

FREE THE COVENTRY

SEVEN



Background to a Struggle

Produced by

**INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP
(Coventry)**

Pamphlet No 2

5p

INTRODUCTION : BY GERY LAWLESS.

This pamphlet is written by members of Coventry International Marxist Group, who have been active in setting up the Coventry Prisoners Defence Committee and in the struggle to free the Coventry 7. The pamphlet is not only about the Coventry 7; it looks at a number of sides to the case, draws general conclusions about the capitalist system in which we live, and how to struggle against it.

The first section gives the background and facts of the case: why the raids took place? Why was Coventry chosen?

Secondly the pamphlet examines the present situation in Ireland - the British hope to be able to buy off a layer of the catholic population through reforms, seats in the Assembly and so on, thereby isolating the IRA from its base of support in order to defeat it militarily. The weak point in this British strategy at the moment is the troops. What factors have caused the massive breakdown in army morale, the decline in recruitment figures and so on? How can we work in this country to intensify this demoralisation?

The third section of the pamphlet looks at the rôle of the press around the case of the Coventry 7, and explodes the myth of the impartiality of the press.

The next section deals with the police and the law. It is popularly believed that the police and the law are neutral judges standing above society. The pamphlet looks at how the police and the law are always used in the interests of the ruling class and stresses certain points that have to be understood if we are to be able to fight back in cases like the Coventry 7. If we believe in the neutrality of the law, then we will be completely disarmed when attacks come wrapped up in legal jargon and legal framework. I can only add that the recent Littlejohn exposure and the probability that there are similar squads operating in this country, is yet another side to the armed might of the British State.

The International Marxist Group has always had a very clear position on the Irish struggle. We believe that our main task in this country is to expose the rule of British imperialism in Ireland and to build a movement which can play a concrete part in taking forward the Irish struggle. The IMG has been prominent over the last four years in the Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign, the Irish Solidarity Campaign and in the Anti-Internment League. At the moment in a number of towns such as Coventry, our members are actively fighting in defence of Republican Prisoners. The relevance of all ideas is shown when they are put into practice; the

DMG is the only revolutionary organisation which has shown that it is prepared to wage a consistent fight, despite all ups and downs in the political situation, to support and take forward the Irish struggle.

We stand for the self-determination of Ireland, and complete independence from Britain. We know that the root of sectarianism, violence and exploitation in Ireland is British control. We are equally opposed to the less open economic control of the Southern economy through investment and economic pressure. The national unification and independence of Ireland must be part of any solution which could ensure that the wealth of Ireland is the property of the people of Ireland. No long term solution is possible unless it means both the real independence of Ireland from Britain, and the ending of all forms of exploitation within Ireland through the establishment of a United Irish Workers Republic.

We call for the complete withdrawal of all British Troops. British imperialism is the cause of violence in Ireland: those causes will never be removed through actions of the British imperialist army. British troops will never bring peace to Ireland; they can only bring oppression. The problem can never be part of the solution.

We call for the ending of interment and the release of all Irish political prisoners, Quite apart from the injustices and brutalities which have accompanied interment, the British government has no right to control any part of Ireland or to intern anyone for fighting to remove them.

Finally our attitude towards the Irish struggle is determined by the real struggles that are taking place. We give clear and unconditional support to those forces involved in the battle against British imperialism and its army. We have political and tactical differences with both wings of the Republican movement, but we recognise that they are the forces fighting British imperialism and that they are leading the struggle which will create the conditions in which the liberation of Ireland will be possible. We think we will be best able to convince Republicans that our ideas of socialism and how to fight for it are relevant, by demonstrating our seriousness in support of their struggle - not by condemning this or that tactic from the wrong side of the Irish Sea.

We can make our biggest contribution to the success of the Irish struggle by building a movement in this country against British rule of Ireland. When we say that we support the IRA in its fight against the British Army, we also prove that we mean it by building a movement in this country to fight for these ends.

But the test of all theories is action: Do these ideas help us to understand what we are fighting and how to fight? The last section of the pamphlet examines the politics of the Defence Committee and shows how it fits into the sort of framework outlined above. It also examines alternative ideas of how to free the Coventry 7, and shows how they have all been found completely lacking when they had to be put into practice.

