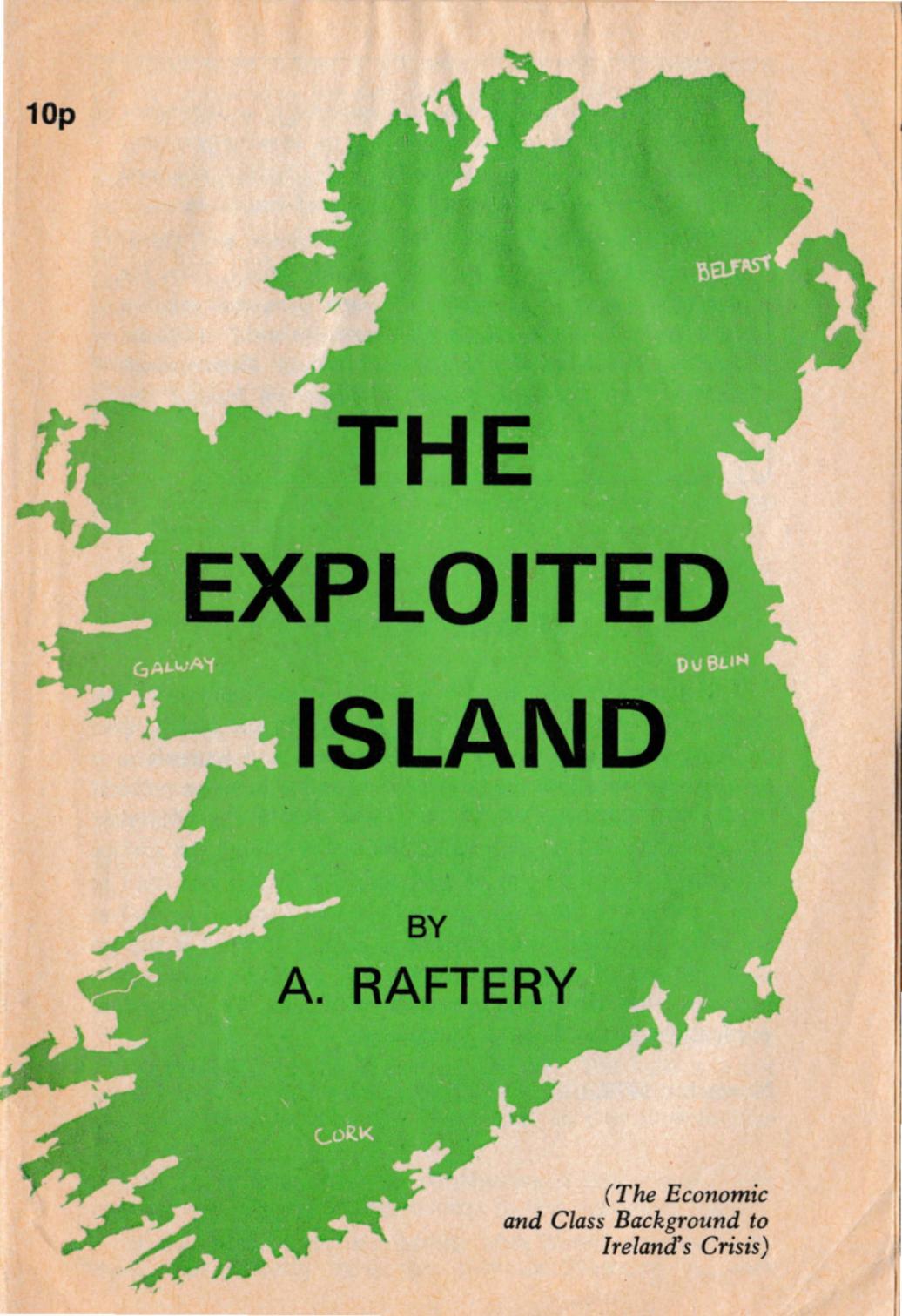


10p



# THE EXPLOITED ISLAND

BY  
A. RAFTERY

*(The Economic  
and Class Background to  
Ireland's Crisis)*

*"Northern Ireland is a typical example of a dependent economy, one in which variations in employment and income are largely determined by its trading relations with one particular economy or group of countries.*

*"Notwithstanding its political independence, and, therefore separate fiscal system and economic policy, Eire, for example, stands in somewhat the same economic relation to Great Britain as does Northern Ireland." (Official Report, published by Northern Ireland Government, entitled "An Economic Survey of Northern Ireland" by K. S. Isles and Norman Cuthbert, 1957.)*

## FOREWORD

This pamphlet tries to give a rather deeper analysis of the situation in Ireland, particularly in relation to the North, than do most commentators. In our newspapers and journals it is usually approached on the basis of the conflict between political parties and personalities. As one who thinks that Marxism presents a method through which the reality behind the surface movement of politics can be analysed, the Author has tried to give a picture of the economic and class background as well as the political. With things moving so rapidly some of it will no doubt be out of date by the time it is printed. It is hoped, however, that the basic approach will open up discussion, particularly in the Labour Movement.

A. RAFTERY.

November 1972.

**T**HE crisis in Ireland is not just an Irish crisis. It arises from the relationship between Ireland and Britain, and between both countries and the rest of the world.

Jack Lynch, Dr. Conor Cruise-O'Brien and Liam Cosgrave, for different reasons, present the situation in the 32 Counties as something involving the Irish people alone. According to their theories the situation in the North can be explained simply on the basis of a conflict between two groups of Irishmen with different traditions and religions. They don't want to ask why these differences only flare up into open conflict when British imperialism is in trouble. Neither do they want to examine what is meant by the word "imperialism". They prefer to pretend that it no longer exists, that it ended with the removal of the British troops from the Twenty-Six Counties.

