

# Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

## NO MORE CUTS

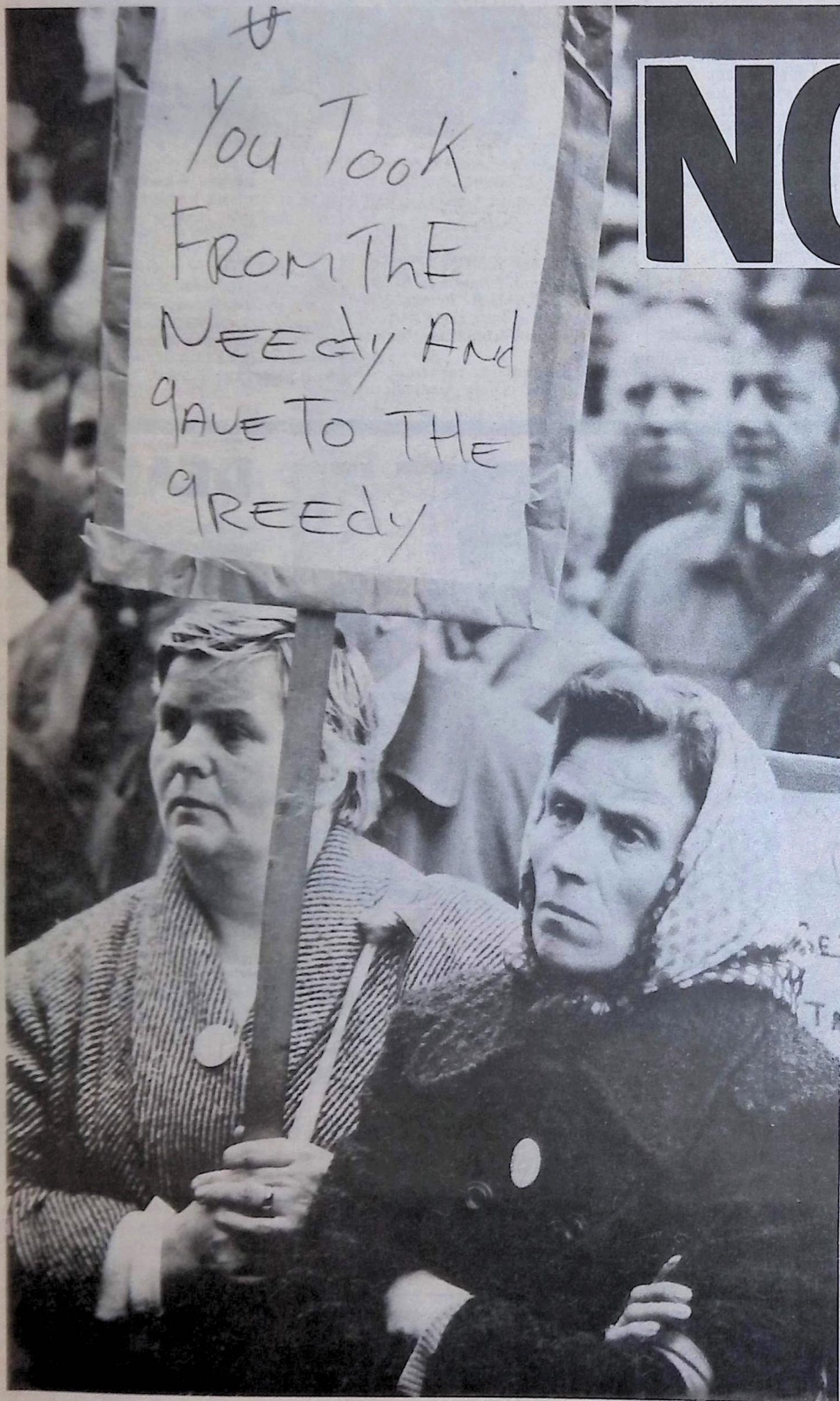


Photo: Derek Splan (Report)

**FOR ALMOST ten years now, working class people North and South have seen their jobs and living conditions slashed by wave after wave of government cuts.**

Today we are faced with yet more of the same. Fianna Fail have decided to implement just about all the cuts proposed by Fine Gael before the election, to attack virtually every aspect of working class life with cut-backs in health, education and social welfare.

Workers who have paid PRSI all their working lives will not now get the full benefit of their insurance if they are made redundant. Pay-related benefit for new claimants will be cut by 50 per cent. A longer waiting period for disability is being imposed. Both of these cuts were introduced to the North by Thatcher more than five years ago.

Despite the fact that there are over half a million unemployed people on this island, reducing the number of public sector jobs has come to be seen as the answer to all our economic ills! The Six Counties, where such job losses are already happening, is proof that the main effect of axing public sector jobs is simply to lengthen the dole queues.

the country is up to its neck in debt, we have to find some way to pay the interest. So let's cut the public sector pay bill.

There are other choices. One very simple way out would be to cancel the whole debt — *refuse* to repay the loan-sharks of the World Bank.

Closing the so-called "Black Hole" would go a very long way to solving the South's financial crisis; over £650 million left the State by this "Black Hole" last year. This massive sum represents profits made by Irish workers for multinational companies who then send the money — untaxed — out of the country.

The working class is not helpless in the face of this onslaught on our jobs and services. In the North, the fight against cuts in the public sector has widened out to include not just the workers immediately involved but also the ordinary working class people who will be affected by the cuts.

Last October, over 1,000 people from the Shankill and Falls area of West Belfast marched in support of their local community service workers. On February 16th, 2,000 people demonstrated in Ballycastle against the rundown of their local hospital.

Some groups of workers have already begun to fight back. In the North, teachers are holding a series of half day strikes and civil servants are proposing three day strikes in support of their pay claims. In the South the radiographers found themselves up against the pay freeze even before it had officially begun, and fought back.

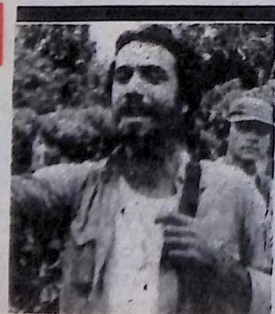
Any and all of these struggles must be supported. If public sector workers are defeated, workers in private industry will get an even harder time. If health, education and social services are cut again, we'll all suffer. It's obvious now, as never before, that working class people must themselves organise together to ensure that there are *no more cuts!*

Cuts in public sector jobs and services result in suffering for the weakest sections of the population — the young, the old, the unemployed and the sick.

The cuts which have been seen in the health service, North and South, are a good illustration. Over the last five years, we've seen wards closing in every Health Board area, from Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry to Ardkeen Hospital in Waterford. Hospitals like Dublin's St Patrick Duns' have been totally closed while Beaumont Hospital on Dublin's Northside can't open because the money to equip it has never come through.

Haughey's pay freeze and proposals to cut public sector jobs are being justified by the dire economic straits which the South is in. The argument is simple:

**Inside**  
**Nicaragua:**  
**A REVOLUTION**  
**UNDER SIEGE:**  
**PAGES 6 & 7**



**FIGHTBACK IN EUROPE: PAGE 3**



# Cuts hit working women

WOMEN IN the North will soon be facing increased hardship because of British legislation which attacks maternity rights for working women. The £25 maternity grant will be abolished from April 6th and new proposals will make it more difficult for part-time women workers to claim maternity benefits.

Since the 1950s women have become an increasingly permanent part of the workforce. Most married women today remain at work for most of their lives. Mothers of young children tend to get part-time jobs where they have the least protection and the fewest rights. The jobs they get are usually low paid and insecure, but for most of these women work is a necessity to help support or be the sole support for their families.

Maternity rights legislation was introduced during the early 1970s. The legislation is complex, difficult to understand and was never satisfactory in meeting the needs of working women and their families.

The legislation was always biased against the majority of working women who are in part-time and often temporary employment. Maternity benefits and the very import-

ant protection from unfair dismissal because of pregnancy only applies to women who work over 16 hours a week.

And a woman has to be in continuous employment for at least two years to be eligible for these rights.

This discriminates against the many women whose working lives are interrupted because they have children. But these basic rights that were won — protection from unfair dismissal, maternity leave, and the guarantee that your job would be kept for you if you wished to return to work — were extremely important in enabling women to keep their place in work while having a family.

But in the last six years, the gains made by women workers have been gradually eroded by the Thatcher government. These cuts in rights and benefits are part of Thatcher's programme to make the working class pay for the crisis in capitalism.

The Tory regime has meant increased unemployment, fewer rights for workers and a general

attack on women's rights, both at work and on issues like abortion. In attempting to promote small businesses, the government has shown itself ready to make women pay the price. With these cuts and rising unemployment, women are either being pushed out of work or being forced to accept extremely low paid insecure jobs.

Changes coming into effect in April include:

- \* The abolishing of the £25 maternity grant which was introduced in 1969 and was available to all women. The grant was never increased — it should have been £130 to meet today's prices. Now it is to be abolished in April and only available as a means tested payment. Half a million women in Britain and the North will lose out.
- \* There will be increased rules and regulations applying to pregnant women. Now the onus is on the woman to inform her employer if she wishes to return to work.
- \* Free milk and vitamins for children and pregnant women has been abolished.
- \* The EEC directive recommending parental leave, which gives paid time off for men and women responsible

*Married women remain at work for most of their lives.*



for children has been rejected. New threats come in the latest White Paper which proposes:

- \* to deny maternity rights to women working in firms with ten or fewer workers;
- \* to increase the hours of work per week from a minimum of 16 to 20 hours to be eligible for maternity benefits. This will cut many part-time workers off from these benefits;
- \* to make it harder to take up unfair dismissal claims. An applicant

to an Industrial Tribunal will have to pay £25 first.

Every erosion of maternity rights is an attack on a woman's right to work and must be fought by the whole trade union movement. Making the fight for maternity rights ICTU policy is obviously important and resolutions to this effect should be proposed. In the meantime, however, the only real protection for pregnant women workers will be that of rank-and-file workplace organisation.

—JOAN MCKIERNAN

## Magilligan jail set to explode

THE RIOTS in Magilligan prison last month were just a hint of the explosion of anger and frustration which can be expected in the prison if conditions are not improved soon.

Magilligan prison is a few miles from Derry. It holds mainly short-term prisoners and prisoners due for release. It has three H Blocks containing about 300 republican, loyalist and criminal prisoners.

Unlike Long Kesh, where there is segregation between republican and loyalist prisoners, a policy of forced integration of prisoners has been imposed by the Northern Ireland Office for some time now. It is this forced integration which has led to the outbreak of rioting and refusal of visits by the political prisoners.

Reports from inside the prison however indicate that the new policy is not really about integration so much as about breaking the will of the political prisoners. Threats of loss of remission for even the smallest infraction of the rules is held over prisoners whose sentences are coming to an end.

Conditions in the prison are dire. There are no recreational facilities, no "rest rooms". The only place prisoners can associate with their comrades is in the canteen between 5.30 and 8.30 in the evening. The heat, noise and overcrowding of the canteen has led to the atmosphere at that time being described by one prisoner as "a pressure chamber, a mad house."

The facilities for relatives and friends who are visiting the prison are punitive. Families have to stand totally in the open without even a shelter from the rain while they are waiting to be admitted to the prison. One visitor described the conditions for visitors as "pre-internment".

On a prisoner from Derry who has spent fourteen years in prison and who has been through the burning of Long Kesh, the blanket protest and

the dirty protest and who has recently transferred to Magilligan described the conditions and tension there as the worst he had ever experienced.

If all hell does break loose in the prison, or if the prisoners are forced back into actions like the blanket and dirty protests, it will be entirely because of the policies of the British government as carried out by the prison authorities.

## Housing Exec budget slashed

THE BRITISH government has announced another set of cuts in the Housing Executive budget for the Six Counties. Nine and a half million pounds less is to be spent on new house building in the coming year.

This is the second year of severe cuts. Last year, total Housing Executive spending was reduced by £44 million. And further reductions of £27.4 million per year are now being planned!