We in the International Marxist Group are proud of our record of struggle on the Irish question in Britain. We say to Irish Republicans in this country; Don't judge revolutionary socialist politics by the behaviour of other organisations. We are as aware as you of the two-faced hypocrisy of many so-called socialist organisations in this country. They are willing to defend any struggle against imperialism, anywhere in the world - providing some simple conditions are met; little things such as that the struggle must be about 6,000 miles from Britain; that the oppressed people in this struggle must play their part as victims, and always refrain from retaliating; and preferably the imperialism should not be British.

But if a couple of fire-bombs go off in London, then we get shrieks of condemnation, and our socialist internationalist becomes overnight a patriotic little Englishman.

As a recent article in the Belfast Provisional paper "Republican News" said: "With very few exceptions, nearly the whole British Left has shown itself in Ireland to be heavily tinged with imperialism and even racism. When it comes to Ireland, internationalism stops at Holyhead."

We couldn't agree more, and we are convinced that the IMG's record and consistent activity is precisely the exception to this record of chauvinism and capitulation.

Gery Lawless.

4, September, 1973.

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This pamphlet was produced by the Coventry branch of the International Marxist Group. As the revolutionary movement grows in size, it is involved in a whole number of struggles; and is even beginning to lead some of those struggles. It is important that the experiences and lessons of these struggles are drawn and widely understood. More copies of this pamphlet, and also of the previous one in the series - "Students and Workers against the Freeze", can be obtained from:

27 Paynes Lane, Hillfields, Coventry.

THE BOMBS.

The recent wave of bombs in this country has produced a sickening wave of hypocrisy in the British press. Only a few days after it became obvious that the British Secret Service, sanctioned by the government, had used free lance squads of criminals, such as the Littlejohns, in the bombings in Dublin last December, we have screaming headlines condemning bombs being let off in this country. One day, then condemn the Derry coroner for being "emotional" when he described Bloody Sunday, as "sheer, unadulterated murder", the next day they use the same "emotional" words about the London bombs themselves.

There is a world of difference between the violence of the oppressor - economic exploitation, poverty, military conquest, and where necessary, the dirtiest tricks in any book; and the violence of the oppressed - the right and need to struggle by any means necessary against that oppression. We all wish that socialism and real freedom could be achieved peacefully, but we wouldn't be taking our own beliefs seriously, unless we recognised that the ruling class will not abandon its power and privilege without a fight.

There may well be some Secret Service activity behind the recent bombings. However, if there are Republicans involved in some of the incidents, our attitude is this: we defend the right of the Republican Movement to engage in activity in this country, but we do not believe that this is the right time for such a campaign. The possibilities for building a wide movement for the withdrawal of the troops will be set back by the bombings. For these reasons - the overall interests of the struggle - we are against a military campaign in this country at this time.

It is obvious that the banning of Sinn Fein is being discussed at the moment by the government. What the outcome will be, cannot be said at the time of writing. At the same time, the Secret Service (through their faithful servants in the Daily Mail) are using the opportunity to start a witch hunt against the IMG. The purpose of all these is to nip the bid of a "Troops Out" movement before it grows, and they are designed to feel out the ground - to gauge opinion to the possibility of a ban on Sinn Fein or sections of the revolutionary left.

The lessons are clear. British capitalism is tottering from crisis to crisis. It faces a massive defeat in Ireland, alongside tremendous struggles of the British working class. In this situation the ruling class will fight against their enemies.

We must be ready for and fight all such attacks.

THE RAIDS IN COVENTRY.

On Friday, April 13, 1973, at 6.00am over 150 Irish homes all over England were raided by the Special Branch. The heaviest raids were in Coventry.

12 homes were raided at 6.00 am and by the evening over 20 had been turned over. In the next two weeks, more than 50 homes were raided, some of them two or three times. The only non-Irish home that was raided in Coventry was the office of the IMG. The police were looking for "explosives". However, nothing was found.

As a result of the raids 7 Irishmen from Coventry are now facing trial in Birmingham Crown Court, on October 8, on various charges, the key ones being "conspiracy to cause explosions" and also for two of them being members of the IRA.

Also, during the first week of the raids about 20 Irish men and women were taken into the police station for questioning. 9 of them were put on police bail of £50.00 charged with "suspicion of conspiracy to cause damage". The charges against them were dropped before they had to surrender their bail at the police station. Also, Tim Canty, was charged with possession of 200 rounds of .22 ammunition and was one of the nine on the suspicion of conspiracy charge. (for details of Tim's case see Red Weekly, No. 13, July 27, 1973).