In dealing with the whole island we must keep in mind the fact that economically Britain has dominated both States. The political independence of the Twenty-Six Counties has not meant economic independence.

Now with the whole island being dragged into the Common Market as an integral part of Britain the struggle for Irish freedom will take on an even greater urgency.

## Imperialism

This word is used so loosely that it is often difficult to make people understand the real nature of imperialism. They think of it purely in terms of occupying armies. In fact, modern imperialism is only in certain areas forced to use the old, crude methods. It conquers countries, even those which seem nominally independent, by taking over their economies and ruling them indirectly through sections of the local upper class.

To put it crudely, modern imperialism is largely economic imperialism. Once a country's economy is under foreign control its political structure will eventually conform to the economic reality.

Dean Swift was one of the first to protest against the economic aspect of imperialism in Ireland. The fight was not started by "Catholic Nationalists". The British upper classes saw rising Irish industry as a competitor, so they attempted to smash it.

The Act of Union was the culmination of this process. The uprising of 1798 was the last attempt in that century to stop it.

At the moment we are having Irish history re-written by those who probably think that they are liberating the Irish

people from ancient myths. In fact they are providing an apology for imperialism.

The main theme in their argument is that the revolutionary movements of the past were not only unnecessary but positively harmful to the movement for progress and independence. This attitude grows naturally out of the idea that Britain's ruling class played little or no part in what happened in Ireland.

The attack on the revolutionary tradition in Irish politics concentrates on the idea that its essence was violence. This is a complete distortion of the truth. The two traditions in Ireland were not distinguished by their differences in tactics but by their differences in aim. What is now being presented as the "constitutional" tradition was the movement of those in the Irish upper class who wanted some independence in order to develop in both industry and agriculture, but did not want a revolutionary break from Britain, as opposed to the mass of the people, including the rising Irish capitalist class, who wanted a complete break from the dominance of imperialism.

The United Irishmen started as a constitutional reform party. Pearse and Connolly were prepared to accept Home Rule. The violent answer has always grown, not out of the desire of the Irish separatists, but out of the intransigence of imperialism.

Violence as a response to upper class terror has not been confined to nationalist forces. The rising trade union movement at the beginning of this century had to fight. The Irish Citizen Army grew out of the struggles of 1913.

1916 saved the lives of tens of thousands of Irishmen. Mr. Robert Kee, author of "The Green Flag", in a Thomas Davis lecture on RTE saw no contradiction between denouncing violence directed by Irish revolutionaries against British imperialism and praising those Irishmen who were slaughtered in British regiments in the First World War. The violence of imperialism is all right. 1916 stopped conscription in Ireland. The "constitutionalist" John Redmond sent tens of thousands to their death.

James Connolly saw 1916 as a blow against the World War. The socialist parties of Europe had decided they would fight against an imperialist war which could only lead to the workers of the different countries killing one another in the interests of the profits of big business.

The so-called constitutional socialists sold out. Only the revolutionaries fought to stop the killing.

The Republican movement in Ireland in 1926 saw a split which seemed to be about the question of whether Republicans should enter Dáil Eireann. In fact, like the Civil War, it was about much more fundamental issues.

The Civil War arose from a basic conflict over the relationship between Britain and Ireland, not from a clash of personalities. Arthur Griffith never believed in separation from Britain. His Fine Gael heirs are now boasting that this was the right attitude all along. This didn't prevent Griffith from engaging in the most virulent forms of anti-Englishism. This racist form of pseudo-nationalism conceals the real sell-out to the upper classes of the country being attacked.

Dr. Garret FitzGerald, on October 25, 1967, in the *Irish Times*, launched a new version of the same trick when he wrote:

"For in an enlarged E.E.C. containing Ireland and Britain we should for the first time in eight centuries be free from British exploitation, deliberate or intended."

This turns the reality upside down. Entry to the E.E.C. has happened because we are considered to be part of Britain.

The Fianna Fáil Party sprang into the political scene in 1926. Its birth left behind the incorruptible remnant of the Republican movement.

Fianna Fáil offered to the people a Party which by constitutional means could achieve revolutionary aims. The link with Britain was to be broken and a new Ireland built on the basis of its own resources. Ironically, if there had been an awareness of our vast mineral resources a much better attempt could have been made, even under a capitalist government. But none of our capitalist Governments ever attempted to find out what our mineral resources were.

The weakness during the whole period of early Fianna Fáil rule in relation to the division of the country was that it was seen in isolation. It was "Partition", the last National task. The necessity to frame policies in such a way as to take into account the desires of the people of all Ireland was ignored.

This was what the British imperialists wanted. The Six Counties State was their guarantee that they could dominate all Ireland. The Economic War was launched, not as Fine Gael propaganda has it, by Fianna Fáil but by Britain. Its aim was to prevent the development of an independent economy in the Twenty-Six Counties. It succeeded.

While Fianna Fáil was in opposition in the early 1950s the Irish Trade Union Congress produced a document charting a course for a new society. It was called "Full Employment". As an answer, Sean Lemass delivered a lecture which was printed as a supplement by the *Irish Press*. He examined the possible ways forward for the Twenty-Six Counties economy. He saw two. One was to go forward on the basis of our own resources, placing restrictions on the outflow of capital. The

second was to develop the economy on the basis of attracting in foreign capital.

Mr. Lemass plumped for the first, rejecting the idea of foreign capital on the grounds that it was a shaky basis on which to develop the economy. In fact, by introducing the question at all he was laying the basis for his future policy.

Under Eamon de Valera the remnants of independence remained. While incapable, because of the capitalist straitjacket which he had helped to put on the State of taking the revolutionary steps needed to set out on the road for independence, he was also unwilling to abandon the ideal completely. He retained at least the memory of the times when even those who only wanted a businessman's Ireland were prepared to fight.

