

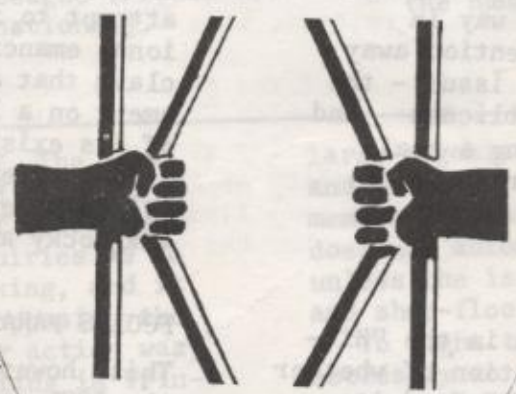
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

Paper of the Movement for a Socialist Republic Nov 1976 No. 3 10p.

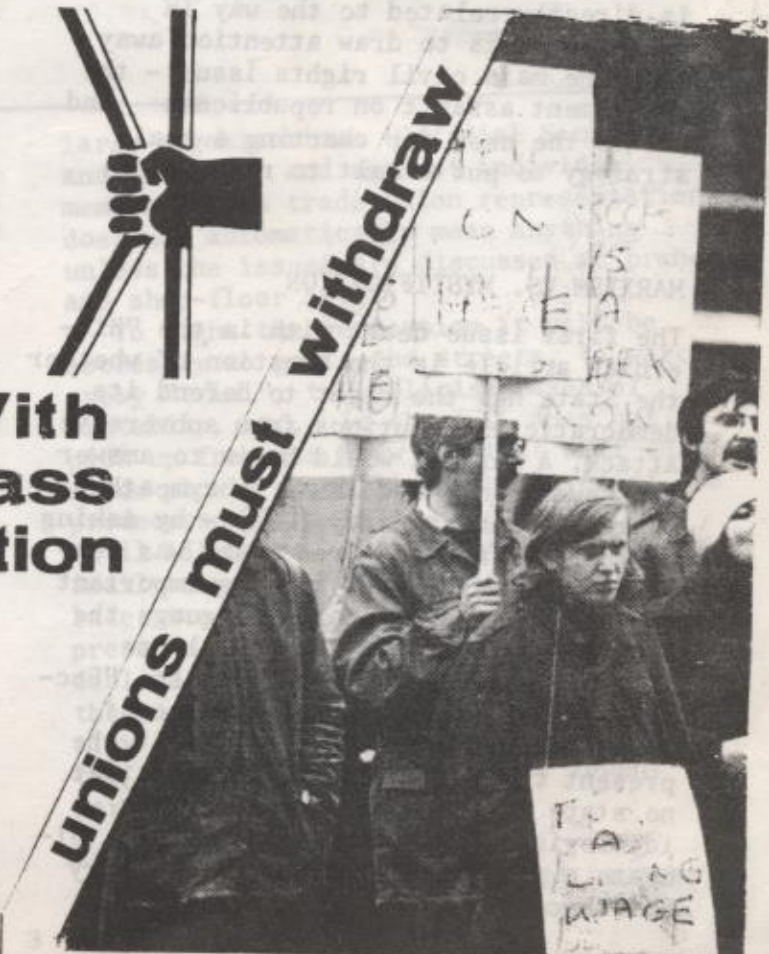
DEFEND CIVIL LIBERTIES AND POLITICAL STATUS



EDUCATION



**With
Mass
Action**



TRIPARTITE TALKS

CAN ICCL FIGHT REPRESSION?

The Movement for a Socialist Republic has argued that the Free State Government began a deliberate assault on civil liberties with the hijacking of Frank Stagg's funeral, and that this assault was developed and deepened through such things as: the banning of Provisional Sinn Fein's 1916 Commemoration; the attempt to charge members of the Irish Republican Socialist Party with the Sallins train robbery and the use of vicious police brutality; the attack on "selfish" women by Minister for Finance Ryan, who blamed them for the economic crisis; Cooney's description of the Union of Students in Ireland as "Sino-Hibernian (!) Marxist"; the muzzling of "Hibernia" and the main daily papers in the Murrays case.

Few people any longer believe that it was the killing of the British Ambassador, Ewart-Biggs, which motivated the declaration of a state of emergency and the passing of more repressive legislation. Opposition to the new laws has come in the various forms of strikes in Navan, Killala and Shannon, large-scale protests in the Press, the widening of the crisis in the Labour Party, and condemnation of the legislation by the newly-formed Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL). This body is of particular interest to the MSR, since we say that the only way to defeat the Government offensive is to launch a mass civil liberties campaign. The question that must be asked is whether the ICCL can do this.

The person mainly responsible for setting this organisation up is its chair-"man", Kader Asmal. Like all lawyers, he has a tendency to express himself in the private language of the court-room. This need not be a fault for some use this jargon to make fun of the legal system and others use it to try and explain in as clear a manner as possible how it actually works. There is no harm done provided an attempt is not made to mystify the subject under discussion. We can see that this is the trap Asmal falls into in his revealing "Hibernia" article (27/2/76) entitled "Case for a Council of Civil Liberties", and this is directly related to the way in which he seeks to draw attention away from the main civil rights issue - the Government assault on republicans - and avoids the need for charting a real strategy to put a halt to repression.