The Coventry 7 are:

Father Fell: Arrested April 13, at 6.00am. Has been in solitary confinement ever since. Was very well known for his support for the nationalist population in the North.

Frank Stagg: Arrested on April 13, questioned and released. He was subsequently rearrested on April 14, coming out of a friends' house and has been in solitary confinement since.

Roland Lynch: Arrested on April 13. Has been in solitary confinement since.

Frank Kelly: Arrested on April 13. Was released and rearrested on April 14, at the same time as Stagg but at a different place. Was in solitary until the middle of July when his solicitors successfully appealed to the Judge in Chambers and he was made a category B prisoner.

Tony McCormick: Dragged out of bed on April 14. Was in solitary until the same time as Kelly. The youngest of the Coventry 7, had his 18th birthday, in prison.

Gerry Rush: Was arrested on the afternoon of April 13. Was in solitary until the beginning of July when his solicitors successfully appealed to the Judge in Chambers, and he was released on bail of £250.00 of his own and two sureties of

£250.00. He has to sign on at the police station every day. His employers would not have him back after he was released on bail, but the union managed to get him suspended on full pay until the trial.

Patrick Burke: Was originally arrested on April 18th and was one of the nine. The police dropped the charge against him before he had to surrender his bail. He was rearrested on May 31 and charged. He appeared in court on June 1, and much to the police's surprise he was given bail. When they were all committed to trial, Pat was taken into solitary with all the others. He was released on bail again on June 25, after his solicitors successfully appealed to the Judge in Chambers.

The original 6 made their first appearance in court on April 16. A large crowd greeted them going into the court room and coming out. Similar crowds (up to 300) picketed the court everytime the men made their appearance.

The charges against the men are the following:

April 16: First appearance in court. All charged with "conspiring together, and with other persons unknown, to cause by an explosive substance an explosion in the United Kingdom of a nature likely to endanger life or to cause serious injury to property".

On May 21, further charges were preferred against all of them.

"that, between January 1 and April 15, in the counties of Warwick and London, they conspired together and with persons unknown to damage or destroy buildings by fire" The other one was that "they conspired together and with persons unknown to destroy buildings".

Lynch was further charged that "On April 13 in Coventry he had in his possession sodium chlorate, concentrated nitric acid, a number of balloons, an alarm clock and seven sensitive microswitches intending to use them or permit others to use them to destroy or damage property".

On June 4, Stagg and Fell were charged that "between January 1 and April 15, in Warwickshire they took part in the control and management of the Coventry unit of the IRA which was organised and trained for the purpose of enabling its members to be employed for the use of physical force in promoting a political object"

Lynch was further charged with "having on April 13 in his possession certain explosive substances-sodium chlorate, concentrated nitric acid and sulphuric acid, wax, balloons, an alarm clock, 7 pressure sensitive micro-switches-in such circumstances as to give rise to reasonable suspicion that they were not in his possession for a lawful object".

The Coventry Prisoners Defence Committee was formed on the initiative of the IIR. It saw its main purpose as explaining the case of the Coventry 7 and trying to win as much support for the men as possible. The Defence Committee produces a regular bulletin (circulation 10,000. Back copies of the bulletin can be obtained from 27, Paynes Lane, Coventry).

It is important to understand why the raids took place and why Coventry was chosen. The British ruling class was already beginning to get cold feet about its policies in Ireland. Therefore, it saw as an important component of its strategy in the 6 Counties to hit at the base of support for the struggle. Therefore, one saw the bombs go off in Dublin, when the "Offences against the State Act" was being discussed in the Dail, last December. Since then, the Southern Regime has moved in a very concerted way against the Provos. In Britain, there were the raids after the London bombs in March, but the concerted effort started on April 13 - obviously the police knew who to check. But the important point for us to understand is that these raids and the subsequent arrests have to be seen in connection with what is happening in the North.

Coventry was picked because it was hoped that, due to the 1939 bomb, which went off in Broadgate, Coventry killing 5 people, the local population would be even more hostile to the Irish struggle than in other areas. The ruling class used all its power since the raids to make sure that everyone in Coventry was reminded about the '39 bomb; through the press, through the statements of the police, through the evidence that the police gave at Tim Canty's trial. They hoped that in this way support would be built for the Coventry 7, and that they would be able to get away with an easy, quick and heavy conviction on flimsy evidence.

Things did not work out for them exactly as they hoped they would. The Defence Committee did manage to get the support of large layers of the local Irish community - all the local colleges and some Trade Union branches passed motions of support and send donations to the Defence Committee.