### BLACKMAIL

IN THE current radiographer's strike, the hospital consultants have complained that the strikers are putting patients' lives at risk.

They have conveniently forgotten the years they refused to work in the new Beaumont Hospital because there were no facilities for private patients.

We wonder how many died because of that little piece of blackmail.

Who are these guys ?

see foot of page



## BEANS



TONY O'Reilly is a wonderful guy . . .

Former rugby international, chairman of Independent Newspapers and now recently made Chairman of Heinz — the bean makers. Our native son made good.

For this he gets a measly four million dollars a year. His personal wealth is estimated to be £35 million dollars.

Ah sure times are hard would you begrudge him it?

## HISTORY LESSON

PRESIDENT Reagan said recently, defending the work of private groups in the USA offering help to the Contras:

"We had a thing called



the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish (Civil) War." He went on to say that this tradition was kept alive by the Contras and those groups in the US assisting them.

This is odd. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade was Communist-led. Those associated with it, or even those who were associated with pro-Republic demonstrations in the US at the time, were in the fifties subject to McCarthyite black-listing.

As the jeans ad goes: "don't know much about history . . ."

## DEAD

SOCIALIST Worker is pleased to announce the recent death of arch unionist bigot, Lord Brookeborough.

We find in very appropriate that his final illness first struck him while on holiday in South Africa.

That's what happens if you break the sanctions. Don't say we didn't warn you.

## GLASS

THE BOSSES certainly are a greedy lot. Take for instance the Waterford Glass variety. Their profits for 1986 rose from £14.7 million to £20.7 million.

During that same time they cut their workforce at subsidiary by 100.

However, as they say in the financial jargon "the market is unimpressed".

So this year they intend to further increase their profits and cut the workforce by 300 to 400 more.

Waterford Glass workers take note.

### THE GREAT LIE

By Abbie Bakan  
Today a great lie dominates the world—that socialism already exists. We are told that police states such as Russia China or Poland are the model for socialism.  
If you want to find out the truth behind this lie—to find out what socialism really is and what it is not—the this pamphlet is for you.

£1.05 incl post

SWM PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Answer: CIA men picketing for a wage increase. (We kid you not)



# WE THINK

# The price of capitalism

THE SOUTHERN Irish working class are facing into their biggest battle for many years. The Fianna Fail budget is a signal for an all-out offensive. Cut backs, pay restraint and more unemployment is the order of the day. Yet if this medicine could "get the country moving" it would have worked already. This has not been the experience.

\* Real wages have fallen by about ten to fifteen per cent since 1981. Sacrifices were already made but still the crisis got deeper.

\* The Coalition has already embarked on a major series of cut-backs — but still the country's debt rose to a massive eight per cent of GNP in interest payments to the world's bankers.

\* In the period when cut-backs and wage restraint were in operation, unemployment shot up. In 1980 seven per cent of the workforce were unemployed. Today 18 per cent of the workforce are out of work.

\* Everything has been done to encourage the bosses to invest. But to no avail. Corporation tax has fallen from 4.4 per cent of all taxes in 1980 to 3.4 per cent in 1985. But still the money flows out of the country in unexplained "black holes".

\* Even where profits rise, this has not led to more jobs. The Bank of Ireland is one of Ireland's biggest profit-makers. But now it wants hundreds of redundancies. Waterford Glass turned in a profit of £20 million this year — but still it wants redundancies.

The matter is therefore very simple. We are being asked to sacrifice for nothing. They don't even make the promises now. Irish capitalism is in a total mess and can only guarantee years of hardship

and emigration.

What is to be done about it?

One thing that comes shining through is the real role of Fianna Fail. For some time many workers have believed that Fianna Fail were slightly better and had some sympathies for working class people. Sections of the Left encouraged this belief. Haughey, himself used the rhetoric during the election campaign of Fianna Fail as a party prepared to fight the right wing Fine Gael/Progressive Democrat alliance.

But now we see the spectacle of the right wing consensus. There is far more that unites FF, FG and PD than divides them. The nonsense about the radical leanings of Fianna Fail has finally been shown up for what it is.

*In order to fight back now, it is vital that this simple message on the role of Fianna Fail is carried throughout the working class.*

But we must also understand the role of the Left parties: Labour and the Workers' Party.

There is much talk about the "pivotal role of the Left in the Dail." It is true that they hold the balance of power — but only when the right-wing divide.

The vote for the Left has declined in recent years. However useful and heartening it is to hear speeches in the Dail attacking the cut-backs, they offer no way forward for workers here and now.

Ireland is a peculiar country in one sense. There is no real prospect of putting our energies into electing a Labour or Social Democrat type government. Lecturing fellow workers that their only alternative is to chasten themselves for past errors and "vote left in future" offers little. Even where the Left have got into power (or are trying

to crawl, Kinnock-like, into power) they offer a sorry sight.

When it comes to elections, we are all for a vote against the right. But as we see, matters are not decided by the ballot box or by a socialist presence in parliament. It comes down to how the mass of workers are prepared to fight.

Unfortunately, the Left in the Dail do not have this perspective. They do not use their speeches in parliament to rally workers to struggle outside parliament. They fail to call for solidarity with workers in struggle. There was not a peep out of them, for example, when the radiographers were being pilloried by the press and the medical establishment. Instead they focus on manoeuvres in parliament.

We need a very different perspective to this. Over the next few months, public sector workers in particular will be in the firing line. We can expect some resistance from the union leaders to the pay curbs. Greg Maxwell, from the Public Sector Committee of the ICTU has simply said: "they are not on!". Every initiative taken by the ICTU for resistance should be given all-out support. But there is a problem. The experience is that workers taking on governments in other countries (see below) find their union leaders supporting only limited action.

Thus they either call for one-day stoppages or else lead sectional struggles. They are terrified of generalising the struggle to an all-out attack.



That is why rank-and-file control over any action is so vital. In France, in December, the railway workers led a magnificent fight against government cut-backs. But the experience led them to call a general assemblies of strikers to control decisions. They elected new strike committees to involve far more than those who carried the unions through periods of demoralisation. They also sought

to cement the links between different different groups of public sector workers.

The same lessons need to be learnt here. We have a long record of one-day and token stoppages. It has been useful in re-building enthusiasm and confidence. But militants must use the occasions for deepening the struggle and winning rank-and-file control of the action.

## Lessons of Europe's workers' fightback

THE ICE has begun to crack. For the last few years the European Labour movement has been on the defensive. The pattern has been one of retreat and demoralisation. But ever since the magnificent railway workers' strikes in France last December, a small ripple of discontent has started to build up. In the last two months four European countries have been convulsed by a series of strikes.

\* GREECE: The Socialist Party government led by Papandreu, embarked on an austerity programme. The workers responded with three general strikes in January. The public sector erupted. Even the Socialist Party "official" trade union was forced to call a one-day general strike.

Unfortunately, the struggle remained firmly controlled by the union leaders. The leading opposition, the KKE — the Greek Communist Party — was determined to confine the movement to one of best three-day stoppages. In the end they called off all opposition, arguing that "the only people who are profiting are the right wing".

\* YUGOSLAVIA: This

country was once held up as a model of socialist democracy because, its supporters claimed, workers' control operated at factory level. The myth was shattered by a number of major strikes in March. The Yugoslav ruling class face major problems. Inflation is running at 130 per cent a year. The country, like Ireland, is burdened by a massive debt. The regime is to meet its creditors to seek a re-scheduling of payments.

Mikulic, the Yugoslav Prime Minister brought in a new law freezing wages at the average for 1986. Workers will have to repay to the State increases they won in January and February.

The result was a wave of anger. 170 strikes broke out with 50,000 staying away. Demands for free trade unions similar to Solidarity broke out. Mikulic had to put the army on stand-by to gain a temporary respite.

\* TURKEY: saw the first major strike wave since the military took power in 1980. 90,000 workers struck. The official trade union movement heavily influenced by the dictatorship's henchmen, had

to give official backing.

Two events preceded the outbreak. In November students staged national protest after a student in Istanbul committed suicide over exam pressure. They demanded an end to expulsions from colleges, against mid-term exams and the abolition of fees.

In the same month, a series of local strikes broke out. In the Canadian-owned NETAS factory, 3150 workers walked off shouting "Bread, Peace, Freedom". In other factories workers boycotted company canteens and buses.

The revival of confidence of the Turkish working class is the greatest threat yet to the military.

\* SPAIN: has been most directly influenced by the events in France in late 1986. Immediately after the upsurge of French students, Spanish Leaving Cert students took to the streets to demand the abolishing of school fees and restrictive university entrance exams. Their anger led to a small victory.

This in turn inspired workers to action. The Spanish "Socialist" govern-

ment had imposed a five per cent pay norm and a general austerity programme. Workers in the SEAT car factory took a lead in fighting back.

But throughout the country there was an explosion of militancy.

In Oviedo, miners protesting against redundancies staged a general strike. They were met by riot police. In another area, the bosses were locked in until they signed new pay agreements.

Gonzalez, attempted to claim that there was "no problem" — only a series of adjustments to joining the EEC.

There are a number of features of the struggles which socialists should recognise.

First they are the living proof of internationalism at work. Workers' actions have inspired each other to fight back. Even in the western Mediterranean, Greece and Turkey, where Nationalist forces have pushed towards war, workers still learn from each others struggle.

Second, the form of capitalist rule is only secondary — workers have still been forced into fighting. The



Celebrations in the street after the overthrow of the military junta in 1974.

Social Democrats of Greece and Spain, or the rulers of the state capitalist countries, have had to fight the workers' movement as much as any Tory government. The scale of the crisis in these countries have stripped off all the left wing gloss and revealed the naked rule of capital.

Third, these struggles have tended to push beyond the bureaucratic mass strikes — but

have still been restrained. None reached the level of the French struggles where control for a period rested in the hands of the rank-and-file and the strike assembly meetings (although Yugoslavia was a partial exception).

In the coming months, as the issues have not been resolved, that will remain the key issue.



# INTERNATIONAL

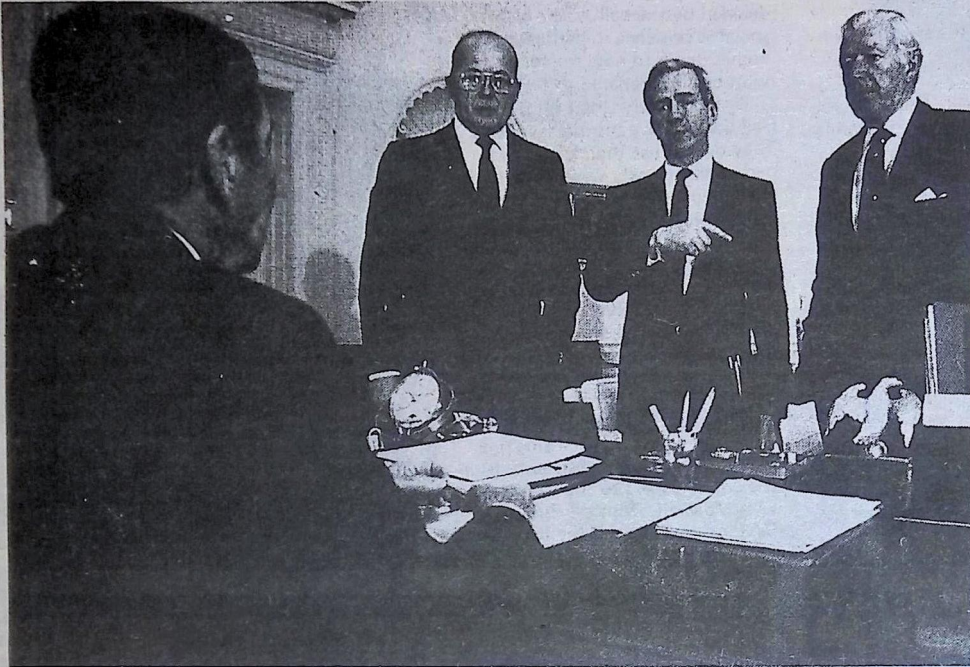
## 'Irangate' was part of systematic US policy

RONALD REAGAN has become a lame duck President. Since the publication of the report of the Tower Commission, his popularity has fallen to its lowest point in four years. The commission was set up to investigate what has become popularly known as "Irangate".