MARXISM VS. MYSTIFICATION

The first issue dealt with in the "Hibernia" article is the question of whether the State has the right to defend its democratic institutions from subversive attack. A Marxist would begin to answer this question - and Asmal is sympathetic to the Communist Party (CPI) - by asking whether in fact the Free State was democratic. Asmal thinks it more important to explain in complicated language the simple idea that any State will use extreme measures to defend itself: "Because of the particular congruence of events in both parts of Ireland at the present time, it needs to be said that no state in the world, whatever its ideological (sic) complexion, would tolerate a fundamental threat to its very existence."

The only reason he is not interested in "law and order" is that this is being taken care of "by those who are charged by the electorate to do so". If by some chance Cosgrave and Cooney lost interest in building up repression, presumably Asmal would step into the breach! This, of course, would be if the State really was threatened, but "we are nowhere near such a situation in the South". A realistic look at the Free State, not just since the Frank Stagg hijacking, would reveal that it has depended for its very existence on the denial of a series of democratic rights since its foundation, the most basic being its attempt to impede the struggle for national emancipation. Only a fool would claim that a State which has used internment on a large scale in every decade of its existence has not been under some strong threat and that the crisis since 1968 did not provide further evidence of its rocky and illegitimate foundations.

FOOL'S PARADISE

This, however, is what the chair"man" of the ICCL says, and that is why he makes a fuss over "less fashionable issues" like discrimination against itinerants, the mental health laws, and homosexuality. The ICCL must take up these and other issues if it is to function properly. It would be absurd to counterpose them to action on repressive legislation. But this is the type of fool's paradise the ICCL seems to live in, because at one of its first meetings a person who asked if anything was being done for the Murrays was told "No", because liberals (?) would be scared off. The meeting proceeded to set up a jungle of committees dealing with burning topics like



DONT LET THEM HANG!



"NO TO THE POLITICAL EXECUTION OF NOEL AND MARIE MURRAY". Oct 8th picket by 'Comite Irlande' on offices of Aer Lingus in Paris. Further solidarity actions are being built by revolutionary socialists, including the Revolutionary Communist League (French Section of the Fourth International).

SAVE THE MURRAYS!

WRITERS PROTEST DEATH SENTENCE

Irish justice "follows the legal tradition and practice of Fascist states," wrote Jean Paul Sartre, Heinrich Boll (a Nobel Prize Winner), and 15,000 German people in a telegram from the West German Irish Solidarity Committee to the President of the Supreme Court, demanding "the immediate suspension of the death penalty for Marie and Noel Murray."

And a letter from members and associates of the Irish Writers Co-operative (Irish Times, Oct 8th) states: "We are opposed to hanging in principle, irrespective of any proven guilt or innocence, since we do not accept that the State has a right to carry out any execution in the name of the people."

traders overcharging on VAT. The real world eventually penetrated into the deliberations: the flood of Government repression led to many enquiries as to what stand the ICCL was taking, and it came out with a statement opposing the legislation. Its only other action was to hold a small public meeting in Trinity College.

MASS ACTION NOW!

Some supporters of the ICCL probably sympathise with these criticisms. One member of the executive, John Mulcahy, has shown no reluctance to support the Murrays. Yet what chance has the ICCL of not becoming "a discreet lawyer-dominated group which makes polite representations to Ministers and writes an occasional letter to the press" (to quote Asmal) unless it is prepared to organise mass activity? Can it really do this when membership costs £3, and its constitution is weighted in favour of

large organisations (Official Sinn Fein and the CPI?) and against individual members. Even trade union representation does not automatically mean anything unless the issues are discussed at branch and shop-floor level.

To fight the repression it will be necessary to go to the streets, to watch every "trial", to publicise cases of brutality, etc. If the ICCL does not pick up from its slow start it will only slide slowly downhill to the level of its predecessor, the Irish Association for Civil Liberties. A spokesman for it originally supported the new laws, but it later wrote an "occasional letter to the press" making some minor criticisms. This decline need not happen to the ICCL, but there is a great danger that it will. A slow start is better than no start and the repression will have to be fought hard.

JAMES GALLAGHER

EDUCATION

INTERVIEW WITH STUDENT MILITANT



BETTY PURCELL has been active as a socialist for many years and was a member of the Dublin South East Constituency Council of the Labour Party before resigning with many others after Labour's decision to enter a coalition with Fine Gael. Betty was elected to the SRC of UCD and then elected Vice-President. She was active in the founding of the Students' Union and has stood for President on a socialist programme. She is active in the women's and socialist movements. She is a founder member of the UCD Womens Liberation Group and Irish Women United. She is also a member of the Movement for a Socialist Republic, Irish Section of the Fourth International.

Q. What policy is the Coalition Government adopting in relation to third level education?

+ + + + +

A. The primary factor is that of the overall cutbacks in social expenditure which the Government is engineering as its response to the economic recession. The cutbacks have had different effects in the various educational sectors, and the Coalition's projections are outlined in its proposals on higher education of 1974.

Briefly, the plan is to maintain the binary system of education while at the same time strengthening the technological sector at the expense of the arts-oriented universities. This will tie education more directly to the needs of industry.