Sean Lemass, by the time he became Taoiseach, had completely accepted the ideology of the new Irish capitalist class. As small businessmen they had wanted independence. As big businessmen they wanted to link up with British monopoly capitalism and get a share of the spoils of the exploitation of the workers, not only of Ireland, but of the whole capitalist world.

This change in the economic set-up formed the basis for the two prongs of Lemass's policy, entry into the E.E.C. and reconciliation with the Unionists. They went hand in hand. On the other side of the Border Captain Terence O'Neill was facing a somewhat similar situation.

Unionism, in spite of its appearance of independence which was necessary to give its ideology the phoney nationalist tinge needed to win a mass following, has always been part of the political expression of the British ruling class. This is not to say that conflicts cannot develop between them or that in its earlier days the voice of native Northern capitalism didn't find a reflection in it.

The Unionist leadership has always represented that section of big business in the North which was tied to British big business. Its leadership was chosen from the old aristocratic strata because it was a more acceptable representative of the Unionist mythology.

After all, even Orange workers came into violent class conflict with Orange employers. The attempt is being made now to present the development of the Six Counties as a natural growth, arising from a different tradition. In fact, the development of the State we know to-day shows careful planning to maintain divisions within both the country and within the Six Counties State itself.

The workers in the North were split on an economic basis, with the vast majority of skilled jobs being held by Protestants.

Development took place not in the Catholic areas but in the Protestant areas. This created the basis for the fear of the Protestant workers that, in a State with chronically high unemployment, the Catholic workers might take away their jobs.

To understand why the North has such chronically high unemployment, much higher than that of Great Britain, of which it is supposed to be an integral part, one must realise the type of economy which exists there. The Isles Report gave a clear picture of the economy of Northern Ireland and the following analysis is based on it:

Industry in Northern Ireland is founded on the basis of processing raw materials which are now bought almost exclusively from abroad. There has been virtually no development of the natural resources of the area. The vast majority of all consumer goods are imported from Britain.

In spite of the fact that the North is supposed to be part of the British economy, in fact it must balance its trade with Britain as if it were a foreign country. When employment rises in the Six Counties, the flow of imports increases. This creates a balance of payments problem. It is solved by creating unemployment, thus cutting down demand and imports.

Unemployment is a built-in part of the Six Counties economy as long as the present relationship with Britain continues.

The Northern labour force has simply been used to process raw materials because bigger profits could be made by British big business out of having the work done in the North where wages were lower than in Britain.

In all the talk of the subsidisation of Northern Ireland, the profits which imperialism has taken out of the area have been forgotten. It may be that with economic developments following entry into the E.E.C., the British upper class will find the Six Counties an economic as well as a political liability. The Unionist leadership realises this. Hence the fears of a sell-out to Dublin.

Having abandoned any idea of achieving Irish independence, Sean Lemass had to ask himself what was the main stumbling block to integrating once again the economy with that of Britain. The North was the obvious answer. Imperialism had kept its foothold there and, in the absence of any serious attempt to break the stranglehold of imperialism on the Irish economy, "Partition" had become a handy pseudo-nationalist catch-phrase.

On the Northern side of the Border Captain Terence O'Neill also wanted to get rid of a tradition which he saw as an encumbrance in the development of a new type of economy. The

foreign firms now setting up factories in the Six Counties could not be run on the basis of the old sectarian divide. They simply wanted the best workers. The older industries, with their religious tests for employment, were on the way out.

On top of this a new class of Catholic businessman was coming up. He wasn't prepared to accept an inferior position for ideological reasons. He wanted his share. Captain O'Neill saw that the basis of traditional Unionism was beginning to disintegrate. If conservative government was to continue in the Six Counties the rising Catholic upper classes would have to be won to share in power. With the British monopolies intent on linking up with those of Western Europe, the Six Counties could speedily become an economic backwater unless big changes were made.

This was the reasoning. Captain O'Neill, however, underestimated the power of tradition. Once the break with the past was made, once the ice was broken in even one place, Unionism was left floundering in the cold waters of reality.

This was not Sean Lemass's intention. What he wanted was the coming together of the big business interests North and South so that the maximum benefit could be gained for them both when they entered the Common Market.

In the event, other forces were stirring in the Six Counties. Economic developments were not the only factor. The worldwide struggle for progress and, in particular the Civil Rights movement in the U.S., had shown that minorities could assert their rights.

The minority in the North had traditionally looked South, more or less waiting for the lead to come from there. Now, under progressive leadership, they stood on their own feet. This minority, whose political suppression and economic subjugation had been an essential foundation for the maintenance of the Unionist State, showed signs of giving leadership not only to the Catholics but to the Protestant working class as well.

This was a prospect which was not welcome to Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Unionists or any other conservative force within the community. It had too many revolutionary overtones. Once the people start marching it becomes difficult for the upper classes to control where they stop.

The Lynch Government for a period made gestures of solidarity, the "We will not stand idly by" policy. Sections of the Cabinet wanted a military policy, not to aid the people of the North, but to take over the leadership of the movement for democracy and divert it into harmless channels.

Eventually Lynch took fright at this policy of even limited

aid. The British Government was bringing pressure to bear on him to stay out of the Northern situation altogether. The decision taken to find scapegoats for a policy of which Mr. Lynch must have been fully aware led to the Arms Trial. It also marked the end of even token anti-imperialism.