The commission found that Reagan authorised the sending of arms to Iran in return for the release of hostages held by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon. Until now Reagan has denied doing this. The commission also criticises Reagan's "management style", that is the way he let members of the National Security Council (NSC), particularly Poindexter and North, run foreign policy. Although the commission could find no hard evidence that Reagan knew the profits from the arms dealing were being diverted via "Project Democracy" to the Contras in Nicaragua, it's obvious that he must have known. Indeed, Col. North said in a memo: "The President obviously knows why he has been meeting with several select people to thank them for their support for Democracy in Cent Am."

The commission revealed a good deal about "Project Democracy" which was launched in 1982 with a fanfare of publicity during Reagan's speech to the British parliament. It was, he said, to be the US Administration's main "weapon" in the fight to maintain "freedom" in the West. The Tower Commission revealed that the Project was in fact the birthplace of schemes to "neutralise" Nicaraguan leaders and assassinate the Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi.

What the Commission didn't reveal is that Project Democracy is



"Don't look at me, boss." Poindexter, McFarlane and Regan meet the president.

not uninterested in Ireland - it has been more than generous in legally pouring funds into what they clearly see as the Irish "Contras" - the SDLP.

All of this covert, illegal activity uncovered by the Tower Commission is the result, not of Reagan's hands-off style of Presidency, but of his direct encouragement of CIA operations that have been going on for nearly thirty years. Most of the Contras' supply network is run by CIA

operatives who cut their teeth in South-East Asia in the early 60s. There they pioneered their "low-intensity" conflict, by which they combined murder with civic action and psychological warfare, first in the Philippines and then in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Among these operatives were Mr Theodore Shakley, ex-director of CIA clandestine operations, who has been identified as a contact in the Iran-Contra deal, and who had

worked for the CIA in Vietnam and Laos. Another was Donald Gregg, who served under Shakley in Vietnam and has been an advisor on the NSC to George Bush. He too has been identified as a contact in the arms dealing. So we can see that "Irangate" is not an aberration but part of a systematic effort on the part of the US ruling class to deal with anyone who threatens US economic or political interests whether inside the country or outside—JOHN STITT.

### Greece

## Communists bail out Socialist government

THE Communist Party in Greece, which enjoys huge working class support, has called off all opposition to the ruling Socialist Party.

The government, meanwhile, is stepping up its attacks on workers' living standards, wages, jobs and conditions.

A week ago the government felt threatened. It was faced with two general strikes and two ongoing strikes in the public sector. One week later it is strengthened and confident.

Once again the opposition has saved the day for its "enemy". And it will be ordinary workers in Greece who will suffer as a result.

The last month has seen three massively supported general strikes in the country.

The minimum wage is now so small that it will mean certain poverty for a large number of workers. This has caused considerable anger inside PASOK, the Socialist Party.

This led the "official" TUC, led by PASOK, to call for a one day general strike last week. It was the final despairing appeal to the government to grant minimal reforms.

Papandreou responded by saying: "Government is independent of the party." His recent reshuffle ensured that all loyal party members were removed from office—only one minister remained unchanged.

The answer of the leading trade unionists in PASOK has been to say "No more strikes, we can't win anything by striking."

Their strategy is wholeheartedly supported by the Communist Party (KKE). It was an alliance between both parties which ensured that the strikes in the banks and electricity industry were called off last week.

### Sell out

The KKE said they were defeated. "The only people who are profiting are the right wing," they argue.

There was no defeat, only capitulation to the government from the start. The KKE limited the demands of the strikes to arguments about bonus and agreements. It refused to call solidarity action or to portray the strikes as a direct confrontation with government policies.

The real concern of the KKE is its forthcoming congress, and the possibility of elections.

The KKE has massively swung to the right. Its demands are for a broad, democratic alliance of progressive and left wing parties for a new government!

Its hopes are also pinned on getting back into the "official" TUC. A congress has been called for later this year on condition there are no strikes. Of course, the KKE obliged.

### Miners flout emergency laws at their Congress

## A fighting demonstration of real power

FIFTEEN thousand workers gave a chilling reminder last month to all the candidates in South Africa's forthcoming whites-only election.

Nine months of repression under the State of Emergency have not crushed the power of the organised working class.

The workers were at a meeting to mark the end of the four day National Union of Miners conference.

Packed into Soweto's Jabulani stadium, the miners could not have flouted more emergency laws if they had tried. The stadium was ringed with pictures of Nelson Mandela. (It has been an offence to display Mandela's picture since the 1960s.)

They listened to speeches calling for the union to build links with political organisations and to lead the struggle for socialism. The police even had to stand back powerless as the new "Scarlet Pimpernel", UDF publicity secretary Murphy Morobe, briefly emerged at the rally.

Holding the rally in Soweto at all was an achievement, given the traditionally tense relationship between the miners and the local "comrades".

Miners cheered calls for a "democratic socialist society controlled by the working class" and for closer cooperation with "progressive organisations fighting apartheid".

Speakers called for the union to "defend and advance the interests of its members and the working class as a whole".

The miners are to lodge a 55 percent pay claim this year. And they want negotiations brought forward to April instead of May.

The biggest battle this year, though, could be around a different issue. The union has threatened strike action if the Chamber of Mines, which represents all the big mining houses, does not promise to dismantle the hostel and migrant labour system by the end of the month.

A hundred and thirty three miners have been killed in factional fighting this year, largely due to splits and tensions built up

by the tribal hostel system.

NUM President James Motlatsi warned: "Either negotiations start with the NUM to begin the process of dismantling the migrant labour system and establish workers' control of the hostels, or the mineworkers seize control with-

out their involvement."

This fighting talk could be more than rhetoric, if it is backed by real activity.

Strikes in the mines over local issues continue at a high level and bitterness at conditions and appalling safety levels will not easily be reduced. Nor will the Chamber easily be able to give up its divide and rule tactics which guarantee cheap labour.

The mines are not the

only source of continuing problems for the bosses.

The miners' conference coincided with the end of a magnificent ten week struggle by 11,000 shop workers in the OK Bazaars retail chain. Around 1,000 strikers have been detained during the strike.

Police attempts to smash the strike by brutalising occupying workers came to nothing. It is estimated that 60 percent of black consumers boycotted the shops, even during OK's "two for the price of one" week.

Engineering workers could be involved in wide-

spread battles to knock an hour off the working week.

These are not the demands of a devastated movement. More than 25,000 people have been detained under the emergency regulations. In some areas township organisation has been dismembered.

But, despite a high number of detainees in the early part of the emergency, the unions have survived the repression.

All of this is alarming for the bosses and white politicians in the run up to the May poll.

This is why there is now a continual stream of splits

and defections from the Ruling Party. Both the "enlightened" candidates and the ultra-right could pick up seats in the election.

What this all means is that no section of the ruling class has a clear idea of the way to re-establish its control. So splinters and vacillations are commonplace.

In this vein the final word must go to Dennis Worrall, standing against the government as an "enlightened" independent: "Black politics must be freed so that they may become properly organised, but emergency powers must be retained to maintain stability during the transition period."



THIS CROWD was later teargassed for listening to a church meeting about the detainees in Johannesburg last week



# Church and State today

"THE STATE recognises the special position of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic and Roman Catholic Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the majority of the citizens"

This bit of sectarian nonsense was an article in the Irish Constitution until 1972 when — with the Bishops' consent — it was removed. But it was, and remains, a simple statement of fact about Southern society.

The Catholic Church has tremendous power in the Free State today. Take just two areas. The primary school system is funded almost entirely by the State. It pays the teachers' wages and 90 per cent of the buildings and running costs of the school. Yet it leaves control of the schools in the hands of management boards where the nominees of the local bishop make up a majority.

Invariably, the school manager is the parish priest.

The State makes no provision for the education of non-religious Irish citizens.

The same applies to hospitals. The vast majority of hospitals are under the control of the Catholic Church although their funding comes from the State. The Church insists on its "right" to hire nurses and doctors according to its own "special" religious criteria. In recent months it has run a low-key campaign against the plans of the Hospital Board to set up a Central Applications Board for nurses lest this would cut into its power of recruitment. It demands that all doctors and nurses conform to the directives of its "Ethics Committee" in the hospitals.

This great power and influence is directed against any attempt to push Irish society to the Left. It is particularly directed against any extension of women's rights. In 1925, the then-Bishop of Galway, O'Doherty advised fathers: "If your girls do not obey you, if they are not in at the appointed hours, lay the lash upon their backs." That sort of crude barbarism has disappeared from the bishops' statements — but the same sentiment of driving married women out of work, of locking women into vicious marriages, of denying them access to contraception and abortion and generally of keeping them under control remains.

This position is unique. Even in other countries like France, Italy or Spain where there is a big Catholic majority, the Catholic Church has nothing like the power of the Irish church. Two major trends accounted for the decline in the Church's influence in these countries.

First in the 18th and 19th centuries, it became clear that capitalism could not continue to develop in semi-feudal conditions. But their battles with feudal society led the rising capitalist class to also oppose the power of the Church.

The Catholic Church was the largest landowner in Europe at that time. It took for itself ten per cent of all earnings — in the form of tithes the Church itself paid no taxes on its great wealth. The higher bureaucracy — "senior civil servants" of the feudal monarchies were usually high-ranking clergy.

So when it came to overthrowing feudalism, the deeper and more thoroughgoing the bourgeois revolution, the greater was the separation of Church and State afterwards. In France at the height of the Revolution, for example, Robespierre could proclaim the end of religion and the inauguration of the "Age of Reason".

Second, even where the power of the Church was not broken in a thoroughgoing bourgeois revolution, it was still weakened over the slow decades of economic expansion. The great boom in capitalism from 1950 to 1969 led to increased demands for women to participate in the workforce. This in turn led to an acceptance by the ruling class of the need for a liberal assault on religious superstitions of the past. Similarly, the

by KIERAN ALLEN

demands for a more literate workforce and a more rational form of capitalist ideology inevitably conflicted with the dominance of the Churches.

Ireland had the misfortune to escape these trends. Due to British colonialism, the Irish Church was not identified with the running of feudal society. It rather appeared as an oppressed Church that symbolised the oppression of the nation itself.

And the very brief and shallow period of economic expansion which occurred in Southern Ireland in the seventies gave rise to the only victory of the State over the Church — the legalisation of contraception.

The South, in fact, went in the opposite direction. The development of its bourgeois revolution was stunted as the republican leaders of the War of Independence quickly came to a compromise with imperialism. But they had reached this position only after years of hard guerrilla struggle. Many of their own followers and the mass of people that they had awakened with their words to the hope of a better life were still left discontented and possibly disloyal. For years their own republicanism was to come back to haunt the emerging ruling class of the Free State. It was for this reason that they ran to the Church for protection. In return for its ideological support in the battle with the extremists, the Catholic Church was given more and more power. The years from 1923 to 1937 were when the real basis of the power of the Catholic Church was laid.

In the battle to found the Free State and to defeat the republicans in the Civil War, the Cumann na Gael leadership needed to win over the Bishops. This was not very hard. The Bishops had always opposed "disorder" and the fight against British rule. Now in 1922 they issued their pastoral on the Civil War. It proclaimed the Irish Free State a "legitimate government and condemned the republicans still fighting for "causing criminal destruction". It warned repeatedly about excommunicating republicans. The Church's influence was crucial in establishing the State.

## POWER

This reliance on the ideological power of the Bishops naturally gave the Church great and growing influence under the first Taoiseach, Cosgrave. At one stage Cosgrave even considered setting up an Upper House in the Dail which would act as a theological board to ensure that the Dail was keeping in line with Catholic morality. But more practically, he was to pass a series of measures to consolidate the influence of the Bishops. In 1923 there was the Censorship of Films Act; in 1924 the Bishops had their say on pub hours with the Intoxicating Liquor Act; in 1925 divorce was outlawed; in 1929 the Censorship of Publications Act set up a censorship board with a priest as chairperson.