It was just such a move which caused the huge student upsurge in France last academic year, an upsurge which proved to the Government the futility of trying to implement a policy contrary to the interests of students. In Ireland, Government policy is reflected financially. The universities have everywhere been cut back financially while in some cases finance for the technological sector has actually increased.

+ + + + +

Q. What have been the practical effects of the cuts, particularly on students?

+ + + + +

A. The effects of these cutbacks has been to force students to pay an increasing proportion of the college budget through higher fees. In UCD the Higher Education Authority proposed that the percentage of college finances provided by students should increase by about 10%. Despite the arguments used by the colleges in raising fees by a standard 25% in most colleges (e.g. the rate of inflation) there has been no corresponding increase in Corporation and County Council grants. The means test remains at the 1969 level of £1,600 per annum parental and this

year only the fees maximum limit has been raised, while the maintenance element remained at £300 max. for students from non college towns and £120 max. for students from the main cities.

+ + + + +

Q. How has the student movement reacted to these attacks?

+ + + + +

A. The response has been uncoordinated and lacking in political leadership. USI has failed totally to act to defend students' living standards, and has met the offensive of the Government with inertia. Last year even the annual grants march was shelved, as the Union's only response to the dwindling numbers mobilised each

year. Official Sinn Fein and its "Broad Left" fellow-travellers have failed to assess the development of Government policy and are still churning out the slogans used in the late 60s, the period of educational expansion.

They see the changes taking place in Irish education purely in terms of status, the main danger being the takeover of the "practical" and "democratic" technological ethos by the "elitist" and "academic" ethos of the universities. They fail to analyse or understand the effects the economic recession is having on Irish education, and that Government policy does not remain static in this light. It is simply not enough to say that the Government is anti-working class, and therefore favours - financially and otherwise - the "middle class" universities over the "working class" RTCs.

The development of both sectors is dependent on the needs of Irish industry for different skills at different times. In fact, USI's "defence" of the technological sector may be viewed as a cynical manoeuvre to maintain votes at National Council (where the tiniest RTC has equal voting rights with the largest university).

+ + + +

Q. What do you see as the main tasks of revolutionaries in higher education in the coming year?

+ + + +

A. The most immediate task must be the setting up of committees to fight all proposed cutbacks in education. These committees must be prepared to act decisively to defend students, and to make students aware of forthcoming dangers such as fee increases. Student union el-

ections should be contested on these issues. All of this should be seen in the context of changing the present bureaucratic leadership of USI and of making that organisation truly responsive and attuned to the needs of students. The importance of equipping USI with a consistent policy for fighting the cuts should not be underestimated.

Parallel to this, radical students should attempt to win commitment from the student bodies to defend the civil liberties of the Irish people, at present under such severe attack by the Government. In particular, students should pressurise for the abandonment of the barbaric practice of capital punishment and for a reprieve of the Murrays.

Also in the area of civil rights, student unions must intensify their activities for the legalisation and free dispensing (through the Health Boards) of contraception, and urgently demand equal administration of social assistance to all school-leavers, whether male or female.



"Just one more question - can you run a school without money?"

Movement for a Socialist Republic

IRISH SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE M.S.R.

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to: The Secretary, M.S.R. 38 Clanawley Road, Dublin 5.

ICTU must withdraw from Tripartite Talks

What is the solution to the economic crisis? According to the news media, the politicians, the employers, and the leaders of the trade union movement, the answer is simple:

"NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP".

The trade union leadership has been selling this idea to the rank and file with promises of maintaining real living standards while curbing money wages: of gradually but genuinely increasing social welfare benefits and social services: of greater employment through the expansion of the public sector of the economy. The Government Green Paper on "Economic and Social Development" (published at the end of September) - supposedly an outline of the framework for collaboration over the next four years - has shattered the credibility of the trade union bureaucrats and their promises. The Green Paper reveals that neither the Government nor the employers consider any of these objectives to be desirable or realistic.

a) According to the Green Paper unit wage costs (i.e. wages measured against productivity) are projected to rise by only 15% in the next four years. This contrasts with an increase of 76% over the last four years. Since there are no plans for major increases in productivity (i.e. re-equipping and modernisation of industry), this lowering of unit wage costs can only come about through drastic and fundamental reductions in workers' living standards.

b) The Green Paper commits the Government against further increases in social welfare benefits. For the past three years there has been no rise in the real value of social welfare benefits. The Green Paper says that this policy of restraint will continue until at least 1980. But there is already plenty of evidence that the Government actually intends to cut the value of welfare benefits. Almost on the same day the Green Paper was published the Government reneged on its commitment to the ICTU to increase welfare benefits to compensate for the 6% prices hike over the past three months. The cost to the Government would be £5million out of a total budget of £1.7billion. Thus the Government's intransigence springs not from economic considerations (which are minor) but from a desire to set the right tenor for the next four years.

c) According to the Green Paper the only means of expanding the public sector - taxation and borrowing - are already exhausted (the value of taxes and the value of Government debt equals a quarter and one-sixth, respectively, of the value of everything produced in the country). Thus the Government sees it as a priority to halt the expansion of the public sector and if possible cut it back. Two days after the publication of the Green Paper, while the ICTU leaders were still pretending that an expansion of the public sector was negotiable, the Taoiseach issued a statement emphasising the need to curb the public sector.