The pickets outside the court grew in numbers and militancy. The desperate attempts to intimidate and harrass the supporters of the Coventry 7 failed miserably.

That is the main reason why the date for committal of the men was changed three times, why the one and only national Orange march in Coventry (2,000 strong) took place after the raids with an escort of only 8 police officers; that is why the pickets outside the court were treated to at least 50 uniformed policemen, any number of plainclothesmen and at least one armed marksman.

PROSPECTS IN IRELAND.

The latest Tory plan for the pacification of Ireland is in a shambles following the Assembly elections.

This is the last in a series of attempts by British imperialism to solve the Irish problem. It started with support for the Civil Rights campaign as a way to dismantle some of the most obvious "horrors" of the Unionist state, and therefore improve Britain's economic and political relations with the South. However the Civil Rights movement came up against a brick wall. The Catholic ghettos had to be defended from Orange attacks.

The refusal of the Orange block to even talk of reform, and the development at the same time of very militant and widespread support for the IRA, led to a drastic change in British policy.

The big stick was out against the Catholics- the British tried to smash the IRA and the Catholics through outright repression- internment and Bloody Sunday. They failed. So yet another policy was worked out. Stormont was abolished: the surgeon's knife replaced the big stick. Some reforms together with a suffocating of the Catholic ghettos with British troops, many arrests and continued internment- the name was changed to detention. This did not work- it did not isolate the IRA from the support of the Catholic ghettos. The farce of the border referendum showed this.

Now the latest and the most dangerous tactic:- to get politics off the street and back into Parliament, and in this way to isolate and render redundant the IRA. The composition of the Assembly is far from what the British hoped it would be. Alliance, Whitelaw's party, gained a miserable 8 out of 78 seats despite support from the British media, British expertise, and £7,000,000. Whitelaw's whole strategy for the assembly was based upon the hope that Alliance would get at least 15 to 20 seats, i.e. the crucial balance of power. Had Alliance obtained such a figure Whitelaw would then have formed an executive around them drawing in the ultra-collaborationist wing of the SDLP and the Bradford wing of the Unionist Party.

Whitelaw would then have worked for a gradual dismantling of the Orange ascendancy and an integration of the Catholics into British Unionist politics. The composition of the new Assembly will allow the withering away of the ascendancy, but on the more fundamental issue, the very existence of a separate Northern Irish State, the elections have produced no cheer for Whitelaw.

The Catholic vote for the SDLP represents to some extent a growing war-weariness in the Catholic population, but more important, as Bernadette Devlin said, Catholics mainly voted for the SDLP to kick out the Unionists, having seen the 'boycott in the local government elections lead to the Unionists retaining 50% control in Fermanagh and a Paisleyite elected in the Bogside. The vote for the SDLP represents a sizeable political defeat for the Provos. This is partly explained by the fact that it is difficult to run an election campaign while fighting a war.

But this explanation in itself is not enough. The fact is that the Provos pitched their total propaganda campaign on a moralistic "don't let the internees down" appeal. There was no coherent agitation explaining in a systematic way what the British were using the election for, and how the boycott fitted in to an overall plan to take the struggle forward towards national independence.

But if it would be wrong to ignore the set-back, it would be criminal to exaggerate it. Tens of thousands of those who voted for the SDLP would walk out of the polling stations and hide an IRA man with a rocket launcher if needed.

However many of the SDLP MPs received their votes from the strong Republican areas and therefore they are under great pressure from their electors not to sell out. Over the coming period Gerry Fitt will be built up by the British press and Whitelaw as being the 'moderate man', 'the one who really represents the Catholics'.

The Assembly can only work if the Provos are beaten. It is recognition of this fact that drives the Brits to push on desperately to try and make the Whitelaw plan work.

If the Provo threat did not exist, British strategy would be to move slowly through the summer to find an acceptable Executive for the Assembly, (their original plan). But this would create a power vacuum, and intensify the mood in Britain for pulling the troops out. So Whitelaw pushes on regardless, knowing that if he does not defeat the Provos, by at the very latest next March, the morale of the Army- figures show that only 652 adults were recruited in April compared with 1348 in the April of last year- may melt with the first snows of 1974.

The wealth of demonstrations, rallies, meetings etc, and the tremendous level

of support during the anniversary of internment still gives confidence that this will be the last struggle for Irish freedom. The SDLP condemned the anti-internment demonstrations (they believe they will end internment through negotiations in the Assembly) and they were publicly humiliated by the level and determination of the support.