Although De Valera had been condemned by the Bishops, he was to face problems similar to Cosgrave's. He too was to break from the extremists. He too was to abandon republican ideals. For those reasons he too was to need the Church's ideological support in carving out a path for constitutional nationalism.

Fianna Fail tried therefore to outdo Cosgrave in playing the Catholic card. In 1925, Sean T O'Kelly proclaimed: "We of Fianna Fail believe that we speak for the big body of Catholic opinion." But the issue was to come to head in 1931 with the appointment of a Protestant librarian in Mayo. The Mayo Library Committee — which included one bishop and five priests — refused to accept her. The Cosgrave government dissolved the Committee. But De Valera rushed to the defence of the Mayo Library Committee proclaiming that the job "was not just a mere passive position



Archbishop McNamara and friend

of handing down books" but was "of a propagandist, educational character", and that for that reason a Catholic must have the job.

From there it was but a short step to the Catholic constitution of 1937.

Every politician since has been haunted by this legacy. They may resent the power of the Bishops, they may see a threat from the Catholic Right to the autonomy of the Dail itself — but they still rely on the Church as their bulwark in the battle for ideas. Garret FitzGerald and his "constitutional crusade" exemplified this relationship better than most. On the surface, FitzGerald looked ready to take on the Church. But John Cooney's recent book "The Crozier and the Dail" reveals that FitzGerald was in regular communication with the leading Vatican diplomat, Archbishop Casaroli, before launching his Crusade.

FitzGerald, like other liberals before him, might give a few barks at the Bishops — But he had no intention of biting. The more the economic crisis deepened, and the more he needed to take initiatives on the North — the more he also needed the Bishops' ideological support.

## RULING CLASS

Because the Southern ruling class needs the Church so much, the fight for the separation of Church and State can only be taken on by the Left.

Unfortunately, the Left in the past has not taken the task seriously — either going along with the fake liberalism of the likes of FitzGerald or collapsing before the power of the Bishops. The former Labour leader, Brendan Corish set the tone when he proclaimed himself "a Catholic first and a socialist second".

The rolling back of women's rights and of basic civil liberties after the defeats of the divorce and abortion referenda have brought a new awareness of the need to take on the Church. But an offensive against the power of the Church requires a recognition of a number of factors.

First, a political organisation must be built which unashamedly bases itself on

the philosophical principles of Marxism — which insists that there is a material basis to all ideas and institutions in society. Ever since Connolly's time, there has been a belief that religion is a private matter". When it comes to the relationship between religion and the State, this should be the case. But a socialist organisation cannot ignore the strength of religious ideas and just dismiss them as a private matter. Religious ideas must be countered and the argument won for a scientific view of the world. This does not mean that those with religious ideas cannot be socialists. But they must be clear that the demands that socialists make for abortion rights, etc — Marxism is not just about bread-and-butter issues — will often be in conflict with religious ideas.

Second, the battle against the Church is only one aspect of the struggle against capitalism. It is not possible to seriously take the Church on without also fighting the poverty and misery they defend — anything less is simply indulging in intellectual debate. The fact that Barry Desmond was seen one day campaigning for divorce, and the next day introducing cuts in hospital services, played into the hands

of the bishops. They were able to produce very simple effective slogans like "jobs not divorce" which seemed to make sense to many working class people who opposed Desmond's cuts.

Third, it is necessary to recognise that the influence of the Church over life in the South is directly related to partition and that the Church's influence will only be completely destroyed when the Southern State is smashed. We've been told that it will be another ten years before divorce can come on the agenda again. There is, then, a simple choice facing anyone wanting to fight for divorce or abortion; do you want to wait for decades while the likes of Dick Spring, Michael D Higgins and Proinsias de Rossa gradually increase their votes, taking the odd side-swipes at Church control? Or do you start now to fight the rotten Church-dominated State structure of the Twenty-six counties?

The conclusion must be that the power of the Bishops will be totally destroyed only when socialist revolution gets rid of the system they feed on.

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# AIDS

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SOCIALIST



# REVOLUTION UNDER

THE Irangate scandal in the US has shown the lengths to which the Reagan administration has been willing to go to undermine the popular democratically-elected government of Nicaragua.

Behind the lying and scheming of Irangate is the view that the example of the Sandanista revolution threatens the survival of capitalism in Central and Latin America.

Here SEAN McVEIGH examines the politics of the Sandinistas and concludes that this threat is more imagined than real.

## New regime attacks disease

IN JANUARY of this year the National Assembly of Nicaragua ratified a new constitution. The constitution, which was drawn up by the Sandanista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) and other organisations to its right, commits Nicaragua to a mixed economy and a level of democracy unknown in the rest of the American continent. The new constitution followed the success of the FSLN in the 1984 national elections when it received 67 per cent of the vote, demonstrating its popularity with the Nicaraguan people.

The popularity of the Sandanistas is easily understood. One only has to look at the very real changes brought to the lives of ordinary people since the overthrow of the Somoza regime in 1979.

Under Somoza, health care had been the preserve of the privileged and rich. 60 per cent children suffered from malnutrition. As a result, epidemics of killer diseases like polio were common. One third of all Nicaraguans suffered from malaria. The Sandanistas launched a public health campaign in 1981/82, inoculating half a million children under five against polio and measles.

A campaign to wipe out the breeding grounds of the mosquitoes which cause malaria has resulted in a 98 per cent fall in cases of the disease. Today 70 per cent of Nicaraguans have access to health care.

When the revolution occurred, half the population were unable to read or write. Hardly surprising, since Somoza had closed the schools in 1978 to save money which he felt was better spent on death squads. The Sandanistas launched one of the most imaginative campaigns in Latin America to wipe out illiteracy — using "Brigadistas" or voluntary literacy teachers, they have reached a stage where today only 13 per cent of the population remain illiterate.

Anastasio Somoza was a vicious, repressive dictator. With his murderous National Guard he ruled Nicaragua through terror and brutality with more than a little help from his friends in Washington. Yet despite massive US military aid to Somoza, the regime was overthrown by the Nicaraguan peasants and working class who, under the leadership of the Sandanistas, fought with extraordinary courage and determination.

It is, then, the duty of every socialist to support the Nicaraguan revolution and in particular to defend it against US imperialism. But it is not enough to support and defend. If we are to learn from the Nicaraguan experience the lessons it

holds for Irish socialists, we must look at the facts and draw political conclusions, however critical they are of the Sandanistas.

Despite the greatly improved situation of the working class since the FSLN came to power in July 1979, Nicaragua cannot cut itself off from the economic crisis which afflicts the rest of the world. And in Nicaragua, just as in other countries, it is the working class which is being made to pay for that crisis. Circumstances are, of course, different in Nicaragua because of the war with the Contras. But this war does not, fundamentally alter the situation, it merely makes it worse. The Sandanistas would be faced with a severe economic situation whether or not there was a war on.

Faced with a worsening economic situation in 1980 before the Contras went on the offensive, the FSLN chose to oppose wage increases. Workers in a number of factories went on strike to achieve their demands. These strikes were supported by organisations to the left of the Sandanistas, the Communist Party and the Workers' Front. As a result of their interventions in these strikes these organisations had their papers closed down and their leaders put in prison. The actions of the revolutionary government were supported by the Sandanista trade unions.

An equally explicit attack was made on workers in 1986 when President Ortega announced a series of measures designed to bring Nicaragua "closer to fiscal reality". This involved price increases of up to one hundred and fifty per cent for a variety of basic goods and household items including rice, beans, corn, sugar, milk and soap. It also included a series of wage increases which favoured the middle class. Professionals and high income earners were given a 102 per cent pay rise, while those on low incomes received only 58 per cent. The Sandanista government argued that professionals were given more to encourage them to enter commerce.

1986 also saw government cut backs in spending on social services and a freeze on recruitment to government jobs. The reason given for the cuts which occurred mostly in Managua and hit education, housing and health programmes, was that the capital was overcrowded. The FSLN hoped that a run-down in the welfare sector in Managua would encourage people to move to the provinces. But the widespread austerity measures that coincided with these cuts lead many to doubt this "explanation".

Class struggle did not end when the FSLN came to power. Far from it. In the weeks and months after the revolution the small urban working class and the much larger rural working class and peasantry began taking over factories and farms. The occupations were mostly aimed at those properties suspected of decapitalisation by their owners. Sections of the ruling class unhappy with the new government were deliberately under-investing. The take overs were in response to this failure to invest.

The Sandanistas opposed the take-overs. It was a difficult situation for them. To move against the bourgeoisie would risk the collapse of the multi-class alliance which is central to FSLN strategy. In late 1979 a Sandanista court ruled that all confiscated property, with the exception of that belonging to Somozaists should be returned to its rightful owners. The ruling had no effect and the occupations increased as the trade unions became involved. The take-over campaign reached its peak in February 1980 when thirty thousand landless agricultural labourers converged on Managua carrying machetes and banners demanding the legalisation of the take-overs.

The FSLN government conceded the demands, but said that agrarian reform would in future take place in a peaceful and orderly fashion. A member of the FSLN National Directorate warned against "anarchic and spontaneous" actions. It was revolutionary acts such as these which prompted the Sandanistas to introduce the Economic and Social Emergency Laws in 1981. This law provides for three years imprisonment for those who initiate or participate in a strike, factory occupation or take-over of the land.

Faced with an economic crisis and a working class unwilling to pay for it, the FSLN strengthened the powers of the state to keep workers in line.

The take-over campaign led to the

## Democracy yes, socialism no

MANY ON the Irish Left seem to believe that the Sandanista revolution is about constructing socialism. As the Sandanistas themselves constantly point out, this is not the case. The revolution is not economic, is not about the working class taking control of society. It is, they say, about national independence, national unity and popular democracy — but not socialism.

The mixed economy in Nicaragua is a reflection of this desire to maintain national unity. Wealth is generated by both private and state enterprise — the workers have control in neither. When the FSLN came to power they issued guarantees to the capitalists promising that property would be respected and that private property would have a part to play in the economic recovery of the nation. This promise is repeated in the new constitution.



The Sandanista junta has absolute control of the armed forces.

Agrarian Reform Law of July 1981. This was aimed mostly at landlords who were behaving in an "unpatriotic" way and refusing to invest. These landlords had their lands confiscated but were to be compensated in full. However another demand of the mobilisation was only half conceded. The workers had demanded that decapitalisation should be made illegal. The Sandanistas passed a law to this effect, but as it did not contain any sanction or penalty against those found guilty, decapitalisation continued.

right to be "consulted" on some matters. The workers have no say in decisions about what they produce — those decisions are taken in management board-rooms, the Ministry of Labour and the National Directorate of the FSLN.

Almost 90 per cent of unions are affiliated to the Sandanistas and are more concerned with achieving production targets than with protecting and advancing the interests of workers. If the demands of the workers are to be taken up by these unions, it will only be done in a way that doesn't interrupt production.

The orientation and base of the economy is the same under the FSLN as it was under Somoza. It is still an economy based upon the export of a few agricultural products. The Sandanistas have deliberately pursued a policy of encouraging the cultivation of export products which have nothing to do with the needs of Nicaraguan workers and peasants and everything to do with earning much needed foreign currency. Between 1982 and 1987 63 per cent of Nicaraguan investment went into the export products of sugar, cattle, coffee and tobacco, while only 11 per cent went into products aimed at the domestic market: grain, poultry and vegetables.

The reason why foreign currency is so badly needed is because the Sandanistas — fearful of alienating their ruling class friends in the EEC and Latin America — refused to repudiate the massive debt which Somoza had run up. So almost half of Nicaraguan foreign earnings go towards paying the interest on Somoza's 640 million dollars spending spree.