PROFITS

The Green Paper is not in any sense a plan for social and economic development. Nor do the Government and employers have any such plan. The trade union leaders are simply trying to lull workers into a false sense of security by pretending otherwise. Workers don't have to look far beyond their supposed leaders to discover that the only plans of the Government and employers is to reestablish the profitability of Irish capitalism at the expense of the workers.

An Irish Times editor up the Green Paper unimpressive document dourly dished out in oft-rejected gruel poured with a few editorial editor also di as just so much wa had one realistic e signs", he said, "I accepts that the the last three year the present econom it aims to revive i taxes and holding o profits and invest

But the Green Paper cut wages: it is al ally to divert resci al needs and chan ets of the private the economy. On th ment has committed the present policy the multinationals Natural Resources no job target has or). On the other ions are planned f with huge grants o already being give ustry.

TRADE UNION POLICY

The bureaucratic l union movement mus deliver the workin est trap. It is tr ICTU conference (epted the interim powered the Congre tripartite negotia ment and employers rank and file wer that such negotiat jectives which wer ICTU policy.

Now it is quite ap the other two "soc contradict trade u of important areas case in the area o Congress is firmly expansion of the p gress executive ne outside their mand whether the public anded at all.

The Congress negot no basis for contin talks. The executi blatantly flaunting not withdrawing im cussions. Nor is th Employer-Labour Cor ive. The truth is t and economic plan essary now is that ment open a broad a sion within its ran the essential elem action programme t blem such as redu is also needed.



SUPPORT POLITICAL STATUS

On Tuesday September 14th Kieran Nugent, a 19-year-old from the Lower Falls area of Belfast, was sentenced to three years imprisonment. His crime was opposition to the rule of British Imperialism in Ireland: Kieran is a republican.

Since March 1972 all republicans convicted in the rigged courts of the North have been recognised as political prisoners by the British Government. But since Kieran's so-called 'crime' was committed after March 1st of this year, he has been refused political status.

Unlike his comrades also confined in Long Kesh, Kieran is denied the company of other republican prisoners. Instead, he is held in solitary confinement in the newly constructed Cell Block H. For the past four weeks Kieran has lain in his cell with only a rough blanket to cover himself, with no mattress during the day, only a bible for reading material: for refusing to wear prison clothing, the prison administration has prohibited all visits, even from his mother.

John Magee

POLITICAL STRUGGLE

The conditions under which Kieran is imprisoned show dramatically the determination of the British Labour Government to break the morale of republican prisoners, to isolate and intimidate them. Unless this attempt to remove political status is beaten, then in the coming months many more young men and women will find themselves prisoners in similar harrowing conditions.

Political status was won only after a long and bitter struggle including a 37-day hunger-strike by 40 republican prisoners in 1972. It represented a major gain for the anti-imperialist movement and a humiliating defeat for British Imperialism. The latter had been forced to admit that those whom it had labelled 'gangsters' and 'murderers' were in fact engaged in a political struggle to end Imperialist rule.

For the prisoners themselves it was no mean achievement, as it allowed them to escape from the boring drudgery of prison routine. They were able to maintain their own organisation within the barbed wire, to hold political discussions, and thus contribute to the development of the struggle outside.

DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Now once again the British Government is trying to 'criminalise' the struggle in the 6-Counties, to regain the ground it has lost. If successful, it will mean the isolation of the prisoners within the camps and also the isolation of the resistance outside. This achieved, British Imperialism would then meet very few obstacles in achieving its singular purpose - to force the nationalist population of the 6-Counties back onto its knees.

The importance of defending political status should therefore not need to be stressed. But even now, when the first prisoner has been sentenced and deprived of political status, some organisations continue to ignore it, continue to sit back like political ostriches seeing nothing, saying nothing, and doing nothing. Prime examples are the Official Republican organisation and the Communist Party of Ireland. This is yet further proof, if further proof is at this stage of the struggle still required, that these organisations have nothing to offer the Irish working class.

METHODS

There can be no doubt that just as the winning of political status required

hard and long struggle so also its defence will be no easy matter. Indeed, amongst those supporting the Relatives Action Committee which is organising the defence campaign, there are those who feel that the campaign cannot succeed. The answer to such doubts lies in the successful protests mounted on August 8th/9th which attracted over 10,000 supporters. But this required patient explanation of the issue, the slow building of pickets on Army/RUC barracks, small meetings in the different ghettos, the collection of several thousand signatures for the petition launched by Peoples Democracy. A slow process, without quick results, without newspaper headlines - but the only method that will ever pay off.

To threaten prison officers, workers in Army barracks, and so on, as the Provisional IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army are doing is seen as an admission that these forces cannot mobilise support on the streets. Thus they add to the credibility of 'anti-Provo' propaganda and the Peace Movement, who at this particular point of time are able to mount impressive street demonstrations. There is no short-cut to winning back the confidence of anti-unionist workers.

RESISTANCE

Inside the prisons the fight has started back. Kieran Nugent is adamant in his refusal to accept the removal of political status. But the fight that he has undertaken is not any easy one. As Dolours Price wrote from her cell in Armagh Gaol - "It is a fight that will be won only with the combined courage and determination of the prisoners and the loyalty and dedication of all concerned people."

