

**WAR-
WONGER-
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**the 'Irish Press'
and the troubles in
Northern Ireland**

**workers association for the democratic
settlement of the national conflict in
ireland**

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the WORKERS ASSOCIATION is a group of workers and socialists who recognize the historic fact that there are TWO NATIONS in Ireland. We therefore stand opposed to the anti-Partitionist offensive, and to those politicians - including the "socialist" ones - who support it. Our slogan is:

Full recognition of the Ulster Protestant nation's right to remain in the U.K. State

Full recognition of the democratic rights of the Catholic minority in the North and of the Protestant minority in the South.

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Since the White Paper has been introduced, and a new government come into power in the South, there are definite hopes of bringing the National conflict to an end. However, these hopes must remain hopes unless the democratic forces come forward with demands which will facilitate a just solution to the conflict.

The following pamphlet shows the schizophrenia of the IRISH PRESS as far as the North is concerned - but this double-think is not just a feature of this particular Ruling-Class paper, but is a trait running throughout Southern Society. It is up to democrats to show up this Nationalist attitude to the North for what it is, and to support a campaign for the immediate abolition of articles 2 & 3 of the Southern Constitution. For while the Southern State officially lays claim to the territory of another State, there will be no lack of unconstitutional forces to assert the claim with more than words.

Northern and Southern workers need fear no division of their forces arising from the border. It is only the Nationalist campaigns to abolish it, which keep them apart. Once the divisive issue is removed, the way is cleared for real working-class unity, North and South.

THE "IRISH PRESS", FIANNA FAIL STRATEGY AND THE TROUBLES IN THE NORTH

"It is sad to think that the Lemass—O'Neill vision of a prosperous and happy Ireland, despite the differences, was frustrated by the sheer ignorance of unthinking Unionist bigots who could not get out of their isolated lodges and get moving with the tide when the ecumenical floodgates were opened by Pope John." (IRISH PRESS editorial 14/6/72)

The attitude of Fianna Fail towards the Northern Conflict is best summarised by the contradiction between Lynch's 'unity by consent' formula and his declaration that 'no minority has the right to opt out of a nation.' The editorials of the IRISH PRESS, which is the most influential of the Southern papers, and the one most read by grass-roots Republicans, whether of the "constitutional" (Fianna Fail) variety, or the "non-constitutional" one (Sinn Fein), concentrate on the second half of the contradiction:

"Nobody on this side of the border wants an eyeball to eyeball confrontation across the border with our Protestant fellow Irishmen, but the time has come when they must realise that they are Irish, that they cannot forever hold on to their hegemony on a part of this island under another flag, with the aid of para-military forces which they cannot properly control." (14/8/69)

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Civil Rights campaign was always seen by the IRISH PRESS as a first step towards National Unity((as they termed it): *"Equal citizenship now: settlement of the partition issue subsequently." (14/8/69): "The time has come when Britain and Belfast must realise that the Catholics can no longer be held back from their rightful place in Northern Irish society, and, having realised this, so pave the way for eventual peaceful rapprochement between the two parts*

of this island and this nation." (14/8/69): "Both (Chichester-Clark and Faulkner) know that reforms, if properly and fairly implemented, could eventually mean the twilight of Unionist rule." (10/8/70). How a full democratic integration of Catholics into the Northern community would weaken the link with Britain is not stated: nor is it stated why, if this is the case, anti-Partitionist politicians in the North opposed such integration for fifty years, by refusing any form of co-operation with the Stormont government. But the function of these editorials was to identify the democratic struggle for equal rights with the anti-Partitionist campaign - at the same time condemning Unionists when they made the same equation: "It will have been noticed in the past week that Mr Brian Faulkner has been busy resurrecting the IRA bogeyman and the threat from the South." (14/8/70)

The identification of the Civil Rights struggle with the Anti-Partitionist struggle had several uses. It ensured the opposition of the Protestants, who could then be represented as brainwashed yahoos opposed to elementary democracy; it ensured that the integration of Catholics into political life in the North, which would have greatly strengthened Partition, did not take place; and it also ensured that attention was diverted away from social and economic issues - and that therefore the radical critique of Northern society did not become a radical critique of Southern Society. In this last respect, it is worth noting the support the IRISH PRESS gave to the Provisionals as opposed to the Official I.R.A.