The way ahead is clear: firstly the massive army onslaught must be opposed through the continuation of the military campaign. It is the armed struggle which has beaten back every other phase of British strategy, and it can succeed again. But we must also heed the warning of the Assembly elections. It is essential that a political line is worked out which can explain that the freedom of Ireland means overthrowing Fine Gael and Fianna Fail just as much as destroying the six county state. Further the freedom of Ireland means the ending of all forms of exploitation, in particular the exploitation of the working class, agricultural labourers and small farmers by Irish and foreign capitalists.

This must show the way forward and give people real involvement in that struggle. The development of bodies such as street committees, squatting and tenant's committees, taking control over public services, will provide means of holding together mass support, and at the same time give the opportunity to put across the political ideas necessary to free Ireland.

The Fourth International has a sympathising section in Ireland - the Revolutionary Marxist Group. Although still a small organisation, the RMG is involved in all aspects of the struggle in Ireland - North and South. For more information about the policies and activities of the Revolutionary Marxist Group, or to obtain copies of their paper - The Plough, contact the address below.

I would like more information about the RMG:

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....
.....

Send to: 58 North Great Charles Street, Dublin.

THE POLICE AND THE LAW.

The use of abstract law and the rather less abstract police thugs (armed or otherwise) in the cases of the Coventry 7, Belfast 10 etc; and also in recent attacks on pickets (Shrewsbury 24, during hospital strike etc) has shown very clearly the role which these state agencies play. There is an increasing awareness of the political nature of both the law and the police. As examined elsewhere in this pamphlet, the government is running out of the time necessary to make its latest "solution" - the White Paper - work. More than ever it is determined to defeat all opposition - not just the IRA in the North, but also the supporters of the Irish struggle in this country. This part of the government's task is being carried out through the "neutral" police and law.

However, there is not yet a Special Powers Act in Britain. The government has to make its attacks without appearing to openly contradict the so-called law, and so-called British democracy.

DEMOCRACY AND LAW.

The stability of capitalist rule in Britain owes a lot to the existence of Parliamentary democracy. The Labour Party and the trade unions have always accepted the parliamentary rules of struggle. They believe that laws agreed by Parliament are democratic and therefore have to be obeyed. They believe that all efforts to achieve change must be gradual and they must be directed through parliament. The acceptance of these ideas and the forms of struggle that flow from them is an important part of the stability of capitalism in Britain.

However, the whole experience of working class and anti-imperialist struggles proves exactly the opposite. To give a couple of recent examples of this: Mike Farrel and Tony Canavan were not released through legal channels; they were released because of massive support in the North and in this country, and Whitelaw was frightened of the outcome if he let them starve. Similarly, the 5 dockers who were jailed last year were freed because of a huge wave of strikes and demonstrations, not because the Official Solicitor proved they had been unlawfully imprisoned.

Rule through parliament suits the ruling class because it enables them to tame sections of the working class movement. Rule through parliament rests on and strengthens layers in the working class who accept and are prepared

to work through the system. Although the ruling class control parliament and the legal structure, it is not quite that simple. To pass a law is one thing, to put it into operation is another. The British parliament took only 12 hours to pass a law, retroactively making the activities of the British army legal. But that did not make the army any more welcome in the North, and didn't stem the IRA's military struggle for one second. Parliament passed the Industrial Relations Act, but as soon as they tried to put it into practice, it was met with mass opposition. The IRAct is now on the shelf, waiting for a more favourable situation to put it into operation. The implementation of any law depends on the balances of forces on the ground - depends on who fights hardest and longest.

, In all attacks made by the ruling class, the law is an integral component of their armoury. We can see this in the Pay Freeze, in the current efforts to undermine picketing rights, in the present attacks on Republicans in this country. We can see it in the Immigration laws passed over the past few years: these are intended to encourage racial divisions within the working class, to intimidate immigrant workers from engaging in political activity, and to give a free hand to extreme right wing and fascist groups who want to build their support on the basis of sordid racist hysteria.

To fight the ruling class effectively, we have to fight back on every level of attack. And this means we have to oppose their laws and support the victims of those laws. To do this we have to be clear about three things.

Firstly as explained above the exact way in which the law is used and applied depends on the relationship of forces. Any law can be broken and fought back by a mass movement that draws in the real power of the working class. The laws on the statutebook and the way they are used is a reflection of past and present struggles.

