It was the tragic fate of the adherents of Sinn Fein that they, as petty bourgeois, did not understand this and were seduced by nationalist dreams.

In keeping with its predatory character, the British bourgeoisie will punish them with the gallows for this error. They fall as victims of the imperialist world war. Although the proletariat does not share their ideals, and indeed often confronts them as opponents, yet it will record their blood in the registry of the crimes of those who unleashed the war.

The first issue of Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata, published in October 1916, presented quite a different appraisal of the Irish revolt by Lenin, contained in his article, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up."

THE IRISH REBELLION OF 1916

by V. I. Lenin



The views of the opponents of self-determination lead to the conclusion that the vitality of small nations oppressed by imperialism has already been sapped, that they cannot play any role against imperialism, that support of their purely national aspirations will lead to nothing, etc. The imperialist war of 1914-16 has provided *facts* which refute such conclusions.

The war proved to be an epoch of crisis for the West-European nations, and for imperialism as a whole. Every crisis discards the conventionalities, tears away the outer wrappings, sweeps away the obsolete and reveals the underlying springs and forces. What has it revealed from the standpoint of the movement of oppressed nations? In the colonies there have been a number of attempts at rebellion, which the oppressor nations, naturally did all they could to hide by means of a military censorship. Nevertheless, it is known that in Singapore the British brutally suppressed a mutiny among their Indian troops; that there were attempts at rebellion in French Annam, (see *Nashe Slovo*) and in the German Cameroons (see the Junius pamphlet); that in Europe, on the one hand, there was a rebellion in Ireland, which the "freedom-loving" English, who did not dare to extend conscription to Ireland, suppressed by executions, and, on the other, the Austrian Government passed death sentence on the deputies of the Czech Diet "for treason", and shot whole Czech regiments for the same "crime".

This list is, of course, far from complete. Nevertheless, it proves that, *owing* to the crisis of imperialism, the flames of national revolt have flared up *both* in the colonies and in Europe, and that national sympathies and antipathies have manifested themselves in spite of the Draconian threats and measures of repression. All this before the crisis of imperialism hit its peak: the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie was yet to be undermined (this may be brought about by a war of "attrition" but has not yet happened) and the proletarian movements in the imperialist countries were still very feeble. What will happen when the war has caused complete exhaustion, or when, in one state at least, the power of the bourgeoisie has been shaken under the blows of proletarian struggle, as that of tsarism in 1905?

On May 9, 1916, there appeared in *Berner Tagwacht*, the organ of the Zimmerwald group, including some of the

Leftists, an article on the Irish rebellion entitled "Their Song Is Over" and signed with the initials K.R. It described the Irish rebellion as being nothing more nor less than a "putsch", for, as the author argued, "the Irish question was an agrarian one," the peasants had been pacified by reforms, and the nationalist movement remained only a "purely urban, petty-bourgeois movement, which, notwithstanding the sensation it caused, had not much social backing".

It is not surprising that this monstrously doctrinaire and pedantic assessment coincided with that of a Russian national-liberal Cadet, Mr. A. Kulisher (Rech No.102, April 15, 1916), who also labelled the rebellion "the Dublin putsch".

It is to be hoped that, in accordance with the adage, "it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good", many comrades, who were not aware of the morass they were sinking into by repudiating "self-determination" and by treating the national movements of small nations with disdain, will have their eyes opened by the "accidental" coincidence of opinion held by a Social-Democrat and a representative of the imperialist bourgeoisie!!

The term "putsch", in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses. The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interest, manifested itself, in particular, in a mass Irish National Congress in America (*Vorwärts*, March 20, 1916) which called for Irish independence; it also manifested itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie *and a section of the workers* after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of newspapers, etc. Whoever calls such a rebellion a "putsch" is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon.

To imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary out-bursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc - to imagine all this is to *repudiate social revolution*. So one army lines up in one place and says, "We are for socialism", and another, somewhere else and says, "We are for imperialism", and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could villify the Irish rebellion by calling it a "putsch".

Whoever expects a "pure" social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which *all* the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But *objectively*, the mass movement was breaking the back of tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious workers led it.

The socialist revolution in Europe *cannot* be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will participate in it - without such participation, mass struggle is *impossible*, without it *no* revolution is possible - and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But *objectively* they will attack *capital*, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented, mass struggle, will be able to unite



The scenes as Dubliners welcomed home the released 1916 prisoners - a sharp contrast to the attitude of the public during the Insurrection.



and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts which all hate (though for different reasons!), and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately "purge" itself of petty-bourgeois slag.