Private capital in Nicaragua accounts for two-thirds of the economy and generates 60 per cent of the GNP. Private capitalism is responsible for 69 per cent of all manufacturing and 79 per cent of all agriculture. The private sector is still the main employer in Nicaragua employing 80 per cent of the working population.

In this respect the Sandanista economy is similar to other capitalist economies of central America such as Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The state sector is smaller in Nicaragua than it was in Allende's Chile, Argentina under Peron or the state sector of Peru under the military dictatorship of General Velasco.

Nor does all the talk of workers' "participation" and "democracy" have anything to do with workers' power. In fact, participation has been limited to access to information about investment decisions and the



# ER SIEGE



SAMOZA'S statue being dragged through the streets of Managua—July 1979

Left — President Ortega

The economic policies of the FSLN have reinforced Nicaragua's position in the world market. In doing so the Sandanistas have made Nicaragua even more vulnerable to the commodity price fluctuations which characterise the international market. A fall in the price of a few export products in the markets of London and New York could do more harm to the Nicaraguan economy in one day than the Contras' "scorched earth" tactics could do in a month.

Central to the mixed economy is the determination of the FSLN to maintain the cross-class alliance which brought down Somoza — an alliance of workers, peasants, students radical clergy and patriotic landlords and capitalists. It was the corrupt manner in which Somoza ran the economy which drove sections of the Nicaraguan ruling class into the Sandanista camp. It had become clear that economic development would not be possible under Somoza. The support of the capitalists was, and continues to be, enthusiastically welcomed by the FSLN. As one advisor to the Nicaraguan government remarked:

"The Sandanistas sincerely want the bourgeoisie, or at least a section of it, to participate in the revolutionary project" — (Carbo Vilas)

The effects of the cross-class alliance are not merely economic. In 1986 there was a campaign by many on the Left, inside and outside the FSLN, to have a woman's right to abortion recognised in the new constitution. The constitution ratified in January does not contain this basic woman's right. To have included it would have compromised the alliance which includes Catholic clergy and the conservative bourgeoisie. Faced with keeping these right-wing friends or giving women a constitutional right to control their own bodies, the Sandanistas chose the former.

## The limits of left nationalism

SOCIALISTS MUST ask whether it is possible for an organisation and ideology which seeks and attracts support from the exploiters in society, to bring about an end to its exploitation. Those who argue that the FSLN is held back by the war and threat of US invasion, ignore the historical facts. The nature of revolutionary Nicaragua is the same today as it was in 1979 and 1980 when there was no war and relations with the US were friendly.

Shortly after the revolution, President Carter gave US acceptance to the Sandanistas when he said: "We have a good relationship with the new government. We hope to better it. We are supplying some minimum humanitarian aid to the Nicaraguan people who have suffered so much".

This was followed by the US Congress granting 75 million dollars in aid and credit was given for the purchase of 60,000 tons of US grain.

The continued existence of capitalism in Nicaragua has little to do with fear of US invasion. The Sandanistas accept and promote Nicaraguan capitalism because there is nothing in their ideology — that of left nationalism — which is opposed to capitalism as long as it is "home-grown".

Fear of invasion, however, has had some influence on FSLN foreign policy. Contrary to what Reagan claims, Nicaragua does not export revolution — and suffers as a result. Fear of alienating the leading governments in the area — Mexico,

Costa Rica, Honduras — has led the Sandanistas to go along with the "Contadora" call for an end to the all guerilla campaigns as part of a regional peace plan. This meant that they had also to expel the El Salvadorean guerrillas, the FMLN, from Nicaragua.

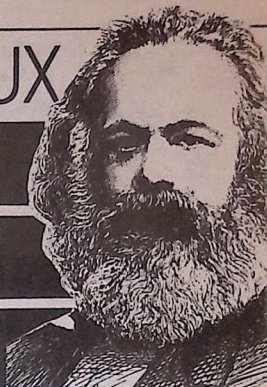
But it is in sealing their isolation in this manner that the Sandanistas have shown the limits of left nationalism. The ideology of left nationalism — represented in this country by the Republican Movement — places no reliance on the power of the working class. As a result, the FSLN seeks support from other nationalist ruling classes rather than from the potentially powerful working class and peasantry of neighbouring countries.

This could prove fatal to the revolution in Nicaragua which can't survive in isolation. The revolutionary movements of El Salvador and Guatemala and the powerful industrial working class of Brazil and Mexico hold the key to Nicaragua's survival. But the moderation of the Sandanistas has done little to attract solidarity from these forces. There is little inspiration for the working class of Brazil or Mexico in agreeing to repay Somoza's debt.

But a government that broke the capitalist rules and refused to pay the debt, a revolutionary government that placed trust in the self activity of its own working class and peasantry — that would be a powerful example to the whole of Latin America, indeed of the world.

## JOHN MOLYNEUX

# Teach yourself Marxism



"KNOW YOUR enemy" is a useful maxim for anyone engaged in a battle. But for socialists it is absolutely essential. Unless we know what we are up against, we have no chance of winning. And what we are up against is not just a group of people—the Tories, the bosses, the ruling class etc— but a whole system: capitalism.

Unfortunately a clear view of capitalism is completely missing among wide sections of the left and the labour movement at present and this confusion often leads to the most serious political mistakes.

Failure to grasp what capitalism means failure to realise what is necessary to defeat it, and often leads to the illusion that it has been defeated when it has merely changed some of its superficial features.

For example there are some in the labour movement, mostly in the right wing, who regard capitalism primarily as an attitude of mind—a matter of personal greed and selfishness. This can lead either to the defeatist view that capitalism is somehow an expression of "human nature" which can never be changed, or to the absurdly complacent notion that it is enough to replace the greedy, selfish Tories with caring and concerned Labour.

### False

Others do at least recognise that capitalism is a definite economic system. But they think of it primarily as a national affair existing within the boundaries of particular countries, so that it can be overthrown within one country while remaining intact in the rest of the world.

However, the most serious misconception prevalent on the left is the view that capitalism is defined simply as a system of private ownership of the means of production.

This definition is historically false because it fails to distinguish capitalism from feudalism and from the slave societies of the ancient world in which there was also private ownership.

It supports the right wing "revisionist" view developed by Crosland and others that Britain and similar countries are no longer really capitalist because of the existence of nationalised industries.

It can lead to the idea that workers in nationalised industries should moderate their struggles within these supposed "islands of socialism" and it discredits socialism by associating it with Russia and Eastern Europe where there is state ownership but also obviously tyranny.

In fact capitalism is neither an attitude of mind nor national, nor primarily

## WHAT IS CAPITALISM?



THE EARLY days of capitalism—women colliery workers in 1865

characterised by private ownership.

Rather it is an international economic system which has developed from roughly the 16th century onwards, and whose main characteristic is that it is dominated by the drive to accumulate capital, or, to put it more simply, to maximise profit.

### Maximise

A primacy of capital accumulation derives from three fundamental facts: The first is the separation of the immediate producers, ie the vast majority of ordinary working people, from any ownership or control of the land, tools or machinery necessary for production. The second is the concentration of all the major means of production in the hands of a privileged minority. And the third is the division of the total means of production into independent units (small or large, private or state owned) which produce in competition with each other.

The first of these facts forces the working people to sell their ability to work, their labour power, to the class that does possess the means of production. That is, it transforms them into wage labourers, or proletarians, as Marx called them.

The third fact forces the owners to maximise capital accumulation, not out of personal greed, but on pain of extinction in the competitive battle. This in turn forces the owners to exploit the workers as ferociously as they possibly can.

This iron logic applies whether governments call themselves conservative or socialist, or even Marxist-Leninist, and whether the controllers of the means of production are individual owners, an anonymous shareholders or state bureaucrats.

It can be broken only when the mass of the producers themselves take possession and real control of the huge industries and corporations that constitute the major means of production in the modern world.

To do this they must first take on and defeat the state structures which the capitalists have constructed for the defence of their system.

In short, a clear understanding of what capitalism is demonstrates beyond doubt that it cannot be defeated by means of parliamentary reform, or any kind of action from above, but only by workers' revolution from below, ultimately on an international scale.

Pamphlets by

## Alexandra Kollontai

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A discussion of how capitalism distorts sexual relationships — written in 1919 when Kollontai was deeply involved in the struggle to create a new society in Russia which would remove such distortions.



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# The tasks for socialists

The Socialist Workers Movement held its annual conference for 1987 at the start of March. Here we outline the analysis arrived at by the Conference discussions of the present political climate and the conclusions drawn by the Conference for what socialists should be doing over the coming year.

THE DRIFT to the right in society in general and in the labour movement in particular, which has been obvious over the last few years, has quickened in the last twelve months. This can be seen in two areas.

\* In the South, there has been a strengthening of right-wing arch-Catholic ideas. The defeat of the divorce referendum opened the way for the so-called "liberal" Justice Hamilton to declare it illegal to give a pregnant woman information about abortion. As a result, the Dublin-based Open Line Counselling has had to close and the Wellwoman Centre no longer has a pregnancy counselling service.

The influence of groups like SPUC and Family Solidarity shows every sign of growing. New attacks can be expected.

The growth of these populist right-wing groups can be traced to the fake liberalism of the Coalition government. When, for example, Barry Desmond was seen to legalise contraception one day and close hospital wards the next, the ground was created for the spread of traditional ideas and values, it made the suggestion that the Government had its priorities all wrong seem plausible.

\* Constitutional nationalism has been strengthened by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In the aftermath of the hunger strikes, the growth of Provo support had rattled the Southern establishment and gravely threatened the position of their friends in the SDLP. This was the main reason they pushed the Anglo-Irish Agreement so hard on the British.

North and South, the Agreement has not cut deeply into Provo support in deprived working class areas. But it has restored confidence in the possibility of constitutional change among the middle class and within the organised working class. No major union has come out against the Agreement. There has been little in the line of public, organised opposition from the anti-imperialist quarter. The series of public meetings that the SWM ran in November and the proposed meetings of the Northern Nationalist Conference are the only signs of opposition among anti-unionists.

In the South, the scale of loss of support from militant republicanism can be seen on the issue of extradition. There had been no campaign against the Extradition Bill which the Coalition pushed through the Dail in December. As a result it met the minimum of opposition there.

In the North, as always, it is those living in the nationalist working class areas who have borne the brunt of the increased repression which accompanied the Accord. It is working class Catholics, too, who have suffered the worst of the loyalist sectarian attacks which last year drove more than 1200 families from their homes. The hard-right loyalist organisations are making the running in relation to the Agreement. They may not be winning but they will continue to hold the initiative until an anti-unionist campaign against the Agreement is launched.

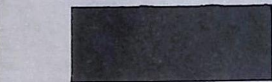
There is, however, no sign of active resistance to the Agreement in the nationalist areas; instead there is a high level of passivity. Martin McGuinness's comment at the Bloody Sunday Commemoration March in Derry was telling: "we

must thank the loyalists", he said, for doing our work for us in fighting the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Sinn Fein, in other words, will not encourage collective action against the Agreement. Nor has Sinn Fein taken the SDLP on politically over the Agreement.

*None of these aspects of the rightward move in society can be looked at in isolation from the most crucial element — the massive decline we have witnessed in working class confidence. Workers have not won a major victory since the late seventies. Instead, there has been a relentless grinding down of militancy.*

North and South there has been a decline in the number of days "lost" through strikes. This decline is not so dramatic in the North where loyalism has traditionally kept the militancy of Protestant workers dampened down by emphasising their alliance with the Unionist bosses. In the South, not only has the number of strikes dropped significantly but what strikes there has been are increasingly under the tight control of union officials. In the seventies, 75 per cent of strikes were unofficial; last year only 38 per cent were. Similarly, the bulk of strikes North and South over the last two years have been in the public sector — always among the best organised workers but very much tied to the union bureaucracy.