The Lynch policy was not and is not just one of "peace" in the North. Only a tiny minority see the unity of the country being achieved through military means. The natural desire of the people for peace was and is being used to make them accept the abandonment of the fight for independence.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael now represent the same classes in Irish society. These are those big capitalists and big farmers who have no interest in seeing Ireland an independent country, who see their economic future as being tied up with the European monopolies. To such people the depopulation of the Irish countryside, the closing down of native-owned industry, the mass emigration of Irish workers, the destruction of our culture and the loss of our political independence mean nothing. Profit is the only criterion of good in the society we live in. Super profit is the only criterion of progress in the E.E.C.

### **Why Have We Joined the E.E.C. ?**

The whole island is now to become part of the E.E.C. The reason we are joining is because the upper classes have once again sold out, as they did before on numerous occasions in Irish history.

When Daniel O'Connell collapsed politically at Clontarf it wasn't just a tactical retreat or a personal defeat. It reflected the fears of the men of property in Irish society that a movement had begun that would not be content with the reforms which O'Connell had won. The foundations of property shivered and the upper classes made their peace with their British masters. The people were left to go to hell, America, or the grave.

"But if they had fought," say the re-writers of history, "thousands would have died."

Because they didn't fight hundreds of thousands died and the Irish population was decimated. Instead of the famine and the driving of the people from the land to make way for cattle, leading to a revolt, the O'Connellite collapse had successfully left them politically leaderless. They didn't die fighting for freedom. They died of hunger in the ditches.

When John Redmond got up at Woodenbridge and called on Irishmen to join the British Army he wasn't just speaking for himself. He was speaking for those Irish businessmen and

big farmers who saw themselves making a good thing out of the war. He was speaking for the propertied classes who saw that revolution was the only alternative. Also the British Army was a handy safety valve to get rid of the unemployed and discontented who had been battling on the Dublin streets with the forces of law and order only a year before.

When Jack Lynch haltingly paints the glowing picture of our future in the E.E.C. he is not conveying a decision independently arrived at by representatives of the Irish people. He is announcing that once again the upper classes are putting their interests before the people's. Their refusal to carry the fight against imperialism to a conclusion has inevitably led "by a comodus vicous of recirculation" back into complete absorption into the imperialist structure.

The arguments advanced by the pro-Marketeers during the Referendum campaign were utterly irrelevant with the exception of one. This was "If Britain goes in we have no alternative".

There spoke the authentic voice of the upper classes and their political mouthpieces in Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. The "we" does not refer to the Irish people but to them.

There was no alternative if the present structure of Irish society, economically and politically is accepted.

There is no alternative if the policy which emerged after the Famine of basing agriculture more and more on the production of beef for export is to be continued. Beef is the only thing the E.E.C. needs from us at the moment. The other side of this policy is the depopulation of the countryside with bigger and fewer farms. There is "no alternative" to this either.

There is no alternative if the industry of the 26 Counties is to become purely a processor of foreign raw materials, like that of the Six Counties. There is no alternative if it's accepted that the country is to be gutted of its mineral wealth by foreign monopolies.

These are the policies of the ruling class both North and South.

### **The North and the E.E.C.**

The almost unanimous opposition in the North to entry into the E.E.C. springs from a variety of reasons. On the Nationalist side there is political opposition because Britain is dragging the Six Counties in without giving them any choice. On the Unionist side there is the fear that they will be seen as irrelevant by the British monopolies in the new situation.

Cutting across both sections of the population is the fear

that the unprotected industries which do exist in the Six Counties will go to the wall. In this respect the Northern economy is much more vulnerable at the moment than that of the 26 Counties where at least some development of native resources has taken place.

It gives room for thought that the forces in Ireland which opposed entry into the E.E.C. were the anti-imperialists and the rank and file Unionists. No matter what slogans were used to demonstrate this opposition there is revealed here a basic unity of interest.

### **Two Nations**

Unionism has long used the argument that there are two nations in Ireland, not one.

This two nations theory is now being put forward, in an oblique way, by both Government and Opposition spokesmen. The only organisation to come out with it openly has been a tiny group calling itself the British and Irish Communist Organisation. It also backed entry into the Common Market. It thus supported the two main policies of the upper classes of both North and South. Why it calls itself "Communist" is a mystery.

In the case of Ireland, it was treated as one nation by British Imperialism until the movement for freedom became too strong. Then the old "divide and rule" tactics were brought into play. Of course, there were and are differences of religion in Ireland. But if these are the basis for separate nationhood then the Gaeltacht areas have a good claim to set up their own state.

In every country there are differences between groups in the community. But conflict only occurs where there is oppression. It is wrong to think that this is a question of one group oppressing another because of colour or religion. In South Africa the coloured people are oppressed because they provide the cheap labour basis for the big employers. A mythology is built up to convince all the white people that the coloured people are naturally inferior. The minority of whites who own the means of production benefit from this oppression.

In the Six Counties another mythology was created so that the differences between Protestants and Catholics could be used for the same reason, to protect the property and profits of the upper classes. Attempts are made to present this as something unique to Ireland.

In fact, all over the colonial empires religion has been used against religion, tribe against tribe, in order to prevent them uniting against Imperialism.

Those who talk in good faith of two nations in Ireland (as opposed to those who are merely using the theory to support Imperialism's interests) completely fail to recognise the nature of Unionism. It was not confined to the Six Counties. The conservative upper class in the South, up to and after the partial independence of the 26 Counties was won, was Unionist. Were they, too, part of a separate nation?

Unionism is not an expression of nationhood. It is a political philosophy which expresses the interests of British imperialism in Ireland. The Unionist Party is a part of the Conservative Party. The fact that Protestant workers are fooled into supporting it no more makes it *their* philosophy than does the fact that British workers can be fooled into voting Tory make Conservatism an expression of their interests.