THE SPLIT IN THE IRA

"In the wake of 1969, the IRA split because it had become so enmeshed in silly, eyes elsewhere, Socialist policies, that it was unable to defend the Catholics of Belfast when the Orange mobs struck. Today, the British army's policy, which from the start conferred upon the Provisional IRA a bogeyman status, and a strength which it did not possess, has, coupled, let it be admitted, with that organisation's ruthless daring and efficiency, (given it) the role of protector of the Catholic population." (10/8/71)

The 'silly, eyes elsewhere, Socialist policies' were, of course, the various half-hearted efforts of the Officials to *oppose*

both the Belfast and the Dublin governments. It is useful to have the Officials, the Provisionals, and the various would-be Socialist groupings formally opposed to Dublin as well as to Stormont. It means that the Dublin government can dissociate itself when need be from their activities: and it means that those who are engaged in the struggle for a United Ireland do not have to argue that Northerners would be better off being governed by Dublin. If that was the position that they held, Jack Lynch might have found the arguments advanced against them rather embarrassing. But as long as it is a mythical 'New Ireland' that is being fought for, no concrete analysis of the only real, existing, alternative to Partition is necessary. This tactic works so long as these 'non-constitutional' New-Irelanders remain fully aware that their function is to concentrate on the North. At the time of Internment, when, of course, the editorials were full of abuse directed against this undemocratic measure, one little warning was slipped in: *"Whoever is responsible for the shootings across the border at Belcoo and Clady will not help the embattled Northern minority, but will only create a situation in which internment becomes necessary here."* (10/8/72). A gentle reminder that the Southern Government would turn off the tap and had done so in the past (as of course it was to do again in the not-so-distant future!)

STRANGE LOGIC

The logical conclusion to the argument that 'no minority has the right to opt out of a nation' is that 'the nation' has the right to use force to keep the minority in its place. Logically of course the Irish army should have been mobilised long ago to oppose 'British occupation' of the Six Counties. But, apart from a brief incursion into Fermanagh during the twenties, they have been content to leave it to the 'non-constitutional' forces to follow this logic through. At the same time (so that the non-constitutional forces will get the message) they make vague threatening noises on their own behalf, and can often be heard congratulating themselves on their 'restraint'! Thus, when the British army arrived, the IRISH PRESS editorial ran:

"British troops are now external to Britain. The de facto recognition that this is not a domestic issue has been made,

and the *de jure* acknowledgment that Westminster, having made the Government of Ireland Act, can now unmake it, remains to be affected. If it is not, Britain can resign herself to supporting armies of occupation for as long as they are allowed to remain, and that may not be so long as Westminster fondly imagines.' (16/8/69)

The logic seems to run that since the British army had to get on a boat to come to Northern Ireland, that proves that Northern Ireland is a foreign country. So now that the British have had to face up to the fact that there is a stretch of sea between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, it is time that they recognised the fact formally by dismantling the Government of Ireland Act, which was only a whim on the part of some British politicians. The Irish government and people have tolerated this whim for half a century (although of course they could easily put an end to it. Who would oppose them?), but they are beginning to get fed up with it, and if the British don't wise up soon, they may consider taking the matter into their own hands. As Mr Coogan says: after Internment was introduced: *"The more hopeful and the more desperate (Dublin journalists) try to believe that he (Mr Lynch) will inform both London and Belfast that the Irish army does not simply exist to comfort Irish refugees from a part of Ireland."* (11/8/71)

"BLOODY SUNDAY"

The IRISH PRESS had its finest hour, its most determined and militant stand, in the few days following 'Bloody Sunday':

"The immediate reaction has been the gratifying one that we are prepared to pass the test - never has the Northern minority's cause received such widespread support in the South."

(1/2/72). T.P.Coogan (the editor of the IRISH PRESS) was to boast two months later that *"We have always warned that a cool analysis was necessary in times of near-despair."* (27/3/72)

Here is a sample: *"There is an understandable temptation to rub the Unionists' nose in their imminent defeat, but to do so would be to imitate not only their arrogant attitude but their dangerous and indeed evil intransigence."* (2/2/72)

The mood over Bloody Sunday was one of unashamed elation and an apparent preparedness to declare an all out war: *"Already the Northern minority, enormously encouraged by the reaction of the*