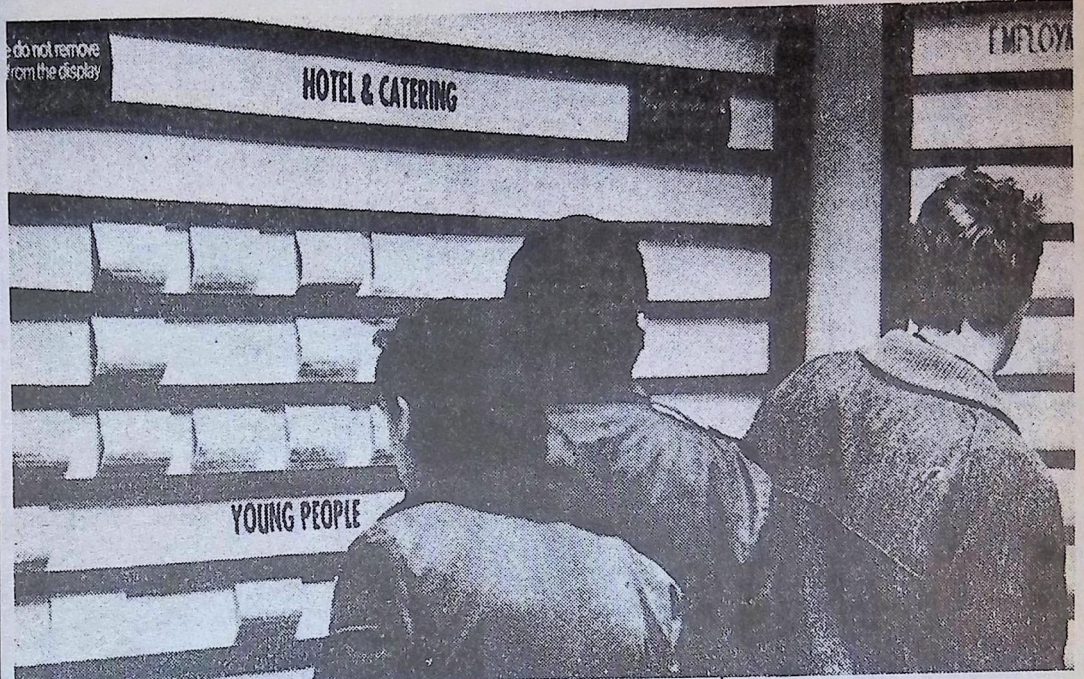
In private industry, it has been a story of defeat after defeat. Packard Electric in Tallaght, Rowntree Mackintosh and Semperit Tyres in Ballyfermot were all well-organised, militant workforces. All have been forced to accept cuts in wages and/or working conditions and a drastic weakening of trade union organisation.



In the North, traditionally well-organised workers in the engineering industry have been forced to accept lay-offs and short-time working instead of pay rises, while the strikes in Wellworths shops across the Six Counties ended in massive cuts in pay and in working conditions.

*The general picture, then, is one where the balance of forces is not in favour of the working class. It is important to recognise this. But it would be wrong not to recognise also the considerable problems which face the ruling class. These set important limits on how far they can push society to the right.*

The state of the Southern economy is certainly a sign of weakness of our rulers. The South has the fourth highest level of debt per head of the population in the world. Since 1981, interest payments have risen by one and a half billion pounds; the government is now borrowing just to pay off the interest. It is the massiveness of this debt which has encouraged the present level of attacks on public sector workers and social welfare recipients. Up to now, the working class is suffering under these attacks but the ruling class isn't fully winning either. The cuts in social welfare in social welfare introduced in the South under the guise of the EEC Equality Directive, are an example of this "no-win" situation. They started by cutting £40 a week from



some couples by TWICE they were forced to retreat in the face of out-taged reaction. Similarly, although the teachers in the South were defeated in their pay fight, they were not hammered in a manner which would frighten other public sector workers from going on strike.

The influence of right-wing SPUC ideas need not rise unchecked either. As Ireland is increasingly integrated into the world economy, and especially into the EEC, the ruling class can no longer afford to be as blatantly tied to the Catholic Church as it was in the fifties. SPUC and Family Solidarity will undoubtedly try to extend their influence but today, unlike the fifties, there is a sizeable minority which can be organised against their worst excesses.

And with Fianna Fail, the party of "traditional values" and "Irish solutions" back in power, some of the wind given to SPUC by the false liberals of the Coalition will be taken out of their sails.

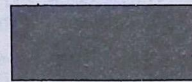
And, of course, the national question continues to represent an insurmountable obstacle to stability South or North. The legacy of their nationalist pasts means that both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael like to present themselves as parties of the "ordinary person". One of the comical things about the recent election was how spokespersons for both parties insisted that they were "left-of-centre". But his populism increases their problems when it comes to the concerted attack on jobs, wages and living conditions which they need to make on the working class in order to pay for the economic crisis.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement may have had some little success but it cannot win decisive support away from the Provos unless it is seen to make a REAL difference to the way the Six County State is run. And the very structure of the State blocks the road to reform. The inability of the London and Dublin governments to force through changes in the Diplock courts, the refusal of the RUC to stop Orange bigotry-marches, the Stalker affair — these are all examples of the inability of the ruling classes in these islands to bring about reform in the North. There is still an element among the nationalist population which thinks that anything which

gets Paisley so het up must be good for Catholics. But as it becomes ever more obvious that real reforms are not forthcoming, the Agreement will increasingly be seen as the con-trick it is.

Our rulers, then, are not in as strong a position as they would wish. They have the upper hand, but not a free hand. Nonetheless, there is a lot of cynical and demoralised talk among socialists. For many, only the gradual building of support for Labour, the Workers Party or Sinn Fein holds any hope; others talk of the "hopelessness" of changing anything North or South. Pessimism has pulled many from the revolutionary left towards these parties.

It is true that Irish society does seem paralysed at present. Workers are on the defensive but the ruling class have proved incapable of smashing the working class in the way it must if workers are to bear all the cost of the crisis.



The new Fianna Fail government has huge problems. It has already agreed to stand by the Anglo-Irish Agreement — to do otherwise would have meant abandoning the SDLP. But with a British general election pending, Thatcher is not going to risk loyalist reaction by giving anything to Nationalists in return. Even the recent, long-awaited changes in the Flags and Emblems Act were accompanied by further repressive legislation.

Public sector workers have had six years of recruitment embargo and paltry wage rises. The kind of sustained attack on the public sector that Fianna Fail needs to carry through could go either way for the new Free State government.

What happened in France in December is worth keeping in mind. There, a right-wing government was swept into power with a huge majority. But within months angry students on the streets made the government retreat. This triggered off a wave of strikes which had the simple theme "we have had enough". The strikes were beaten, but they showed one important point. The re-emergence of a fighting spirit in the working class after years of

defensive struggles need not necessarily require a gradual process of re-building strength in one workplace after another. Things can change very quickly. After years of storing up anger and bitterness, a small sign of weakness on the part of the ruling class can spark an explosion of anger among workers.

No one is predicting that this situation is necessarily just around the corner in Ireland. And in the meantime, what do we do? In our workplaces, we work towards re-building the confidence and strength of trade union organisation which has been lost. In campaigns like the one to Defend the Clinics, we argue for actions against SPUC and Family Solidarity which will warn them that there IS an organised opposition to stop them going any further.

But revolutionary socialists must recognise that, at the moment, with such a low level of struggle, the most vital task is to keep alive the ideas of workers' power. As the crisis deepens and the drift to the right continues, the fight for complete liberation for all women and gays has been forgotten and substituted by "liberated" lifestyles for the few; the struggle for a 32 County Workers Republic is dropped from the agenda and replaced by a call for a united capitalist Ireland; the possibility of the working class controlling our own lives and running society in our own interests is forgotten and instead we are asked to wait for decades until the Left gets a majority in the Dail and legislates for socialism.

The most basic ideas of marxism are that the emancipation of the working class must be carried out by the working class itself and that total liberation for women and real unity and independence for Ireland depend on the fate of the working class. Keeping these ideas alive through debate and discussion — in Socialist Worker and other literature, at public meetings, in our unions, our workplaces, schools, colleges and at the dole — this is the very least that socialists can do in the coming year.

This is the task the SWM has set itself. It aims to recruit individuals in the coming year to slowly begin the task of building a revolutionary socialist part in Ireland.



# SWM takes lead

SPUC have become Ireland's moral police. Using cloak and dagger techniques, they sent people to the Open Line Centre and Well Woman clinics pretending to look for an abortion. Then they took a case to the High Court to get them to stop counselling women on the possibilities of having an abortion.

SPUC is a vicious right-wing movement that aims to drive this country back to the fifties. They can, however, be isolated if they are taken on. Because, unlike the fifties, there are many who have got a taste of the freedom which SPUC is trying to smash.

The Socialist Workers Movement organised a picket on the SPUC HQ in Blackrock, outside Dublin on Saturday April 4th. The SWM had argued inside the Defend the Clinics Campaign for this course of action for months. But the right-wing drift inside the feminist movement led it to shy away from this action. For this reason SWM went ahead independently to organise the picket..

\* \* \*

*Are you interested in the politics of the Socialist Workers Movement?*

Each week branches of the SWM meet in many towns in Ireland. At the moment there are members in *Dublin, Belfast, Derry, Dundalk, Dungarvan, Kilkenny, Portlaoise, Cork and Waterford*. Meetings begin with a political discussion introduced by a speaker. There is plenty of time for questions and discussion. The second part of the meeting deals with the day-to-day business of the branch.

Anyone who wants to find out more about SWM is welcome to attend these meetings. For full details of meetings in your area, write to: SWM PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

# NICARAGUA: Revolution under siege

speaker: MIKE GONZALEZ

Wednesday April 22nd DUBLIN, CIE Hall;  
Thursday April 23rd WATERFORD, Wadding Hall;  
Friday 24th April CORK, Carpenters Hall;  
Monday April 27th BELFAST, Conway Mill,  
Tuesday April 28th DERRY, Gweedore Bar

All meetings start at 8 pm.

# SWM Day School

## Marxism and the Russian Revolution

with JOHN MOLYNEUX

(British Socialist Workers Party, author of: "Trotsky's Theory of Revolution", "Marxism and the Party", "What is the Real Marxist Tradition?")

### SESSIONS ON:

- \* Bolshevik strategy and tactics from February to October 1917;
- \* Lenin's and Trotsky's Theories of the Revolution;
- \* Why the revolution was lost;
- \* Why Russia is state-capitalist today

DUBLIN: May 9th, 11.00 am to 5.00 pm  
BELFAST: May 10th, 11.00 am to 5.00 pm

Admission: £2 (£1 unemployed). Tickets available from: SWM, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

# Strikes are not played out!

LAST MONTH'S SW had an article by a Packard shop steward and I, like SW, would like to express my opposition to the views expressed there.

The idea that some sort of legislation can be brought in which will end the need for industrial action, ignores the role of the State in society in general and industrial relations in particular. The courts which make and administer the laws of the State are not neutral observers in the struggle between bosses and workers. The strike weapon is

used by workers to defend their standard of living within a State based on exploitation.

During the course of a strike workers recognise that they are challenging the state but the conclusions they draw are not always correct.

In a period of mass unemployment such as the present time, the idea grows that the strike weapon itself is redundant or out of date.

In fact the opposite is the case. It is precisely in periods of mass unemployment and recession that

strikes are necessary, but they have to be spread to involve workers in other industries, either directly or through seeking support financially by workplace collections. The determination of workers can be steered, their moral can be raised by the knowledge that they are supported by workers outside of their own industry.

A victory for one group of workers then becomes a victory for all workers.  
TOM RYAN,  
Dublin.

# Fighting AIDS bigots

I'VE JUST read the new pamphlet "AIDS: The Socialist View" by Duncan Blackie and Ian Taylor of the British SWP.

The AIDS virus is deadly. In Africa it is expected to kill millions in the next few years, in the US it is an epidemic, in Britain we don't know how many people are infected, but the number is growing. So far there is no cure and little hope of one in the future as scientists uncover the baffling way in which the virus breaks down the body's immune system—the very system which is meant to fight off diseases.