It is noticeable that lately the spokesmen for the two main parties in the South, and some spokesmen in the Labour Party, are accepting Unionists of all shades, even including Paisley, as spokesmen for the interests of the Northern people, not just as elected representatives. This is because Lynch, Cosgrave and Co. want to maintain a conservative leadership in both the North and in Britain. The development of a radical movement in Britain, the Six Counties, or the 26 Counties, could not be confined within one area. To prevent the emergence of such a movement is the objective of Heath, Lynch, Whitelaw, Faulkner, Craig and Paisley.

## Political Forces in the Six Counties

### (1) Paisleyism :

Ian Paisley originally emerged as the leader of the fundamentalist Unionist backlash to Terence O'Neill and to the movement for Civil Rights. In all the talk about violence it is being rapidly forgotten that it was the Paisleyites and Unionists who introduced violence into the North. It was they who physically attacked, along with the forces of the State in some cases, the Civil Rights Movement and the Catholic ghettos.

Paisleyism based itself on a largely working class following not because it represented their interests, but because it articulated their fears. This role is now performed by Vanguard and others. Paisley, while remaining basically the same sectarian representative of imperialism, is also an opportunistic politician. He will compromise if it means getting a share of power. His opposition to Craig is based, not on Vanguard's anti-democratic stand or commitment to violence, but on the challenge presented to Paisley's leadership.

Since direct rule Paisley has concluded that the possibility exists to play a role on a much wider stage. With the Six Counties integrated with Britain, Paisley sees himself in the British cabinet.

Realising that to be a political clergyman in Britain is death, Paisley abandons his Roman collar and wears an ordinary collar and tie in interviews on British television.

It is necessary to understand clearly what Paisley represents. In spite of all his jack-acting about the "dry-closets" which his constituents have to use, he does not represent the ordinary Protestant. His is the voice of Imperialism as surely as Faulkner's is. Paisley is, he hopes, cuter than Faulkner. Behind all his manoeuvres he is an implacable enemy of Irish unity and independence.

It is necessary to deal like this with Paisley because an astonishing number of people have been fooled by his changes of front. This is understandable in the present situation where those who feel they are drowning will even clutch at an Orange lily.

### (2) People's Democracy and the Ultra-Left :

The present situation in Ireland has been a god-send to what may be broadly called the Ultra-Left. By this is meant those Left-Wing groups who are of the opinion that a revolutionary situation always exists.

Within the broad Civil Rights movement which developed in the North in 1969, organisations like P.D. played an often heroic but ultimately splitting role. Once they had decided that a revolutionary situation existed, Civil Rights became irrelevant. As far as the Ultra-Left was concerned the Civil Rights movement should be a movement for Socialism.

Tariq Ali exhorted them to stop singing "We Shall Overcome" and instead sing the "Internationale". They did this for a period, though many of them didn't even know the words.

The danger of the Ultra-Left is its influence on young people, particularly students, who are brimming over with pristine revolutionary zeal and who are told that there is a short-cut to Socialism, and that all that's holding the people back is the established movements' leadership. The attack is concentrated not on the real enemy but on the labour movement, from the trade unions to the Communist Party. This inevitably leads to splits, not least in the Ultra-Left organisations themselves, confusion and a weakening of the struggle against imperialism.

On the question of imperialism, Ultra-Left groups are as weak as the Irish Labour Party. They completely fail to see

that it is both economic and political and concentrate their attack on capitalism in general.

Like Bernard Shaw's "Old Revolutionary Hero" the conservative classes could say of the Ultra-Left, "We never gained his theoretical approval (but) we at least always had what we valued far more: his practical support".

### **Imperialism's Legacy**

Ireland was left with many problems after the Treaty. The fight for independence was not completed; economic freedom was not won, the country was divided. The liberal breaking down of superstition and myth, the opening up of the intellectual atmosphere which had accompanied the rise of capitalism elsewhere did not take place because Ireland was still under the sway of imperialism. All these problems, and the winning of Socialism as well, cannot be achieved at one blow.

There will be many stages, many alliances with all kinds of forces, many retreats and defeats as well as advances and victories before independence is won as the basis for the advance to Socialism. In present circumstances Socialism might follow very rapidly on independence. It is essential for a Socialist to understand the different stages in the struggle.

Among those on the Ultra-Left are people who consider themselves followers of Mao Tse Tung. They should read Mao's writings at the time the Chinese were making a revolution and see how far their attitude was removed from "Socialism to-morrow" fantasies.

### **(3) S.D.L.P. :**

With the development of the crisis in Ireland new forces stepped forward, representing sections of classes which up to then had found representation through established parties.

In the North there was the emergence of the S.D.L.P. This party represents a coalition of interests on the anti-Unionist side. Talk of its being composed solely of a number of individuals ignores the fact that it is putting forward a consistent policy. It wants a share of power and an end to discrimination. In many ways, although it has a left-wing, it represents the interests of a rising Catholic business class. In so doing, however, it can also represent the immediate interests of the broad masses of the minority.

As a Parliamentary force it has found itself in an ambiguous situation, a situation where parliament became irrelevant and

was eventually abolished. The Alternative Assembly could only have functioned if some section of the people who have supported Unionism had recognised it. Any assembly in the North basing itself on only one section of the people is bound to fail. This applies also to Republican attempts to have elected councils in the ghettos.

### **(4) The Alliance Party :**

The Alliance Party represents the O'Neill wing of Unionism. It is "European" orientated and, in general, represents the viewpoint of the newer, progressive businessmen, including some Catholics who would repudiate even the muted nationalism of the S.D.L.P.

At the same time, in the present situation, its stand against sectarianism makes it a potentially progressive force in the Northern community. Sectarianism has always been Imperialism's way of getting the Paddies to bash each other while the British Army, moryah, holds the position of referee. Any force which opposes sectarianism is opposing an aspect of British Imperialism's hold on Ireland. This does not mean that the Alliance Party will not eventually emerge as a conservative force.