Resistance within the prisons will mean harsh retaliation from the prison screws and British soldiers stationed in the prisons unless there is a mass movement on the outside fighting for the control of our streets. We must stand together for we will surely fall together if Britain is allowed to get its way. While Kieran Nugent lies naked in H Block, Long Kesh, none of us are free.

DEFEND POLITICAL STATUS!

BACK TO THE STREETS!

RE-BUILD THE MASS RESISTANCE!

CRISIS IN THE SCHOOLS

The educational system in the 26 Cos is in a deepening crisis of crushing proportions. It is a crisis which promises to evoke major struggles by students, teachers, and the working class as a whole. Its roots are many but its solution demands fundamental reorganisation of the system and re-thinking of its basic philosophy. The Irish educational system has always been skimpy and distorted - geared originally to the direct needs of the British colonial overlords and latterly to the needs of the neo-colonial set-up of the Free State. One of the over-riding distortions is the ownership and control of so much of the system by the church. The vast majority of primary and secondary schools as well as many third level colleges are completely in church hands. In education, more than in any other single area, the church has played its role as a central pillar of neo-colonial rule in Ireland. As well as determining archaic curricula and maintaining primitive school facilities, clerical control has served to root out or cow down rebel teachers and students.

The church-dominated sector of the system proved so inflexible that in the past decade, when imperialist investment in Ireland required a more technically trained workforce, the government stepped in to expand the secular vocational portion of the system, especially into the third level.

At the present time, there are superimposed on this chaotic, piecemeal system a number of powerful newer disrupting forces, resulting in the main from the international recession and the ending of the long post-war boom in the imperialist economies. Emigration has largely come to an end, and there is no likelihood of its resurgence in the years ahead. Consequently, there is underway a population explosion, probably surpassing that of the first half of the 19th century. 33% of the population is under 15 years old.

Primary schools are beginning to burst at the seams. In place of the 'ideal' pupil to teacher ratio of around 20/1, the actual figure is about 39/1. About 69% of all primary pupils are in classes of over

50. And the worst conditions of course prevail in the schools in working class districts. In the post-primary levels there has been a 70% increase in the number of students in the last decade. But at these levels the process is only beginning.

Among the consequences of this student population explosion, without a related expansion of facilities and increase in the numbers of teachers, are high pupil absenteeism but especially an appalling rise in functional illiteracy among post-primary students. Estimates suggest that about 30% of vocational school students and up to 10% of secondary school students are backward readers. Serious psychological as well as social and economic impairment of huge numbers of young people is undoubtedly being meted out by this increasingly crisis-ridden system. The government is meanwhile bent on cutting back on educational spending, thus shifting a still heavier burden onto the shoulders of the workers and the poor.

THE UNIONS

The prospects for the years ahead include accelerated worsening of the school system, rapid deterioration in the quality of the education received by young people and decline in the working conditions of all teachers. Resistance to this process is an integral part of the fight by workers and their allies against the deepening of their exploitation and oppression by the British imperialist overlords and their native neo-colonial agents. The defence and improvement of the educational system is a vital strand in the struggle of Irish workers and small farmers for "unfettered control of Irish destinies". It is a strand of the struggle that must involve the broadest layers of the workers' movement - trade unions, tenant committees, etc. - as well as the student movement.

The teachers have a vital interest in this fight and have a central role to play. Unfortunately they are now disunited. The primary teachers are in INTO (Irish National Teachers Organisation), the vocational teachers are in TUI (Teachers Union of Ireland) and the secondary teachers are

(continued on PII)

Under the pressure of the role of Imperialism in Ireland and the turn of events, republicans, including all those of either socialist or purely nationalist orientation, have been forced to adopt positions on social and political questions. This has been an extremely slow process among the vast majority, hindered by militarist conceptions of struggle.

Those most obviously at fault are the Provisionals. The process of radicalisation among women and within their own ranks has come into conflict with the influence and heavy weight of religious indoctrination. The traditional view that Catholicism and Irish nationality are synonymous has been absorbed and maintained within the broad ranks of the Provos.

Womens' Liberation



One example of the absence of the particular fight for women's rights is to be found in the events of the "Free Derry" period. A huge step forward for the struggle, Free Derry represented in essence an embryonic "dual power" situation. That is, where a whole community "opts out" of the State and decides to determine its own functioning; where the decisions are put back into the hands of the people they affect. But there is no evidence to be found of a move towards dealing with the social and personal problems within the community: i.e., the hardship inflicted on woman within the family by virtue of the "services" she must provide: cooking, cleaning, mending, washing, repairing and organising the family, doubly hard if she is also the breadwinner (as is typical amongst Catholic families in the North). Not one of these functions was collectivised, or socialised: there were few or no nurseries or creches established; all of which would have made women freer to participate on a broader level in the running of Free Derry.

Many reasons can be cited for these weaknesses. Definitely included is the failure of many socialists to realise the implications of the situation, and the weakness of the 26 Co women's movement of the time in coming to grips with the role of British Imperialism. Also the Republican movement, by virtue of its backwardness, was in no position to correct these weaknesses.