Secondly, the whole strength of the law as a weapon for the ruling class relies on the popular belief that the law is impartial and neutral. Justice will be done at the trial, and therefore there is no need to build any support outside the court. It is the task of Republicans and socialists to explain to the rest of the working class the class nature of the law, not for their general knowledge, but in order to build real and substantial support. This is the only way to

ensure the release, not just of the Coventry 7 or the Shrewsbury 24, but to defend against future attacks on Republicans, trade unionists or revolutionaries. To build a movement to smash the conspiracy laws could unite a number of struggles against different aspects of the Tory offensive. At the same time it would show in practice the class nature of the law.

Thirdly, the law opens a trap for all supporters of political activists, such as the Coventry 7. The long drawn out nature of the legal trial tends to focus the issue in terms of "guilty" or "not guilty". In the case of the Coventry 7, we are ^{not} concerned with whether or not they are guilty, but whether or not the government attack can be beaten back. Socialists and republicans give full support to the struggle of the Irish for self-determination: we ^{not} ~~must~~ ^{let} this case (which is very much a test case) ~~not~~ wrapped in questions of guilt or innocence simply because that is the issue the government has chosen.

THE POLICE.

Having said this about the use of the law, it helps to see where the police fit in. The subtleties of the law also include the brute force, intimidation and torture methods of the police (and army where necessary). All these have been used and are still being used, not only on the prisoners who have suffered intense periodic mistreatment, but also on their supporters. These trials are not merely about one set of charges for one offence, they are a nationally planned attack on supporters of the Irish struggle. The police are the striking force in this attack.

Britain's image of "the friendly copper" is used in the same way as "the neutral law" -- to hide reality. This reality, in Coventry alone, meant systematic beating up of the prisoners, preventing them from seeing their solicitors, for one man (who was later released) refusing the supply of tablets for an urgent heart condition.

When looked at from the light of real struggles taking place, the police force falls a long way short of its friendly image. As in the army, the reality of service in the force is very different from the glossy adverts. Advancement and promotion depend on carrying out political instructions. The recent publicity given to the existence of Armed Special Patrol Groups shows the state forces are learning some of the lessons of the Irish struggle and the upsurge in working class struggles in this country. The SPGs are not only trained marksmen; they have

also received special training in techniques of dealing with pickets and factory occupations. There is also the Special Branch (which was set up specifically to deal with "Irish problems"). They have been trained for surveillance of political activists and similar matters. When the crunch comes, the ruling class will always fall back on open repression by the police and army.

The police are the fist of the long arm of the law, and there should be no doubt as to whose shoulder that arm springs from.

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THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP. (BRITISH SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL)

The International Marxist Group is a revolutionary socialist organisation which believes that the struggle of the trade unions against the employers and against the present Tory government, or the struggle of the Irish for national self determination are different parts of the fight against the entire system of capitalism. We support every struggle against the system and its effects, including every struggle for better wages and conditions, the struggle of blacks against racism, the struggle of women against oppression, and we give unconditional support to the struggle of the Irish against British rule.

We believe, however, that all these struggles can only be successful if they are seen in the perspective of the struggle to achieve socialism. This means a strategy towards the destruction of all means of capitalist rule, the nationalisation of industry and the establishment of workers control. Further, the struggle against capitalism is an international struggle, and we are committed to building the Fourth International - an international revolutionary party which can develop and lead that struggle.

To achieve these ends we work within all organisations of the working class, and we are willing to work with any group or individual on any of these issues for which we fight. In this way, we are convinced that the superiority of revolutionary socialist ideas will be proved in practice. By being able to take forward all these struggles, an organisation will be built that will be capable of developing and leading the struggle of the working class to overthrow capitalism and build a socialist society based on the satisfaction of all needs and genuine democracy.

Our paper, the Red Weekly, has continuous coverage of the struggle in Ireland; we have also produced a number of other pamphlets and material on Ireland and all aspects of the working class movement. For more details of these and other activities of the IMG, fill in the form below.

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP.

Please send me more information about the IMG.

NAME ADDRESS

OCCUPATION

Send to: IMG, 182 Pentonville Road, London N1.

THE PRESS AND THE COVENTRY SEVEN.

The press plays a vital role in defending British rule of Ireland. Lies (eg the slander campaign against Sean MacStiofain), cover-ups, propaganda, etc. The press distorts the situation in Ireland (and elsewhere), and presents a picture favourable to the interests of the government.