Social-Democracy, we read in the Polish theses (I,4), "must utilise the struggle of the young colonial bourgeoisie against European imperialism *in order to sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe*". (Authors' italics.)

Is it not clear that it is least of all permissible to contrast Europe to the colonies in this respect? The struggle of the oppressed nations *in Europe*, a struggle capable of going all the way to insurrection and street fighting, capable of breaking down the iron discipline of the army and martial law, will "sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe" to an infinitely greater degree than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony. A blow delivered against the power of the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal force delivered in Asia or in Africa... The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an *independent* factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the *real* anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene.

The general staffs in the current war are doing their utmost to utilise any national and revolutionary movement in the enemy camp: the Germans utilise the Irish rebellion, the French - the Czech movement, etc. They are acting quite correctly from their own point of view. A serious war would not be treated seriously if advantage were not taken of the enemy's slightest weakness and if every opportunity that presented itself were not seized upon, the more so since it is impossible to know beforehand at what moment, where, and with what force some powder magazine will "explode". 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 crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are "opposed" to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a "putsch", we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites.

It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had *had time* to mature. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord, without reverses and defeats. On the other hand, the very fact that revolts do break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; but it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain experiences, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught, just as certain strikes, demonstrations, local and national, mutinies in the army, outbreaks among the peasantry, etc., prepared the way for the general onslaught in 1905.



LETTERS PAGE



Dear Editor,

Many thanks for sending me No.2 of Marxist Forum. It contains a number of thought provoking items.

I was glad to see that Peter Anderson discussed the creation of a (rural and small town) petty bourgeoisie by The Land Purchase Acts. Though I am no expert, I should have thought that the main motive of the British Government was not to create a counter-balance to the working class but, rather, to appease the peasantry. After all, it was from the latter that most of the unpleasantness had come during the 19th century. And what London was particularly concerned about, at the end of last century and the beginning of this, was, surely, the strategic importance of Ireland in a possible war. In order to ensure a peaceful Ireland during such a war, they were ready to sacrifice the interests of a section of the ruling class, namely, the Anglo-Irish landlords.

This manoeuvre succeeded, in that Ireland was comparatively quiet during the 1914-18 war. As is well-known the Easter rebels got little popular backing in Ireland, even though they were "supported by gallant allies in Europe" - which did not mean the French at Verdun, or even the Belgians or the Serbs!

Yet, once the Anglo-German war was over, the Anglo-Irish war began. And who was it who fought against British rule, if not that same petty-bourgeoisie? That fact needs explaining. And the Anglo-Irish war was, as you know, not a charade.

Then came the split over the Treaty. Who were split? Why, presumably, that same petty-bourgeoisie again! Along what lines?

It would be useful, I think, to get somebody to contribute a "class analysis" of the Anglo-Irish war and the Civil War. In a country so history-conscious as Ireland it is, I should imagine, important to present a comprehensive and coherent version of the nation's history - its recent history, at any rate - in accordance with the given political group's philosophy.

All good wishes,

Yours

BRIAN PEARCE
(Herts.)

Dear Editor,

I have enjoyed the first two issues of Marxist Forum. I agree with your groups opinion that there is a theoretical weakness among the Left in Ireland and your magazine will, hopefully be a means to enrich the debates.

I also agree that Marxism has tended to be seen as an academic exercise, removed from the real struggles of the workers. It is from this viewpoint that I was very interested in the reviews by the Republican prisoner A. McIntyre of the articles by Henry Patterson.

Patterson parades himself as a Marxist but his steady output of articles and books are all designed to channel the struggle in Ireland into safe parliamentary paths. I, therefore think, that Comrade McIntyre let Patterson off very lightly.

It seems to me that to attempt to answer Patterson by merely arguing about the degree of "common ground between the national issue and the class/labour issue" is to play into his hands and adopt his methods.

Is not the fight for the unity of the country inseparable from the fight for socialism? And is it not also a fact that there are very few "class" issues such as strikes which do not pose the question of the integration of the Irish economy into world imperialism?

The anti-working class politics of the despicable Workers Party have found a champion in Patterson and I would like to see Marxist Forum carry articles which put him in his proper place - a defender of imperialism in Ireland.

Yours fraternally,

J. Ferguson,
Dublin.

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BOOK REVIEW

**"Polmaise: The Fight for A Pit" by John McCormack with Simon Pirani.
Indexbooks, 28 Charlotte Street, London, W1. £3.95.**

A Personal Review by A. McIntyre, Republican political prisoner, Long Kesh.