Southern Government and people to their distress, are considering through their representatives how best to repair community relations in the North in a United Ireland situation. This is not to say that there is not a long way and probably a lot of blood before the political inevitabilities become reality. But the resolve in the direction of that "victory" is now unstoppable. What we must make sure of is that we do not look forward to, or cheer, a victory over fellow Irishmen." (2/2/72) For a while, any pretence that the IRISH PRESS was opposed to the 'non-constitutional' forces was dropped: "If there was an able-bodied man with Republican sympathies within the Derry area who was not in the IRA before yesterday's butchery, there will be none tonight" (31/1/72). All the forces of anti-Unionism were to unite on a clear-cut Nationalist programme (there was to be no more of this 'Socialist' nonsense): "Now that they (the Northern minority) are prepared to die if necessary in total resistance to Stormont, and their demands have been pared down to the simple ones of British withdrawal and Irish reunification, they look, not helplessly, but hopefully and somewhat desperately to the South for aid in the final hour." (1/2/72) - "Grief (among the Northern Catholics) was quickly replaced among all but the bereaved by shock, anger and, paradoxically, hope, partially because of the widespread evidence of Southern support, and, to use the Belfast expression for 'the final straw', the balloon is up, and nothing will bring it down except a United Ireland....the Taoiseach's reiteration of this point on TV last night was all the more forceful for being delivered with such restrained dignity." (1/2/72) Advice was freely dispensed to all the anti-Unionist forces, and there are no prizes for guessing what was the advice given to the 'non-constitutional' forces: "On the non-Constitutional plane, it must be realised that all the forces united against British policy stand to lose if we fall to fighting among ourselves, as the disturbances at the British Embassy last night underlined - any demonstrations which might bring demonstrators and gardai into conflict or create Government versus the people tensions, must be avoided." (1/2/72) There is no suggestion that the 'non-constitutional' forces are not a valid part of the whole struggle.

In this respect, the IRISH PRESS was, for a while, fairly

truthful; the non-Constitutional offensive was indeed a valid part of the whole struggle. Indeed, by the IRISH PRESS's own logic, it was the most valid part of the whole struggle. But the IRISH PRESS was supposed to be supporting the Constitutional wing: it was supposed to attach a greater importance to the utterances of Jack Lynch, than to the actions of the men who were doing the fighting. When Lynch said, in 1969, that he would n't stand idly by, that was *"the most momentous TV and radio broadcast in Irish history."* (14/8/69). When British troops were brought in, Mr Coogan remarked that *"while notionally at least the British troops were brought in at Stormont's insistence, the fact is that their presence followed on Mr Lynch's calling for immediate implementation of equal citizenship for the people of Northern Ireland."* (15/8/71) Mr Lynch's broadcast after Bloody Sunday was *"one of the most momentous he has ever delivered"* (1/2/72). And when Direct Rule was introduced, the anti-Unionist line-up was described thus: *"Apart from the IRA, there was the all important and overriding diplomatic pressure from the Dublin government, with a sensible degree of political restraint; there was the staunch action of the SDLP in walking off the Stormont stage and throwing their weight behind the Civil Rights demonstrations and the people who paid no rents or rates; there were the ordinary folk who risked all in sheltering IRA men."* (27/3/72) It was of course easy for the Constitutional 'Soldiers of Destiny' to show this impressive and dignified restraint when they had an unofficial army to do their fighting for them. As every Ulster Protestant knows, Jack Lynch has never threatened him, has always insisted on the principle of 'unity by consent'; has always held out the hand of reconciliation and friendship.....

"BLOODY FRIDAY"

The responsibility for "Bloody Sunday" was traced by the IRISH PRESS to a political view - Unionism - which it discredited. When similar atrocities were committed by the 'hard cutting edge of Catholic grievances', the IRISH PRESS was less rigorous in its logic. Here, for example, is what Mr Coogan had to say about the March 20 Donegall Street blast:

"No words of condemnation can be too strong for this foul act.....With Belfast reeling from the effects of this deadly

explosion, the House of Commons in Westminster was content to waste time debating whether or not there had been undue delay in the Heath government doing something about the North It was a debate, too, in which the participants stuck largely to their entrenched positions, especially Mr Maudling and Mr Callaghan, who went to all lengths to assure the Unionists that the Border was not an issue" (21/3/72).

How callous can the British government get? on the very day that an anti-Partitionist bomb killed six people completely at random in a busy shopping area, the British government reaffirms its refusal to impose an anti-Partitionist solution on the Unionist majority. The IRISH PRESS's condemnation of the bombing is formal - politically it is twisted into yet another attack on the existence of Northern Ireland as a separate State:

"The explosion in Belfast's Donegall Street yesterday was one of the most atrocious acts of violence ever committed in a civilized society - if, indeed, Northern Ireland is any longer entitled to regard itself as civilised." He goes on to say: "It matters no difference (sic) to the innocent victims whether they lost their lives or were horribly mutilated because of bungling on the part of the perpetrators, or confusion caused by conflicting messages of warning" (21/3/72). In fact, it is impossible to conduct a campaign of guerrilla warfare in a city without occasionally committing 'atrocities' - whether deliberately or by mistake. Placing a bomb in a crowded shopping area (or attacking 'economic targets' as the IRISH PRESS politely puts it) is an activity that is likely to end in the deaths of people who are out shopping, no matter how conscientious you might be about giving warnings. This is especially the case if you are also trying to cause economic disruption by a policy of putting out false warnings. The Donegall Street and 'Bloody Friday' bombings were an intrinsic part of the non-Constitutional campaign, and nobody who in any way supported the Provisionals is in a position to dissociate himself from them.