We can see this very clearly if we look at the Coventry Evening Telegraph and the Coventry 7. From the beginning, all the papers made big play about the security arrangements outside the court -- armed marksmen, massive escort, handcuffs, searches in triplicate, etc. This was intended to produce the atmosphere of hysteria: these men are dangerous, therefore they are guilty, therefore they are in the IRA. This was intended to isolate the prisoners, and to deter potential support.

Reporting restrictions were lifted early in the remand proceedings. The first headline in the CET read: "Bomb Parts Found". Had the Defence Committee not been set up, and had the trial been allowed to carry on in peace, then the police would have moved to conviction and sentencing as soon as possible. But once it became clear that the Defence Committee was building up support and getting stronger: the state had to counter-attack. One part of this was to start the propaganda war through the press. So reporting restrictions were lifted, and we had the headline about bomb parts. In the article under the headline what was actually alleged was parts of an incendiary device: these later turned out to include such lethal weapons as -- batteries and balloons. Then there was the headline: "Priest on IRA Charges". This was clearly meant to ensure that no potential juror was influenced before the trial!

The press has been only too ready to publish details of the police's evidence. It has given prominent display to the emotional elements of the police case -- IRA, bombs, etc. At the same time, it has kept quiet about the refusal to grant bail, kept quiet about solitary confinement, kept quiet about continual intimidation of the Irish community, and kept quiet about the real level of support for the Coventry 7 that existed outside the court. This is the "free press" that the British are so proud of.

The editors and press barons are firmly committed to defending the present

REPRESSION AND DEFENCE.

The present stage of the Irish struggle, causes the British government new problems in this country. As long as things seemed to be going well for the army, as long as it was widely believed that they were "keeping the peace", as long as the British press propaganda machine could wrap everything up with a few words of comfort; then they had very few problems in this country. Throughout the last four years, the movement in this country in support of the Irish struggle for self-determination has been small and isolated.

The Irish Solidarity Campaign and the Anti Internment League, apart from the weeks immediately after internment and Bloody Sunday, were little or no threat. The two wings of the Republican Movement has a wide measure of support among Irish exiles, but that support was fairly passive and did not go much beyond buying papers and giving money. It did not extend to active support. Most importantly in terms of political support, both these groups were cut off from the British working class.

However, the situation is one of constant change. The war in Ireland is the thorn in the side of British imperialism. The war continually creates the possibilities of a huge political crisis in Britain.

One aspect of this is the morale of the British troops. To try and counteract this decline, the British government has spent £5½ million. This has gone on glossy advertising, recruiting campaigns amongst boy scouts, church youth clubs, etc. Army parades have been arranged up and down the country to show off the glorious army and so on. But money can't buy everything. The fall off in recruiting figures and the demoralisation continue. Soldiers are still being killed. The tension is still there. It becomes more and more clear that the actions of the army are not leading anywhere. In these circumstances there are going to be more deserters, more drugs, more disobediences and more demoralisation.

The bi-partisan policy between the Tory and Labour Parties over the handling of Ireland, is beginning show cracks. The Labour Party is starting to voice some doubts about whether or not the present role of the British troops is the best policy. If (when) the Assembly fails, then the differences will grow. Of course, the Labour Party is not going to be any more sympathetic to the demands of the Irish people. Anyone who thinks that the solution to Ireland's problems lies

through the election of a Labour government, is entirely wrong. They should remember that it was the Labour government who sent the troops in; they should remember that the Labour Party has never even called for the ending of internment; they should remember that every Labour M.P. co-operated with the Tories to push through their retroactive legislation in 12 hours. They should also remember the Labour Party's policy over Vietnam, cringing support for Lyndon Johnson's brutal policies.

The Labour Party are never going to stand for the interests of the Irish people. But they may move towards an alternative policy for carrying out the interests of British imperialism in Ireland. This possibility is very important because it will bring British policy in Ireland into open discussion for the first time. This will create much better conditions for explaining the real role of Britain and British troops.

Also, there is a growing dissatisfaction in this country with the war in Ireland. People see their sons and friends coming home in boxes, and they don't know why. Already the petitions that have circulated in various towns show the growing mood for a withdrawal of the troops.