It is difficult to read "Polmaise: The Fight for A Pit" with feelings of detachment. The book both inspires and angers. Inspiration comes from the unyielding militancy and comradeship of working-class people while anger is stirred by the treacherous scabbing activities of unprincipled collaborators.

John McCormack was a National Union of Mineworkers pit delegate with vast experience of pit life. Simon Pirani, who assisted him with the book, is a Marxist socialist. Together, they combine revolutionary intellect with practical experience to produce a vibrant account of struggle - class struggle. It is through the efforts of such people to ensure that the light of working-class militancy shines brightly, that we may all gain hope and courage for the battles that lie ahead.

The pit at Polmaise in Stirlingshire, Scotland, had been in operation since 1905. It was involved in the famous general strike of 1926. The Polmaise men were workers' men not firms' men: they frequently returned a 98 per cent positive response to calls for strike action.

In 1983 Polmaise experienced the first lock-out in a Scottish coalfield since the second world war. The following year the same pit was the first one to strike in protest at the British state's decision to implement a policy of pit closures.

The overall purpose of the Tory strategy was to reverse working-class gains made since world war two. The reason stated by the Tories for justification for their pit closure policy was the economic non-viability of pits. This myth was exposed by the fact that Polmaise at the time of its closure was a developing pit. It was shut because it was a bastion of working-class militancy.

The state marshalled its forces well. Aided by treacherous Labour leaders, it was not beyond using dirty tricks such as destroying pits, nor unleashing its coercive apparatus on the striking miners. The media rallied to the cause of the state with gusto, and disdain for the truth. Ultimately, while the Tories did not win outright, they did succeed in decimating the Scottish coalfields.

That the miners failed to adequately defend post-world war two working class gains should not be blamed only, or even mainly, on the strength of the state. Despite their great courage, and willingness to lose their lives on the picket line, the miners were treacherously compromised by elements within the ranks of the working class.

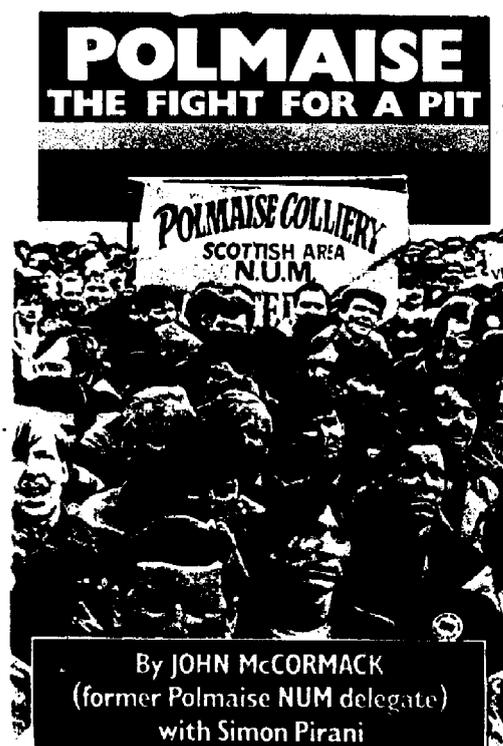
The Scottish NUM leadership was intent on dampening the class struggle. They persistently sweet-talked the miners in a bid to soften their militancy. Top members of the Scottish

NUM were eager to see the strike conclude so that they could go back to having an easy time. In the 1987 post-strike election for the NUM presidency, the Scottish executive did its best to sabotage Scargill's chances. They preferred the right-winger Walsh.

However, the position of the NUM leadership in Scotland must not be treated in isolation from the influence of the British Communist Party. This vile group of opportunists, like its sister party the Communist Party of Ireland, by refusing to take up real working-class issues, were decisive in handing the Tories a victory. This CP behaviour is paving the way for a six-day week, privatisation and a link-up with the scabs of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

"Polmaise: The Fight for A Pit" provides us with a crucial insight into the dynamics of capitalist society, and for this alone it deserves praise. Yet, perhaps its most critical contribution lies in its ability to show the crippling effect of treacherous leadership.

This is a perennial problem faced by militants resisting the state. It will go away not through compromise and collaboration, but struggle. Polmaise is a beacon in that struggle.





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Title: Marxist Forum, Vol. 1, No. 3

Organisation: Socialist Revolutionary Group of Ireland

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