The historical schism between the fight for national liberation and the fight for women's rights should not remain unchallenged. For the Provos in particular, it will mean casting aside such assertions as: "the Republican movement led the fight for the liberation of women, and in fact, the first woman elected to a national assembly in these islands was a Republican." (An Phoblacht Editorial, Jan 30, 1976). It will mean recognising that it was women themselves who organised for such things as the vote; that Countess Markievicz developed her own capacity as a leader of the National Struggle, - it was not "given" to her. It will mean clearing away such confusions as "men and women to allow themselves to be split into male and female liberation movements is to play into the hands of the class enemy", and recognising the urgent need of Irishwomen to form their own independent women's movement, which with correct leadership and solidarity could become a powerful component part of the National Struggle and a powerful inter-related ally of the workers movement in its fight for liberation.

For the women's movement it will mean answering the challenge it faces, and that is the fundamental certainty that in the last analysis the struggle for womens liberation, as it proceeds, can and will be thwarted by unthreatened Imperialism. If the women's movement comes to grips with this central task, that of understanding the role of Imperialism, and develops its own strategy for struggle, then the only way is forward.

EVE ADAM

This has led them to adopt the appalling position that abortion is a British plot (i.e. a characteristic of British society), while joy in motherhood is characteristic of Irish society. The concept was most recently expressed in leaflets distributed by a Belfast cumann criticising the Peace Movement, contesting the "concern" of the British on life and death and correctly calling their concern hypocrisy.

But they went on to accuse the British Government of the murder of 70,000 babies under the 1967 Abortion Act! This argument does not even, as the Right-to-Lifers do, deal with the immediate reasons for abortion, particularly the needs of women! The Provos cannot be so blind as to refuse to see it is women who are demanding the right to abortion, - and not just in Britain but all over the world (in France, Italy, Germany, USA, Holland, Belgium, etc.). To control one's own body is a central demand of women struggling for their own rights.

And that is the important point to be made: women struggling for their specific needs. As our republican comrades have correctly pointed out, women have always struggled alongside men. In previous stages of the National Struggle they were there - Anne Devlin, Countess Markievicz, Betsy Gray, Maude Gonne - and today, too, women are fighting. There are over 200 women political prisoners in 6-County jails. Women themselves demanded the right to take arms in this phase of struggle just a few years ago. Many forms of struggle, and at different levels, are led by women. In the North, prisoners aid committees, prisoners relatives committees, street protests against British Army harassment and arrests, are led by women.

But what has been missing from the various component parts of the struggle is that part which fights for the needs of women, that part which takes to task and begins to challenge the role of Imperialism in relation to the oppression and exploitation of women. All the major areas of women's involvement in the National Struggle, North and South, have been supportive rather than leading. While in the last few years it has begun slowly to change in the South, under the impact of the women's movement, North of the border things appear to be pretty much the same. There can be no doubt that the influence and hegemony of traditional republicanism plays a large part in maintaining this situation.

Republic- anism

SOCIALIST WOMEN V FEMINISTS?

An article under the above title in the last issue of the 'Socialist Republic' has stirred up considerable controversy. As a result, we shall be printing in our next issue a number of letters on questions raised in the article. (Socialist Rep Editorial Board.)

PLOUGH BOOKS

Pamphlets available from
Plough Books;

BRITISH STRATEGY IN NORTH-
ERN IRELAND 25p

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM? 10p

IRISH NATIONALISM AND BRIT-
ISH IMPERIALISM 25p

SOCIALISM MADE EASY by
JAMES CONNOLLY 15p

CHINA AFTER MAO

The death of Mao Tse-Tung and the arrests of Chiang Ching (his widow) and other "leftists" have occurred at a time when China is undergoing its most serious political crisis since the Cultural Revolution. The present conflict, which came into the open when about 100,000 Peking citizens rioted on April 5th, involves a faction struggle between the "leftist", or Maoist, wing and the "rightist" faction, apparently led by Teng Hsao Ping but which appeared to have the support of Chou En Lai before his death.

The rightist faction are opposed in particular to what they regard as the downgrading of education and technology by the Maoist faction, for whom expertise in professional knowledge is secondary to "redness" in politics. The result of this line, they argue, has been to weaken severely the development of technology and retard socio-economic growth. Teng sums up the rightist argument with a much-quoted maxim: "black cat, white cat: what's the difference so long as they catch mice."



THE COURSE OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

The current faction fight goes much deeper than a dispute over standards in education or technology; at stake are the central characteristics of the 'Chinese road' to socialism. The cohesion of Maoism as an ideology derives from the specific form which anti-capitalist revolution took in China and the role which the Party played in it. These features become clearer when we contrast the development of the Russian and Chinese revolutions.

The Chinese revolution occurred in isolation as a detour from the main course of world revolution, after the failure of the revolution in Western Europe and the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution. The influence of the latter was especially evident in the nature and role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) which was considerably different from the original Bolshevik Party. Whereas the Bolshevik Party was a revolutionary marxist organisation through and through, and the revolution it led was based upon proletarian democracy (i.e. the working class exercised power through its own organs - the soviets) the Chinese revolution did not involve any democratic organs of mass power. Likewise, the 'Marxism' of the CCP was heavily modified by traditionalism, dogmatism and Stalinist distortion. The collapse of the soviets in Russia during the course of the civil war and famine led to the bureaucratisation of the new state - the formation of a privileged caste of administrators who gradually monopolised power - a process which met its greatest opposition within the Bolshevik Party. The bureaucratisation of the Soviet Union was premised upon the destruction of the Party as it had been, and the institution of a reign of terror which was primarily directed against the working masses.