But none of this would worry T.P.Coogan. After Bloody Friday, he wrote "An intensification of the campaign was forecast in yesterday's IRISH PRESS, but it was expected that it would be directed against the British Army, military, and possibly economic targets, not callously against the civilian population. Just think of putting questions about Irish Unity to these people" (22/2/72). Here he is pretending that the real enemy is

the British military and economic presence. At various times, of course, the IRISH PRESS has been quite aware that it is not the British government that wishes to maintain Partition, but precisely the 'civilian population'. A week before Direct Rule, the IRISH PRESS speculated:

"If this (the initiative) precipitated the long awaited backlash, he (Heath) could gamble on the IRA keeping out of the way while the British army contained the violence.... This would have two effects: Tory sympathy for the Unionist cause would evaporate, and the Protestants, having turned against the British army, would be more inclined to talk to their fellow Irishmen. Heath would be in a position to dictate any terms he liked to Stormont." (Feb.72)

Here it is evident that the problem is not that the Unionist cause is being maintained by the British interest: it is a native Irish cause, and the presence of the British army is due to a sympathy for it among certain backward Tory elements. But this sympathy is very weakly based, and if the Protestants behave very badly (definitely a desirable occurrence) it would vanish. The substantial British Imperialist interest (Heath) is secretly on the side of the IRISH PRESS. The enemy is the Protestant population itself, and the tactic to be employed against them is our old friend 'divide and conquer'. The worst elements (who will conduct the backlash) will go over to the 'Irish' side when they find themselves attacking the British army (because the British army is on the 'Irish' side); and the hardcore Unionists (Stormont) will be isolated and Mr Heath will give them the final necessary shove into a United Ireland.

In this absurd fantasy, the only element of realism lies in the recognition that it is the will of the Ulster Protestant community, not the might of British Imperialism, that is maintaining Partition. But when the Provoes start attacking this community (the 'civilians') rather than the British army (or the economic life of the Ulster Protestant community) then that element of realism has to be abandoned. The offensive has to retreat from its logical development (all out war against the Protestants) back into its respectable 'Constitutional' shell:

"The activities of the Provisional IRA also add strength to Mr Lynch's increasingly urgent call for political talks by all those with a legitimate interest to seek a political solution... .. Perhaps, just as Bloody Sunday in Derry led to a rapid re-

appraisal by the British of their policy, the events of Bloody Friday in Belfast can produce over the graves of the eleven who died in the explosions and the four who died subsequently, a further political initiative in the long and tricky process towards a just, lasting peace in the North and throughout Ireland." (24/7/72) B

But you needn't expect this initiative to come from the Southern bourgeoisie. The political responsibility does not in any way lie with them: "A terrible price has been paid for the blunders of the British army and Mr Whitelaw's staff in losing the trust of the Catholics in sensitive areas, and in their partisan attitude to the IRA." (22/7/72)

THE NORTHERN CATHOLICS

The people who have suffered most from the Southern bourgeoisie's vacillating attitude toward Northern Ireland have been the Northern Catholics. They were taught to identify Partition itself as the source of all their grievances, and therefore to isolate themselves from the rest of the community in the North. They were seen by the Protestants as a fifth column supporting the efforts of the Southern bourgeoisie to absorb Northern Ireland, and this intensified their isolation and their sense of grievance. The most principled and energetic anti-Partitionists saw that Partition could only be ended by a military campaign. The Catholic bourgeoisie encouraged this in the hope that Northern Ireland would become ungovernable, but refused to give it the support it would need if it were to win. They hoped that Britain - giving the ungovernable Northern Ireland up as a bad job - would do the military work for them. When it became clear that this was not going to happen, the Southern bourgeoisie withdrew its support from the unofficial army it had created, leaving it stranded: and leaving the Catholic community, which had been pushed into a more complete isolation than ever before, dependent on the 'foreign power' (Britain) for defence against the inevitable reaction of the attacked Ulster Protestant community.

Mr Coogan deserves to be richly rewarded for his services to the Southern bourgeoisie during this honourable, and at times even glorious, part of their history.

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