### **(5) The Republican Movement :**

The Republican Movement has been referred to as the incorruptible remnant left when Fianna Fáil broke away. Unfortunately its incorruptibility went hand in hand with a removal from reality. The Fenians lifted Ireland up from the slough of despond. But the Fenian heritage contained a negative aspect, the idea that an élite group could win a revolution without involving the people. This attitude led to the tactics of terrorism which, instead of winning support, isolated the Republican Movement from the people.

In Irish history the great mass leaders have taken the parliamentary road. The three greatest have been O'Connell, Parnell and De Valera. The only exception was Jim Larkin, and his influence was largely confined to the cities. Parnell and Larkin were, in their different ways, revolutionaries who were prepared to use different tactics at different times. They realised that methods were only a means, not the end. Parliament is something which was won by the people's struggles. Parnell was right to participate in the British Parliament in the circumstances of his time, as Sinn Fein was right to boycott the British Parliament in 1919 and set up a separate assembly.

Padraig Pearse is often presented as if he were a blood-blinded mystic. In fact he was an extremely far-seeing and astute politician and revolutionary. He supported Home Rule before 1914 when Arthur Griffith was rejecting it. He also recognised in his last writings, that Parnell was a revolutionary.

The Republican movement for many years followed the negative tradition of Fenianism, ignoring its democratic and social aspect. When it began to grope its way back to the Connolly conception of the unity of the national and the social struggle, tensions developed which ended in the split. This split was a tragedy, particularly in relation to the Northern situation. Once again Imperialism could play on the differences between Irishmen. Behind the split was more than a difference of tactics. The Provisionals, apart from tactics, are not very far removed from the "left-wing" of Fianna Fáil or Aontacht Eireann. They see independence as a separate issue from a social revolution. This leads to an ignoring of the Protestant working class in the North and of the reaction in the South to the bombing campaign.

The Provisionals are anti-imperialists but they are blind to the necessity to win the people for the fight for independence. They think that a small, determined group can do it on its own. This is the classic reaction of the small businessman who wants to overthrow big business without awakening a movement among the people, which, he fears, might overthrow all private property.

It is essential to understand that the split in the Republican movement is not just over the question of entering Parliament. The Official movement has grasped the necessity for political and social action. In spite of aberrations when it has tried to out-do the Provisionals, it is moving closer and closer to a working class position. Its weakness is a failure to recognise that the organised working class is the force which must be won to lead the struggle for progress.

The weakness of the trade union and Labour leadership must be corrected but it is only within the organised working class, not in the creation of parallel or alternative movements, that the secure foundation for a progressive movement can be won.

The ruling class has based its rule on violence. While they could be smashed by violence every manifestation of democracy or trade unionism. Imperialism only denounces violence when it finds itself incapable of using it.

Most of the revolutions in human history which achieved progress have been won by the violence of the oppressed against the oppressor. The oppressed did not choose the means.

No matter where you look in the world, the revolutionaries have first tried peaceful means and have been forced into armed conflict by the vicious reaction of the upper classes. These classes defend their property with more savagery than they would defend their lives.

This is true in Northern Ireland. In 1968-69 the movement for Civil Rights—in other words, normal democracy—relied on peaceful means. It was met by violence. In spite of that the Civil Rights Movement has consistently pursued a policy of non-violence. This has been met by the internment of Civil Rights workers and the Derry massacre.

It is not surprising that sections of the people turned to counter-violence. Defence of the Catholic areas is completely justified.

The Provisional bombing campaign has a political objective. It aims to cripple the economy of the Six Counties and force Britain to negotiate. To an extent it succeeded in bringing down Stormont but the price which has been paid is greater than the return.

The working class of the Six Counties has been alienated and made a prey for the Craig-type demagogues.

The Provisionals aim their blows at imperialism but they hit a different target. This arises from a failure to understand what Wolfe Tone meant when he spoke of uniting Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. This was his means to achieve the objective of breaking the connection with England. The means are part of the objective. To lose sight of the necessity to unite all the Irish people means playing into the hands of imperialism.

## The Working Class Movement

This movement, no matter what the weaknesses or reactionary positions of its official leaders at different times, must be the main force for progress in Irish society. To some on the Left and in the Republican movement the trade union movement is seen as irrevocably lethargic, containing the revolutionary class but itself simply an instrument of capitalism. The call from these forces is for the winning of the working class for Socialism and independence outside the trade union movement.

It is true that the trade union movement by itself cannot bring about political change. It is also true that no progressive political force can bring about change unless it is based on the organised working class.

The trade union movement as it exists, not some ideal future manifestation of it, is where the struggle for progress is going to be decisive.

Even before the Civil Rights Movement in the North, the trade union movement had produced plans for democracy and economic development.

For a period in the Six Counties, with fighting in the streets and sectarian passions blazing up, the trade union movement for a period appeared to be taking a back seat. It seldom makes the headlines. Transitory movements, thrown up by the violent situation, seem to take the centre of the stage and then disappear. Because of the split in the working class itself the role of the trade unions has become mainly a holding operation, an attempt to prevent the differences within the working class from breaking out into a complete division on organisational lines.

The 32-counties unity of the trade union movement is sometimes taken for granted. Some may, quite innocently in many cases, raise questions as to whether Irish workers should be in British unions. This ignores the historical development of Ireland and Irish trade unionism. Any attempt to arouse feeling against British-based unions is a move to partition the working class movement between North and South. This would suit the employers on both sides of the Border and would create another division which British imperialism would exploit.

The Paisleyites, the Craigites and the official Unionists have all attempted to win the working class away from the 32-counties nature of the trade union movement. This tactic of imperialism has been so far defeated. The maintenance of the all-Ireland nature of the I.C.T.U. must be a primary aim. Nothing must be done to split it.