MAOIST THEORY AND PRACTICE

The Chinese context was very different. The Chinese Revolution was not based upon the democratic organs of mass power but rather on the mobilisation of the masses in an authoritarian manner. From this the CCP's famous 'mass line' - a line premised upon the closest possible relationship between the Party and the masses, while simultaneously the Party - or rather the top echelons of the Party/Army complex - maintains a monopoly of all decision making. The Maoists have always been very anxious to prevent a deep chasm emerging between the Party leadership and the masses of a type which exists in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The strategy they devised to prevent this development has been twofold: firstly, they have acted to prevent the emergence of a large and hardened caste of administrators and managers, and secondly they have attempted to involve the masses in local administration and decision making. However, there is a great risk for the bureaucracy that an autonomous mass movement might develop which would attempt to assume full political power for the masses. To prevent this the Maoists impose a system of extreme regimentation over all political and intellectual discourse. The consequence of the Maoist 'mass line' is, in reality, a fairly widespread a-politicism. Because, although Mao

declared that "the revolution must rely on the masses of the people, or everybody taking a hand", it is very difficult for the masses to become enthusiastic about political activity when "politics" consists merely of the oral and written repetition of the latest pontification from the Chairman or his cohorts.

The rightist faction has been able to increase its power and influence in the context of the disillusionment which has become widespread since the Cultural Revolution. The disastrous turn in Chinese foreign policy has been an important factor in assisting the process of demoralisation amongst leftist youth and workers. Whereas in the 1960s the CCP criticised the USSR for collaboration with Western Imperialism, they now characterise the USSR as imperialist itself: - as the main enemy -; and they ally with Imperialism against the USSR, and against progressive and revolutionary movements (e.g. Bangla Desh, Sri Lanka, and Angola). It is ironical that this flows directly from the ultra-leftism and subjectivism of the Maoist faction, for whom socio-economic relations are irrelevant in analysing a situation or a society; for Maoism the determining factor is the subjective attitudes of a particular individual or group. The 'new turn' of Chinese foreign policy in the 70s has enabled Teng and his faction to appear more left-wing on some issues than the Maoists; it seems that Teng's faction favour an alliance with the USSR and oppose alliances with capitalist countries.

The key slogan of the anti-Maoist faction is "unity and stability". Their general proposals are classically Stalinist: - to allow small increases in income differentials and thus create a narrow privileged layer to act as a cushion between the rule of the bureaucracy and the masses. However, it does not favour making concessions to spontaneous capitalist development in any form and the Maoist characterisation of Teng and his followers as "capitalist roaders" is a slander. More likely, the type of society they envisage is structurally similar to the USSR.

During the Cultural Revolution Mao proved capable of mobilising huge forces - especially the youth - against these tendencies, and of demobilising these forces when their activities threatened the whole existing bureaucratic structure. Now Mao is dead, his faction has lost much of its credibility, especially amongst the former activists in the Red Guards, and its main leaders have been arrested. The Chinese working class has increased its strength and its confidence and if any sector of the bureaucracy attempts to mobilise sections of the masses in the course of the

faction struggle they will find it much more difficult to send them home again when they have achieved their ends.



SCHOOLS..... continued from P 8

in ASTI (Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland). University teachers, to the extent that they are organised, are scattered in WUI (Workers Union of Ireland), ASTMS (Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs) and IFUT (Irish Federation of University Teachers). Unification of the teachers' unions into a single fighting force is a vital goal. In the period ahead, maximum common discussion, common action and solidarity by the different unions would pave the road to such unity.

Issues of common concern to all teachers would include defence of wage levels against inflation, defence of present facilities and spending levels against cut-backs, reduction in student to teacher ratios, vast expansion in teacher training, a crash programme of school building, improvement in school facilities as well as curriculum development and adaptation to the needs of the communities. Elimination of clerical control would speak in the interests of the vast majority of lay teachers. And related to this issue is the need to nationalise all the church-held school properties which were bought with community money. No compensation should be paid.

SOLUTIONS?

The annual conferences of the three main teachers' unions at Easter did not map out campaigns, common or otherwise, on these issues. Some discussion did occur at the TUI and ASTI conferences about the need for remedial teachers to deal with functional illiteracy. This palliative - undoubtedly needed for today's victims of the system - is no answer to the population explosion in the primary schools. More schools, more teachers, better facilities are needed. Probably the most 'daring' stand taken by the ASTI leadership was to demand lay access to principalships in the secondary schools. In a situation where of the 500 or so secondary schools in the 26 Cos about a half dozen have lay principals, the issue of clerical control and its effects on the career prospects of lay teachers is especially acute.

The teachers' union conferences reflected the concerns of the older teachers. But currents are eddying about in the ranks of the three unions. Younger teachers are thinking and trying to work out solutions to the nightmare situation of the educational system. This radicalisation is deepening under the impact of the deterioration of the system and will find expression more and more in the teachers' unions. And the policies and fights of the teachers, to have hope of success, will have to deal with the fundamental issues of church control and national oppression as well as the immediate issues of wages and conditions of work.