But fighting the disease isn't only a medical problem. It is a social problem. Rumours, myth and prejudice, aided by the media, have led to attacks on gays. Popular misunderstanding has sometimes verged on panic. Meanwhile, the British Tory

government is using its publicity campaign against AIDS to push "Victorian values" of heterosexual monogamy and the family. Right wing moralists have taken centre stage with their scapegoating of gays and "permissiveness". These ideas threaten to tip society back into the dark age of guilt and fear, ignorance and sexual repression. Under such conditions AIDS can spread.

This pamphlet aims to cut through the hysteria and misinformation surrounding AIDS. It presents the known facts in a clear and unprejudiced form. It shows how the AIDS crisis has been deepening, and lives lost because of the rotten priorities of the society in which we live.

It also shows what we can do. Socialists do have answers to catastrophes such as AIDS. In the short term, the AIDS crisis demands



that we fight the bigotry whipped up by the government and the media. It means being able to explain the facts about the disease — not some sensation-crazed editor's notions.

We have to fight to defend any section of society used as scapegoats as a result of the AIDS scare.  
VICKIE KAVANAGH,  
Dublin

# Ferry danger ignored

MANY OF your readers will remember the Zeebrugge ferry disaster where 150 were lost at sea. The reason why the ship sank can be found in the name: The Herald of Free Enterprise.

European Ferries, which owned Townsend Thoresen, which owned the ship, used to be Chaired by Kieth Wickenden, a Tory MP. He christened the ship out of love for his political master, Maggie Thatcher.

In 1980 the prestigious shipping magazine, "Fair Play" investigating roll-on, roll-off disasters, found that the reason the ship sank suddenly was because of the flooding of the unpartitioned car decks. Leaving the car doors open was also identified as a cause.

These facts were all known to the owner. But their greed for profits knew no bounds. In 1985 they made a profit of £48 million. Safety came a very poor second.

Now Band 1 and Sealink are taking the same road on their ships on the Irish Sea.  
JOHN HARPER,  
Lisburn

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Workers Movement is a revolutionary socialist organisation that fights for a workers' republic and international socialism.

The system under which we live, capitalism, is based on production for profit—not for human need. It leads to poverty and war; racism and sexism. It is a system that can only be destroyed by the class which creates all the wealth—the working class.

### REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

Capitalism cannot be patched up or reformed—it must be overthrown. That cannot be achieved through parliament as the Workers Party and the Labour Party argue. The real power in this society lies in the boardroom of big business. The structures of the present parliament, courts, army and police are designed to protect the interests of the ruling class against the workers. At most parliament can be used for propaganda against the system—it cannot be the instrument by which workers destroy the power of the rich.

We therefore stand for a workers' revolution which produces a different and more democratic society—one based on councils of delegates from workplaces and areas who are democratically elected answerable to assemblies and subject to recall at any time.

### NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

That kind of socialism does not exist anywhere today. Workers have no control over countries like Russia, China or Poland. They are exploited by a state capitalist class. A workers revolution is required in those countries too.

### AGAINST PARTITION

The six county Orange state is propped up by British imperialism. That state divides the working class by the guarantee of marginal privileges in housing and jobs to Loyalist workers. The struggle of Catholic workers to rid themselves of sectarianism and bigotry can only succeed by smashing that state.

The slow task of building working class unity against imperialism must be begun. However imperialism must be fought in the here and now and we support all forces engaged in that struggle regardless of our differences of programme.

We stand for:

- The immediate withdrawal of the British Army
- The disbandment of the RUC and UDR
- No to extradition and collaboration on border security

Connolly wrote that partition would bring a carnival of reaction. He was absolutely right. Irish workers confront two reactionary states. The Southern ruling class have no longer any fundamental conflict of interest with imperialism. They have become junior players in the world capitalist system. Their state props up partition—despite their occasional nationalist rhetoric.

The 'national question' will only be solved in the course of mass working class struggle against both states. Republicanism, by limiting the struggle to nationalist goals, by appealing to all classes in Irish society, can never defeat imperialism. Only a revolutionary socialist organisation that fights openly for the Workers' Republic can unite sections of the working class who have nothing to gain from a bourgeois Eire Nua.

### AGAINST ALL OPPRESSION

Revolutionaries oppose all forms of oppression that divide and weaken the working class.  
We are for real social, economic and political equality for women.

We are for an end to discrimination against homosexuals.

We stand for full separation of the church and state.

We stand for secular control of the hospitals and the schools.

### THE UNIONS

Today the trade union movement is dominated by a caste of bureaucrats whose principal aim is to make their compromise with the system. They have destroyed solidarity between workers by the two tier picket system. They have failed to lead any fight over tax, wage cuts and unemployment.

We stand for:

- 100 percent trade unionism
- A 35 hour week to reduce unemployment
- The election of all union officials, subject to recall
- Against redundancies. We say: occupy to demand nationalisation under workers' control
- Full independence of the unions from the state. No reliance on the Labour Courts or the arbitration schemes in the public sector

We fight for the building of a national rank and file movement that links together the best militants to provide an alternative leadership to the trade union bureaucrats.

We fight for the formation of Right to Work committees that link the unemployed to the power of the trade union movement.

### THE PARTY

To achieve socialism the most class conscious sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. The SWM aims to build such a party around its activity in the working class movement. It stands in the tradition of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Connolly. We urge all those who agree with our policies to come in and join the SWM.



# JOIN US!

I would like more details about the Socialist Workers Movement

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Send to SWM, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.



## REVIEWS

## Labour in Irish History

"Labour in Irish History" by James Connolly, Bookmarks, £2.00 post paid from SWM, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

THE NATIONALIST view of Irish History is one of 700 years of struggle against British rule by heroes and martyrs of almost superhuman qualities. At its most absurd is the story which probably most children heard at school of Sarsfield lying mortally wounded on a foreign battle field sighing "Ah if only this blood were shed for Ireland" or words to that effect. It stretches the imagination a bit, but these kinds of myths were and still are presented as Irish history. In reality he was probably moaning and groaning in pain and if he could talk at all was probably ordering his servants to "get me out of here!"

James Connolly's Labour in Irish History, recently re-published by Bookmarks with an introduction by Kieran Allen of the Socialist Workers Movement, is a welcome change from this approach.

Written from a clear materialist viewpoint it is not a catalogue of horrors and events but an attempt to show why these happened, to explain why people acted in certain ways — it was not because they were good or bad Irishmen or women but that their actions reflected their class interests.

Throughout the book he shows that he had little time for ideas which were, and still are, accepted as common wisdom. For instance, writing about the Irish inevitable attachment to private land ownership he wrote: "if long continued insecurity of life begat in him a fierce desire for the ownership of a piece of land to safeguard his loved ones

in a system where land was life, this new-born land hunger was triumphantly trumpeted forth as a proof of the Irish attachment to the principle of private ownership"

Connolly's main argument is against the idea of a union of classes to free Ireland, in other words the idea that all Irish people have a common interest in national liberation. As he put it himself: "When questions of class interest are eliminated from public controversy a victory is thereby gained for the possessing, conservative class, whose only hope of security lies in such elimination"

Following this line of argument he explains the actions of various national heroes: Sarsfield, Grattan, O'Connell and the Young Irelanders.

Sarsfield was a feudal lord who fought to ensure "that the class who then enjoyed the privilege of robbing the Irish people should not be compelled to give way in their turn to a fresh horde of land thieves."

Grattan, a representative of the emerging capitalist class was afraid to push the break with Britain too far for fear of the forces it might stir up.

O'Connell, in a chapter entitled "A chapter of horrors" was an anti-trade union Catholic bigot. While in the British parliament he opposed any measure which attempted to improve the conditions of the working class.

The Young Irelanders, revolutionary in words, remained no more than that.



However, when examining the more radical national movements such as the United Irishmen or the Fenians, Connolly fails to carry his materialist analysis through. Concentrating on the support those movements had, which mainly came from the working class and rural poor, he fails to examine the class politics of their leaderships.

Wolfe Tone, for instance, represented the most militant section of the new capitalist class. The fact that the majority of that class did not follow his lead should not make us paint his politics red.

Similarly with the Fenians, although some of its leaders were individually members of

Karl Marx's First International, they still took the view that the Fenian movement should be open to people of all classes and class issues should not be raised within it — a view which Connolly so eloquently criticised in the earlier chapters of his book.

Connolly's views have been distorted by many who have never read them and would not be in sympathy with them if they did. The strengths and weaknesses of his politics should be understood by all fighting for a Socialist Republic.

The first step towards understanding them would be to read this book.

## Bragg's Blues

WHEN LAST asked (three months ago) to review "Talking with the Taxman". Billy Bragg's difficult third album my initial feeling was of relief that wouldn't be a Black Lace LP. I remembered with horror a review I once read of the Redskins "Neither Washington nor Moscow" LP. The person writing the review never even attempted to grasp the message they were trying to put across. For this reason, I feel I should comment on the politics of the record — otherwise why would I be reviewing the bloody thing for a revolutionary paper.

After listening to the LP a few times I realised that a lot of it was spent attacking marriage and the family. Don't get me wrong — I enjoy a good old attack on marriage as much as the next person but I feel that the actual attack was on the same line as the Specials' "Too much too young". The only difference being they could fit it onto one track instead of three-quarters of an LP.

What's missing (probably because of the emphasis on marriage) considering Bragg's claim to be an internationalist is the lack of international sentiment. "There is power in a union" and "Help save the youth of America" doesn't balance with "the best of all this bad bunch" — ie the Labour Party, we'll do it for you crap, that Bragg has a tendency to throw in now and again in order to sound the reasonable moderate militant which he is.

However after saying all this and being the hypocrite I am, I loved the LP and would recommend it for your collection. My only hope is that when his next LP is released I will be able to get the review in on time.

—CHRIS McCAY

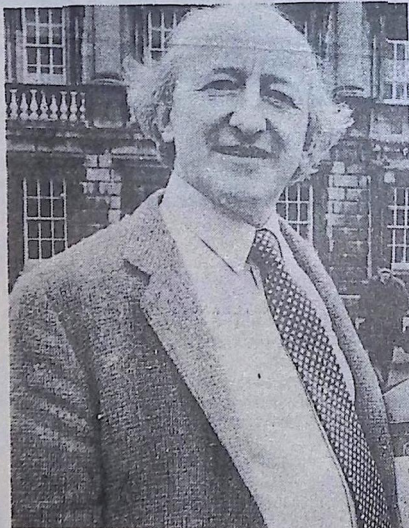
## Can I fix your gutter?

FROM THE third floor of Glendearing House, news and views on the recent election poured forth. Niall Stokes and his chums from the august and highly-respected organ Hot Press sorted out the national chicken's entrails and, with their usual visionary political awareness, told us what the gods had in store for us.

Niall, Commander in Chief, is the paper's leading thinker and philosopher. A definite liberal with hints of pink on his political make up, Niall told us before the election that there was no sign of the revolution yet so he would urge all the readers to go out and to vote and to vote Left at that... Not all that different to what we read in Socialist Worker you say? Well...

Hot Press is usually on the same side as socialists on social issues. It gave very good coverage to the pro-divorce side in the referendum. Ditto on the abortion referendum. And its absolute hatred for the lizards of SPUC is a breath of fresh air in the Irish media. The recent issue on AIDS was a good example of the kind of factual, sympathetic and leftist coverage we have come to expect from Niall's cheery crew. The problem is that never do we see any hint at what might be done to actually change things — nothing that is besides voting in the correct manner.

The Hot Press ideology seems to be totally wrapped up in liberal reformism and as such our salvation can be found with a strong Labour Party. The return of Michael D. (a regular columnist) and Jim Kemmy of the DSP while welcome to anyone on the Left are made to



Michael D Higgins a regular Hot Press columnist

seem to be eternally optimistic and joyful.

The scenario will be that while Charlie plays, the left will regroup, spend a couple of years getting people's gutters fixed and their names in the papers and once again sally forth to rescue us all. A new golden age of "socialism" will ensue courtesy of the left-wing TDs and their friends in Hot Press. Nowhere is it advised that readers actually do something except exercise their franchise.