All these factors point to the possibility of building a movement in this country to demand the withdrawal of British troops. Our task is to point out that we want the troops out of Ireland because they can never bring peace. In all activities related to Ireland, the slogan "TROOPS OUT" must be on our banner. A powerful movement demanding the withdrawal of troops will play a real part in taking the struggle in Ireland forward to victory.

THE ARRESTS.

We have outlined earlier in the pamphlet why the arrests took place, why Coventry was chosen and so on. There are two other elements which can be brought out here: Firstly the arrests and the way they have been used by the press are intended to discredit these organisations and individuals who are already involved in the campaign to win support for the Irish struggle. (The recent articles in the Daily Mail and Daily Express about the IMG are further examples of this.) Secondly, both these arrests and the letter bombs in London will be used by the government propaganda machine to try and strengthen their hand. They will point to the bombs and the so-called conspiracies and say that we have carry on

the war in Ireland, otherwise it will start in Britain.

HOW DO WE DEFEND THE COVENTRY 7?

We have tried to show throughout the pamphlet that the case of the Coventry 7 cannot be seen in isolation. To defend the Coventry 7, we have to take up politics. We have to relate to the struggle in Ireland, we have to understand the role of the police and the law. We have to understand the government's policy and know where the weak spots are. Most importantly to defend the Coventry 7, we have to take forward the struggle to achieve their aims.

The main planks of the Defence Committee in its campaign have been the following. Firstly, we rely on mass support, not British justice. Secondly, we seek to expose the workings of the courts and law, to explode the myths of a "fair trial". Thirdly, our bulletins and activities have been directed towards gaining the widest possible publicity for the case; to lay the ground for explaining the issues involved and gaining support. Fourthly, whilst most members of the Defence Committee have seen the need to put the defence of the prisoners in a wider political framework; the main part of the committee's work has been around this single issue, and we have been prepared to work with anyone who agreed with the need to build support for the Coventry 7, and to work for their release.

The Defence Committee was set up in the days following the arrests. Our two main activities have been the pickets outside the court, and regular production of a bulletin. The pickets were designed to serve three purposes. To ensure that the prisoners were aware of a continuous and growing level of support. To ensure that the police were aware of the continuous and growing level of support. The crowd outside the court each week was vital as a concrete expression of support for the seven and therefore halting any plans for a rapid trial, conviction and sentence. Thirdly, the holding of regular pickets gave a constant focus to the campaign; there was always a specific activity in which all supporters could be involved.

The main purpose of the bulletin was to directly counter the effects of the police harassment and the press propaganda. We took up articles appearing in the papers, and explained what the real facts were. We tried to bring into the open, all examples of intimidation, arrest etc. Also, the mere fact that the bulletin appeared every one or two weeks, was a direct stimulus towards drawing people

into the campaign. It answers the old question "What can be done". It showed that something could and was being done.

The Defence Committee had many other activities as well. Although the major concentration of the bulletin was towards the Irish community, it was also given out outside or inside most of the major factories in Coventry, and a couple of trade union branches passed motions of support. A rally was held in Coventry on August 12, to tie the case of the Coventry 7 with the continuation of internment in the North and to demand the withdrawal of British troops. We sought every means to raise the case and to fight for support.

An examination of the role of the Defence Committee and the general question of how to fight such cases of repression would be incomplete without examining the part played by the "socialist" groups. The introduction to this pamphlet points out that when faced with the acid test of the Irish struggle, the British left has failed miserably. The same is true of the Coventry 7. Here is an issue which is important, not just in terms of the Irish struggle, but even in terms of the possibilities of future attacks against all working class and socialist groups.

The Socialist Labour League fill their paper with "the fight to defend democratic rights": but where are they when there is any specific issue of legal or police attack? Nowhere to be seen. The International Socialists participated in the Committee for a few weeks, and then withdrew (see the statement reprinted in Red Weekly No 6). The real reasons for their withdrawal can be seen in the fact that their members have torn down Defence Committee posters and tried to prevent bulletins being given out on picket lines. The Militant group do not support the Coventry 7 "in case they are guilty". And so on. These "reasons" are attempts to hide the real fact: none of these organisations are prepared to lift a finger in support of the Irish struggle.

The IMC has fought consistently for the right of the Irish to be free from British rule. The Defence of the Coventry 7 is one part of this fight. There will be many more similar cases in the next few months. Possibly Sinn Fein will be banned. We pledge ourselves to continue the fight: to expose British imperialism in Ireland, to support the struggle of the IRA, to defend Republican prisoners and to play our part in building a movement for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.