ARMED STRUGGLE

the way forward?

'WORKERS' FIGHT' is the news-sheet of members and supporters of the Movement for a Socialist Republic. It covers the major issues on which class struggle elements within the trade union movement should be fighting. Not just describing strikes, it draws the lessons from particular struggles and provides valuable information to back up the intervention of militants, concentrating on opportunities to build and mobilise for class struggle initiatives.

If you would like to receive 'WORKERS' FIGHT' regularly in the post, please cut out this form and send it with £1 (more if you like!) to W.F. (Sub), c/o 38 Clanawley Rd, Dublin 5.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....



The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) recently claimed responsibility for several military actions against the British Army. Although no official explanation has been given of the aims and motivation behind this campaign, it is clear that by inflicting casualties on the British Army the INLA seeks to inspire the anti-unionist ghettos with a fresh hope of victory in the struggle against British imperialism. By the heroism of the deed they believe they can detonate a new upsurge in the North.

THE REPUBLICAN CONCEPT OF "THE PEOPLE"

This scheme is obviously mid-way between the latest pacifism of the Officials and the militarism of the Provos, whose definition of a "military target" encompasses a great deal more than the British Army. By striking this balance the INLA apparently believes that it has found the Marxist mean between social reformism and traditional Republicanism. But the Marxist concept of armed struggle differs from all others not in terms of how it conceives of its target but in terms of how it sees the relationship between armed struggle and the mass of the population. On this crucial point the INLA is fundamentally in the same tradition as the Republican Movement.

Despite the bitter animosity between the Provos and the Officials and despite the vast differences in their tactics, they are both strategically linked to the republican tradition by their concept of the Irish People. Republicanism views the Irish people as an inert mass which can be activated only by applying action from without. The theme of the "bought people" being redeemed by the heroism of the valiant few is a familiar one in republican ideology. Only recently, when claiming responsibility for the assassination of the British Ambassador, the Provos emphasised that their mandate for action did not come from the Irish people but from the justice and correctness of their cause. The Officials also continue to express this theme, albeit from a more overtly reformist point of view. They have a picture of the people as so politically backward and apathetic as to portray an almost complete lack of independent political life in its midst. Thus, while the Officials eschew "acts of heroism" they nonetheless resort to external stimuli such as the trade union bureaucracy or the bourgeois women's peace movement in hopes of breathing some life into the working class and small farmers.

THE WORKING CLASS AND REVOLUTION

Marxists have a much different attitude to the masses. For Marxists, the working class constitutes the original dynamic and creative force which makes revolutionary action possible. All the most effective forms of revolutionary struggle on which Marxists base themselves - the trade unions, workers' control, guerilla warfare, soviets, etc. - were all the spontaneous creation of the masses themselves. Of course, Marxists believe in the need for a disciplined, committed, and self-sacrificing revolutionary organisation; but the task of this organisation is to give leadership based on lessons learned from the struggles of the working class. In short, Marxists begin with the spontaneous and sporadic initiatives of the masses and try to generalise these initiatives in a conscious and therefore more precise and effective way. How this concept of the working class moulds the Marxist attitude to armed struggle can best be understood by considering Lenin's attitude to "terrorism" and guerilla warfare.

LENIN AND ARMED STRUGGLE

In Russia at the beginning of the century an organisation known as the Socialist-Revolutionaries carried on activity quite similar to that of the present-day Republican Movement (excepting the S-R's open adherence to the general principles of Marxism). The S-Rs consisted of a political wing and a military wing, called the Fighting Organisation. The Fighting Organisation was organised into Regional Mobile Detachments of Combat which were in turn organised into local brigades. Like the republicans, the S-Rs based their armed activity on the need to encourage and inspire the masses to revolt.

The S-Rs were by no means a simple collection of desperate individuals ready for any adventure; - they had a committed membership of 50,000 with 300,000 close sympathisers who acted under their leadership; workers and peasants comprised 70% of the membership with intellectuals making up the rest. Nonetheless, Lenin characterised their activity as elitist and a diversion from real revolutionary struggle. The very methods employed by the S-Rs excluded any mass participation. Moreover, in so far as militant acts inspired the masses, the result was not and could not be a greater self-confidence by the people in their own ability but a passive waiting for the next militant act.

It is true that "Marxist" denunciations of "terrorism" are often little more than a figleaf for their own inactivity and their capitulation to bourgeois prejudices. Lenin was not that kind of Marxist. His starting point as always was the ingenuity and resilience of the working class. Marxism, he said, "recognises the most varied forms of struggle and it does not 'concoct' them, but only generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle which arise of themselves in the course of the movement." Thus, when guerilla warfare (i.e. attacks on the police, government officials, banks, etc.) broke out spontaneously in Russia (between Autumn 1905 and Autumn 1906) Lenin fully endorsed and supported it and the Bolsheviks played a leading role in organising the fighting. While Lenin dismissed the indeterminate terrorism of the S-Rs, he was quite willing to support another form of terrorism, provided: a) it not only had the passive approval of the masses but their active support and participation as well; and b) it was linked to a realistic short-term possibility of a mass uprising.

JAMES CONWAY

(To be continued next issue: discussion will include the perspective for armed struggle in the North and the record of the Irish left in relation to the need for mass self-defence.)