This socialism-from-above thinking permeates the paper. Michael D. Higgins in the issue of the March 12th says he sees the present time as one where the Left "must now

plan its own programme". But what should working class people be doing? Must they continue to allow their trade union rights to be sold away, the hospitals to be closed, the army and police to break and scab on their strikes, their Social Welfare Benefits to be savagely cut? All this while the reformists fiddle about in the Dail.

The Hot Press is a readable and entertaining paper and as it is essentially a music paper, it serves its purpose well. In many ways it is an added bonus that it so ably shows the insanity of the system in its political articles. Maybe it's too much to ask, but it would be good to see some solutions as well.

—BRENDAN O'DONNELL

## HYSTERIA



## AIDS: Facts and fiction

"AIDS: The Socialist View" by Duncan Blackie and Ian Taylor, published by Socialist Workers Party (Britain), 90p

OVER THE past weeks, few people who have access to a television set can have remained unaware of the AIDS crisis. While it is good that the media is beginning to look at the spread of the AIDS virus in a more serious way there's still a lot of moralistic hypocritical rubbish being spouted about AIDS both on the box and in the papers.

Never have so many condoms been seen by so many people — and a good thing too. But instead of celebrating the wealth of human sexual experience and explaining how best to safely enjoy sex, most of the recent TV programmes have tried to put the burden back on to women to "say NO" ("safe sex" and condoms being seen as the last resort in the event of personal weakness).

And that's where this AIDS pamphlet comes in. Because instead of sermonising and preaching "good living" it deals clearly and in an interesting and readable way with the facts about AIDS. Chapter headings include "How AIDS was discovered", "The dangers of Victorian values", "The devastation of Africa" and "AIDS in the workplace". If you like a bit of scandal, the section looking at how the various laboratories tried to cheat each other over who had first claim to the "virus rights" reads a bit like a cross between the goings on in an American soap opera and a James Bond film.

AIDS has been compared to the great plagues of history and the spread of the virus, particularly in Africa, would seem to confirm this description. But in a chapter looking at plagues of the past it is shown that although diseases may have natural causes, the extent to which they spread often depends on human intervention. In the earliest times people were powerless to deal with diseases such as the Black Death. Levels of scientific knowledge have gradually pushed back the threat of disease. But the achieve-

ments of science have frequently been counteracted by hysteria, mystification, lack of resources and competition among scientists themselves.

In the fourteenth century it was thought that plagues were sent by God as a punishment for sin. In the 19th century syphilis was deliberately mystified in order to promote Victorian values of sexual repression. Although it was endemic in industrial towns and around military bases the government refused to tackle syphilis properly, preferring to concentrate on the criminalisation of prostitutes carrying sexually transmitted diseases. It was only during the first world war, when an increase in syphilis in the army caused the government concern about their "fighting power" that they actually set about trying to beat the disease.

Bigotry and complacency, the pamphlet points out, are worsening the AIDS crisis. Because gay men were the first in Britain and US to be infected by the virus, the government were happy to dismiss AIDS as a "gay plague". In Ireland where most AIDS victims have been intravenous drug users a similar lack of government interest has been displayed.

In Britain the Tories have put pitiful resources into fighting AIDS. They spent more on advertising British Gas shares than on the AIDS education campaign. In Ireland the Southern government still hasn't had a mass education campaign on AIDS. The campaign when it does come will be next to useless anyway in a State where it is illegal to advertise the sale of condoms and where homosexuality is still outlawed.

It is important, therefore, that if we are to counter all the rightwing moralistic nonsense we can expect to hear about sex in the coming months and years, all socialists arm themselves with the facts about AIDS. The SWP pamphlet gives these in an accessible way. It looks at the sort of arguments socialists will have about AIDS and gay rights at work and how best to deal with these. Every SWM member and anyone else who cares about fighting AIDS should read "AIDS: The Socialist View".

—LINDA MOORE



# 'It's rank and file activity that makes the difference'

MEMBERS of the Local Authority Workers' (LAW) group are taking a civil action against Dublin Corporation and County Council over the issue of the travelling time allowance. The case will be heard in Dublin's Circuit Court on April 2.

Socialist Worker goes to press before then but in the meantime we print here an interview with CHARLIE NOLAN, a member of the LAW group and SWM.

**SOCIALIST WORKER:** How did the court case come about?

**CHARLIE NOLAN:** There had been agitation for some time over the issue of travelling time in the local authorities. The allowance is paid as part of our wages but is stopped if we are on sick leave or holidays. For three weeks holidays it can mean a loss of £60-£70 in your wage packet.

In order to get an exact definition of the allowance, individual members of the LAW group have taken the local authorities to court. If the case succeeds the result will have a major effect throughout the local authorities.

**SW:** Have the unions campaigned on the issue?

**CN:** No. The union leaders' attitude was that the allowances should be left as it was. They argued that this would suit them better when negotiating for wage increases. This isn't true because real wage levels have, in fact, dropped over the last few years.

**SW:** What kind of support does the LAW group have?

**CN:** On the issue of travelling time it's had a lot of support. It

collected £1 each from four thousand workers to pay for the court action. However, this support is largely passive.

The LAW group hopes to use the case to mobilise support for a new union in the Corporation, which would include both craft workers and general operatives. **SW:** What difference would a new union make?

**CN:** It wouldn't make much difference but the LAW group sees itself as being different from the union bureaucrats. It does attempt to break down the sectionalism in the Corpo and it does challenge the bureaucrats. There was a lot of opposition to the union bureaucrats over pay. General operatives' wages are particularly bad compared to tradesmen's, which encourages division. There is also bitterness among tradesmen over the deterioration of the Analogue agreement. This has been reduced to a meaningless agreement, no better than the National Wage Agreements. The LAW group hope to tap this bitterness by putting forward the idea of a new union.

**SW:** Surely the idea of a new union would create passivity? Won't the rank-and-file simply sit back and wait for the leadership to do everything?

**CN:** The people pushing the idea argue that the new union will give a better service and will not have any full-time officials. They say that more rank-and-file involvement will encourage activity and not passivity.

I have argued that passivity comes from expecting others to do things for you rather than relying on self activity. The



Flashback to last year's Dublin Corporation strike

people arguing for the new union are relying on the granting of a negotiating licence to encourage

the rank-and-file. But it's the rank-and-file strength that makes all the difference when it comes

to looking for higher wages, not the negotiating licence. It's by fighting for rank-and-file activity

in the existing unions that we can see progress, not by arguing for a new union.

## Pay up! X-ray strike

FIVE HUNDRED and twenty radiographers in 98 hospitals in the South have been on strike since March 4th to be paid money owed to them since a Labour Court ruling in November 1986.

Backed up by the Dept. of Health, the hospital bosses refused to pay the radiographers even though they had agreed to implement the ruling in January and some radiographers even had money reclaimed from them.

All routine X-Rays have been stopped but a 24-hour emergency service is available which the consultants and management are constantly abusing.

Three hospitals, the Richmond, Dr Steven's and Cashel, have had a their emergency service withdrawn and only re-instated when management were prepared to abide by the union's stipulations that a consultant should complete and sign only one request for an emergency X-ray in front of a radiographer.

The radiographers have hospital-based meetings and regional meetings and are in

contact with their national committee - mainly where the emergency service is being abused. This strike shows that the

## NI civil servants place demands

THE Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance, NIPSA, together with a consortium of British civil service unions, have issued their 1987 pay demands. They are an increase of £20 per week for all lower paid grades, 15 per cent for the higher grades; a minimum wage of £115 per week; the abolishing of incremental scales; six weeks annual leave (an increase of just over a week); a decrease in the working week from 37 to 35 hours and "an acceptable long-term pay system".

The pay would restore civil service pay to its 1980 level. At the minute government figures

government and the hospital bosses will back out of binding arbitration and that it is possible for workers to fight back.

estimate that civil service pay now lags behind that of private industry by between 20 and 27 per cent. All married civil servants at clerical officer grade with an unemployed partner and two children are entitled to Family Income Supplement - a clear indictment of their poor pay.

Despite this, the government has offered an increase of £4.50 or four per cent (whichever is greater); a £3 per week increase for 16 and 17 year olds and an increase in responsibility, supervisory and typing allowances by four per cent. So far the treasury has refused to consider the other demands and rejects the concept

of catching up with 1980 levels. The consortium of civil servants unions have responded by planning information meetings of all members. Government buildings have been heavily leafleted with two pamphlets spelling out the union demands. The next plan is to consult union membership on a withdrawal of goodwill and an overtime ban along with a strategy of non-co-operation. Industrial action planned for early April would mean selective three-day strikes in which the selected strikers would receive 85 per cent of their wages followed by unpaid strike action by all members for the other two days.

However, the decision by four of the major British unions to make independent claims has weakened the collective strength of the consortium. It is also felt among many NIPSA members, after the experience of 1981, that three-day strikes are not very effective and an all-out strike would be best.

The teachers' dispute in Britain and the Free State have showed clearly that all-out strike is the best hope for victory. The NIPSA bureaucracy will try to avoid all-out strike at all costs. It's up to rank-and-file civil servants to ensure that there won't be a repeat of 1981. -MARK McIVOR

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## NI Committee of ICTU must defy **WORKERS DEMO BAN**



**THE LAW** governing marches, pickets and other public protests in the Six Counties will undergo significant changes in April.

British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Tom King is presenting the changes as merely bringing the North into line with the Public Order Act introduced into England and Wales last year.

But as usual, the powers given to the police in the North are far greater than in Britain.

The Public Order Act in Britain was explicitly designed to deal with mass picketing such as seen during the miners' strike and the

print dispute in Wapping, with anti-nuclear protests and with demonstrations at the South African and other embassies.

The new law will give the RUC even greater powers to impose conditions, including re-routing, on marches. For the first time, the RUC will have powers over the size and duration of open-air meetings — an assembly will now be defined as a gathering of three or more persons (who need not even have a shared objective).

It is the extension of the power to ban marches and the lengthening from five to seven days of notice to the police of an intended march that has excited the

opposition of the Unionists to the Public Order Bill.

No anti-unionists will shed a tear to see a loyalist march banned. Given the nature of the RUC the problem is that the new powers, like the old, will be used against republicans, socialists and trade unionists rather than against loyalists.

In Britain, for example, the first Public Order Act of 1936 was supposed to deal with fascist marches in the East End of London. The marches banned, though, included May Day and other trade-union organised demonstrations. Between 1981 and 1985 there were twenty bans imposed in London alone. These included CND demonstrations and H-Block support marches.

The way in which such

powers are used against trade unionists was seen during the 1984-85 miners' strike in Britain when police used public order powers to set up road blocks and turn back pickets. Those pickets who did not obey the police and turn back were arrested and charged with obstruction. The new law confirms such powers

It also confirms the British High Court judgement of 1985 that mass picketing can be a criminal offence. The court said then that "sheer weight of numbers on a picket would be sufficient by itself to be intimidatory". The result is that any group of workers wanting to organise a mass picket at their workplace can be arrested for intimidat-

ing others — merely because of numbers.

The new law also removes from trade union marches the customary exemption from the requirement to give notice to the police. While in Britain marches called spontaneously to protest at some sudden official or private decision are exempted from the notice requirement, there is no exemption in the North. The penalty for disobeying conditions or a ban will be six months imprisonment in Britain — in the Six Counties it will be two years.

The objections of unionists to the change in the law and to the harsher penalties for the North compared with Britain is another example of their

hypocrisy. It was Stormont which first introduced the idea of notice requirements in 1951 — 35 years before

Westminster. What's more, the heavier sentences, etc simply confirm those in the existing law which were introduced by the unionist administration of 1970-71.

Unfortunately, there has been little opposition to the new law apart from the Unionists. The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has issued a ritual protest. If trade union opposition is to go beyond ritual, the first step must be to refuse to give notice of forthcoming May Day rallies and marches. Mass Pickets of any striking workplaces should be organised along with the May Day protests in defiance of the new law.