## The Protestant Workers

It has been a weakness on the side of the independence movement that little or no attempt has been made to understand the basis of the Unionism of the workers, and other non-exploiting sections, in Northern Ireland. That there is a certain economic basis has been outlined earlier on. This has been completely ignored. It is usually taken that the only economic basis is better social welfare benefits for which, in fact, the workers themselves pay.

It must be repeated that the division of Ireland is due to Imperialism. But Imperialism has played on real differences. These, of course, did not need to become antagonistic. They must, however, be understood.

It is not sufficient just to quote Wolfe Tone and think that the problem is solved. Those who want independence and progress for Ireland must reach out their hands to the Protestant section of the working class, show them that their fears and feelings of hostility and insecurity are understood, show that democracy for all in the Six Counties would be for their benefit as well as for the Catholics.

Protestant fears spring from real causes in the economic and political field. They are used by Imperialism to point to the wrong enemy, as Hitler used real German fears and miseries to pillory the innocent Jews as the culprits.

## Tactics of Unionism

Sections of Unionism have become more sophisticated in their propaganda than in the old days. They no longer point to the Roman Catholic Church as the main enemy but to the alleged instability and backwardness of society in the Twenty-Six Counties. They carefully ignore the huge unemployment which has always been a built-in feature of the Six Counties economy. The Unionist leadership do not share the fears of the Unionist rank and file, they exploit them.

The emergence of working-class Unionist political forces is a sign of how class differences are beginning to emerge in Unionism, even if through the distorting clouds of myth. The leadership of such organisations as L.A.W. offer no future to the workers but sectarian strife. The rank and file, however, express a real reflection of working-class feeling, even expressing a primitive socialistic tendency at times. It is up to the democratic forces to win the working-class rank and file of such Unionist organisations on the basis of a programme for democracy and jobs for all workers.

At the same time the attempts to split the trade union movement and the carrying out of pseudo-militant "strikes" which are simply an expression of sectarianism must be defeated.

## The Roman Catholic Church

The Paisleyites still concentrate on the alleged threat that a united Ireland would be dominated by the "Roman" Church. In the Twenty-Six Counties there are some, like Dr. Noel Browne, who agree that the role of the Church is the main cause of conflict. Paisley does it cynically, Browne honestly. How much truth is there in the allegation?

There is unquestionably a great deal of truth in the idea that the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church has played an extremely undemocratic role in Irish society. What Dr. Noel Browne, and others, ignore is that this role was played against, not on the side of, the forces for independence. From 1798 to 1922 the fighters for freedom were not only denounced but excommunicated.

Since the foundation of the Twenty-Six Counties State the Church has been used on the anti-progressive side. The idea that it controlled the State, however, is totally wrong. Dr. Browne's Mother and Child Scheme fell not just because of Church opposition but because his fellow politicians in the Inter-Party Government didn't want it. The Hierarchy could have been defeated, as was shown when De Valera warned the Cardinal that he would not tolerate interference with the later Fianna Fáil Health Act. Reactionary politicians wrapped the cloak of morality and religion around them to justify opposition to a progress which they did not want anyway.

The field where the Church unquestionably plays a powerful and divisive role is in the field of education. The splitting of education along religious lines is a tremendous stumbling block to the ending of divisions between the people. People of all religions have, of course, a complete right to their own conception of what type of morality should be taught to their own children. In education nobody has a right to create separate systems whose purpose is to maintain the power of any Church over what should be of concern to the whole community. A Church should have as much right to lay claim to run education as it would have to run the transport system. This does not mean that clergy of any religion, or nuns, should be debarred from teaching, as long as they are qualified to do so.

It is significant that one of the main targets of attack by the Paisley-type bigot is the very fact that the Roman Catholic Church is changing, under pressure from below, its attitude of hostility towards other Churches. Real ecumenism would mean the end of one of the main weapons in the bigot's armoury to maintain himself in power. The movement for change within the Roman Catholic Church, most clearly articulated by the late Pope John, is a progressive move not only of importance to Catholics. Socially it is of tremendous importance, particularly in Ireland. It was both a recognition and an initiation which helped speed up the change in the intellectual climate.

There are many now in the Irish upper classes who would be only too happy to blame the Church for all that went wrong in the past. At one time everything that a priest said (unless

he was a Father O'Flanagan) was to be taken as gospel. Now that many clergy are beginning to speak in a radical and even revolutionary way we find Fianna Fáil spokesmen deriding them as "so-called clerics".

It is only too clear that the Churches will have to accept a secular society in both parts of Ireland. When this happens depends not only on the Churches but on the movement of the people.

To date Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have been making liberal noises about the Constitution. They dodge the real issue by saying that a new Constitution must wait on a 32-Counties Ireland. The present Constitution (while not at all as bad as some pseudo-liberals who only want to have a crack at the independence movement make out) is a barrier to the achievement of a united Ireland. Now is the time to start a discussion with those in the Six Counties who will talk about it, for the drafting of a Provisional Constitution for all Ireland.

The British Labour movement, the British working class never benefited from the exploitation of Ireland. They are the natural allies of the Irish people. Through the T.U.C. they have formally supported the struggle for democracy and a Bill of Rights for the Six Counties. Co-operation between the Irish and British Labour movements is one of the main conditions for the ending of Imperialist interference in Ireland.

The crisis in Britain and the struggle of the workers there against the oppressive role which the State is now openly playing is part of the same struggle which is being waged by sections of the Irish people. The people of both countries have a common enemy—the British upper classes and their hangers-on.

There must be an immediate programme for democracy in Northern Ireland so that the present situation can be resolved. This entails the passage by the Westminster Parliament of a Bill of Rights for the North. This would end political discrimination and guarantee all shades of opinion the right openly to propagate and express their views. The British Government has dodged taking this step, the only meaningful one in the Northern context.

John Taylor and other Unionist hardliners are now talking about forms of "independence" for "British Ulster". These pseudo-nationalistic slogans are raised precisely because of the fear that the British Government may be forced to concede democracy for the Six Counties. Taylor & Co. want to re-establish the old Stormont system with even greater powers for themselves. The domination of Six Counties society by the most reactionary forces in it would be against the interests of

all workers, no matter what their religion or political affiliations.

In a democratic context the first step could be taken to bringing about the unity of the working class. This is the only basis upon which secure progress can be achieved.

There must be alliances at different levels with all sorts of forces in the North to oppose the manifestations of sectarianism and imperialism. The form these alliances take will depend on the immediate circumstances, but in the fight against unemployment, sectarianism and all the other manifestations of imperialism, nobody should be excluded because of his political viewpoint.

The unity built up in the minority on the question of Civil Rights must be duplicated at lower levels in ways which will take the fight against the monopolies across the sectarian divide. This is the most immediate tactical necessity for the forces for progress.

The Fianna Fáil Government is not pressing for the implementation of democracy in the Six Counties. It pays lip service to it. Its main policy is not to embarrass the Tories and to slip quietly into the Common Market with them. Within the Labour movement pressure must be built up to force the Twenty-Six Counties Government to make it clear to Westminster that only full democracy will do.

Here the British Labour movement has a crucial role to play, and all shades of opinion, Labour Parties and the Communist Party, in the Irish Labour movement must bring it home to the British working class that this is their fight as well.

Democracy for the Six Counties is the immediate demand but this is by no means the full solution to the crisis facing the whole island. This is both economic and political and it can only be solved on the basis of a movement uniting the ordinary people of both parts of the country in a struggle for the right to run their own lives, to control their own economy and to run their own political system.

It is frequently said nowadays by various Southern politicians that the question of unity of the country should not be raised, that it only frightens the majority in the Six Counties. The reactions of Faulkner, Paisley and Craig are pointed to. Socialists, however, do not accept that these politicians speak for the interests of the ordinary people. The division of Ireland has benefited nobody but the big business interests. The Socialist answer is a unity based on the interests of the people.

The right to live and work in your own country, to live in a progressive society in which there are ever-increasing possi-

bilities and prospects for the ordinary people, this is an objective shared by all the workers and small farmers of Ireland.

Imperialism has meant the exact opposite for both parts of the country and the E.E.C. will accentuate the process. Close-downs of factories, unemployment, the driving of the small farmer from the land, these characterise both States. They are the result not of Republican backwardness or Orange spite but of the subordination of the whole Irish economy to the interests of the British ruling class, the owners of big business.

The basis for real progress in Ireland lies in the defeat of monopoly capitalism and all its manifestations and the creation of a State serving the interests of the people.

Most people who are putting forward blue-prints for a new form of society in Ireland are concentrating on technicalities, on the forms of administration. Forms are not unimportant but they are only the expression of a situation, they are not the situation itself. Any form of unity, or move towards unity, which is in the basic interests of the people, must have the full support of all working class and progressive forces.

Whether unity would take the form of a central administration or of a federal state are matters for discussion and decision between the people. There can be no question of coercive unity or of the setting up of forms of rule against the wishes of the minority.

Economically, a united Ireland would develop its resources in the interests of the people. The new type of industry being set up in the North was characterised editorially by the leading English journal, *New Scientist* on April 20, 1972, as follows:

"The well-polished capital intensive process industries attracted by lush inducements to Northern Ireland in the past 15 years have meant little to the ghettos either Green or Orange."

This is the way the Southern economy is developing as well. Whoever controls the land, the sea, the minerals and the factories controls everything else eventually, including the political and cultural life of the country. One has only to look at television to see how both Irish traditions are being gobbled up.

A socialist, united Ireland would be a country in which the dominance of the present upper classes, native and foreign, would be broken. It would be a people's Ireland.

It is true to say that the unity of the country on this basis is not the immediate task. In the two States a progressive movement must be built which will democratise the two States

which exist. A blow for progress in either State is a move forward for both.

With entry into the E.E.C. some may be tempted to despair. But the E.E.C. itself is showing that it cannot resolve the contradictions of capitalism. Whether it will exist at all in its present form in 20 years (or less) is becoming doubtful.

In the Six Counties itself realities will have to be faced, even by imperialism. The crisis of the relationship between Ireland and the British ruling class has burst out in the North-East, but it will not be confined to there. In different forms it is going to be fought out in both parts of the country, whether in political struggle or in fights against the results of imperialism, close-downs, unemployment, the take-over of land.

Arising from this fight, properly led, can come the building of the unity of the Irish people, not on the basis of catch-phrases but on the basis of their real interests.

For further news and views on the standpoint of the  
Communist Party of Ireland you can read :

**IRISH WORKERS' VOICE** (a weekly Bulletin). By post, for  
3 months, 50p; 6 months, £1; 12 months, £2.

**UNITY**, published weekly in Belfast by the Northern Area  
Committee, C.P.I. By post, 3 months, 85p; 6 months, £1.70;  
12 months, £3.40.

**IRISH SOCIALIST**, published monthly in Dublin. By post,  
6 months, 45p; 12 months, 90p; foreign, £1.

---

For further information or inquiry about joining the  
Communist Party of Ireland, apply to 37 Pembroke  
Lane, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

**Title:** The Exploited Island: The Economic and Class Background to Ireland's Crisis

**Organisation:** Communist Party of Ireland

**Author:** A. Raftery

**Date:** 1972

Downloaded from the Irish Left Archive.

Visit [www.leftarchive.ie](http://www.leftarchive.ie)

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