

Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

Free the Birmingham Six



● John Walker



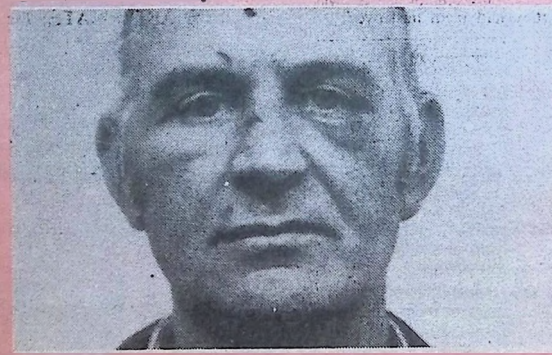
● Richard McKenny



● Gerard Hunter



● Billy Power



● Patrick Hill



● Hugh Callaghan

Fight Extradition

THE British Home Secretary, David Waddington, still refuses to free the Birmingham Six. This despite the fact that he has files that prove that Special Branch officers knew the six were innocent shortly after they were jailed in 1974.

The file contains details of the men the police believed to be the real bombers.

This evidence is backed up by a retired prison officer who saw all six naked within hours of their arrival at the prison -- the marks of earlier beatings were obvious.

On top of all this, 20 officers

of the West Midlands Crime squad who interrogated the Six have since been sued for assault, disciplined or accused of fabricating evidence.

It is an open and shut case of innocence.

It, however, offers no protection when the institution of the state has to be defended. The British Tories dread the pressure building up for the release of the Birmingham Six

as it will cast yet another light on "British Justice". At most, they hope to bury the case with a grand gesture of clemency.

Irish politicians have made great play of their concern for the Birmingham Six. But we need to remember two things.

First, the majority of the crooks in Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are more than willing to stand over the locking up of innocent political offenders in

Irish prisons. Nicky Kelly was locked up for years before finally being released on the basis of "clemency". Don O'Leary, is still languishing in prison for having an IRA poster in his house.

Second, despite their great "concern" they are just as anxious as the British that extradition continues. Next month Jim Clarke, Dermot Finucane and Owen Carron are

due for extradition. Jim Clarke has already been convicted in the North on the sole evidence of confession beaten out of him by the RUC. But still the Fianna Fail and Fine Gael politicians want him handed over.

It is high time that the labour movement took up these cases of repression. The issues should no longer be left in the hands of filthy hypocrites.

SOUTHERN HEALTH CRISIS: Hospitals face 'flu collapse

THE health crisis has been forced into the news because of a protest led by consultant doctors in Galway Regional Hospital.

They presented the Minister for Health, Rory O'Hanlon, with a 50 page report showing that on average 30 patients a day have been accommodated in the corridors.

The recent 'flu epidemic turned a chronic situation into an intolerable crisis. Lack of ward space means that patients who might otherwise be treated have been kept at home.

The report states: "Maximum cost efficiency has gone beyond the accepted safety standards of patient benefit." There are 646 eye patients on the waiting list, some of whom have been waiting since 1986.

The Mid-Western Health Board hospitals have suffered the most. In Nenagh, overcrowding has been going on for four to five years. One doctor claimed overcrowding was so bad during the 'flu epidemic, doctors and nurses had to jump over beds to tend the sick.

A nursing representative of the new union SIPTU has described conditions as "critical, dreadful".

In Ennis, where beds were reduced from 104 to 78 in 1988, overcrowding occurred in 25 days in October and 17 days in November. Gerard Byrne, a consultant surgeon, has said "doctors cannot practice medicine adequately".

At a North Western Health Board meeting on December 21 last year, the Minister demanded further "efficiency savings", including pressuring patients more for the £10 charge! When he claimed that the recent 'flu epidemic was merely an emergency, a consultant in the Mid-Western Health area dismissed this as a "white-wash".

The Irish Nurses Organisation (INO), which represents most nurses, said in a recent circular to members that it had been predicting this crisis for two and a half years. It went on to say that the crisis would get worse in 1990, by which time the services "would not be capable of a proper and adequate response". INO states that many services will have to be rebuilt from scratch. Because of this they asked to see the Minister, but he has refused their request.

The health service has been steadily cut back since 1982. However, in 1987, the Fianna Fail government, breaking their election promise, forced deep cuts.

In 1988 £11 million was cut, and in 1989 £20 million. 3,617 beds and 5,212 staff positions have been lost while the service has been run at its limits. Hence the crisis when an upsurge happened during the 'flu epidemic.

At a meeting of the Mid-Western Health Board in January, one pharmacist said "if the 'flu epidemic had been full strength, the health service would have collapsed". The 1990 allocation, which includes an

"increase" of £120 million, is in fact a reduction in real terms from 1988.

On February 13 and 14 the Labour Party spokesman for health, Brendan Howlin, will propose a motion of no confidence in the Minister for Health. He will demand the opening of 500 acute hospital beds at the cost of £20 million. He also wants another £200 million to be put back into the health service.

This is rich coming from the Labour Party which, when in coalition with Fine Gael, pioneered health cuts.

The hypocrisy of Labour is made clear by their refusal to challenge the government on January 31, when the Dail reconvenes. They are waiting until after budget day and will do it in private members' time, just to be sure that they are heard to protest without actually stopping the cuts.

While private hospitals like the New Mater and the Blackrock Clinic prosper, the public system is allowed to decline. The nurses of St James's Hospital showed what must be done. In July 1989 they staged a successful 24 hour strike against their conditions. They showed that only industrial action can defend health care.

■ JOHN STITT



Travellers kept out

AROUND the 12th century the word "tynker" started appearing in written records as a trade name, and by the 16th century travellers were well known as an occupational group of skilled metal and general craftsmen and migrant seasonal farm workers in Ireland.

With changes in farming—concentration into larger units, use of tractors, etc.—and mass production of cheap and disposable household utensils, these skills have become redundant.

Horse and cattle dealing, too, have dwindled rapidly in this century. As the travellers' generations-old nomadic way of life became less useful to the settled community and their old skills became almost unmarketable they have, in the last few decades, been marginalised to the fringes of society.

There are estimated to be over 15,000 travellers living in Ireland now. According to a 1988 report of the Health Research Board nearly 75 per cent are under 25 years. Only 1.7 per cent survive to 65 years. About half live in local authority housing. Of the other half, 92 per cent live in caravans and trailers with no water, sanitation, electricity or refuse collection.

They are forced to sign on at separate dole offices or on separate days from other people. There are hardly any schools or training courses where they decide what is taught, how, and by whom.

Because of prejudice by bosses, it is almost impossible for them to get ordinary jobs, even nixers. If they deal in scrap or beg to try to survive they are shifted, their caravans forcibly moved on, usually before daybreak. They don't get served in most pubs and cafes.

Heating and cooking with bottled gas or coal fires in caravans is expensive

and dangerous. Recently within the space of six weeks four small children died in caravan fires. In both cases there was no telephone on the site to call the fire brigade. On one site there was a tap, but the water pressure was too low to be any use.

Over the last thirty years there have been numerous reports on the conditions of travellers in Ireland which have all expressed the need for urgent official action, particularly in the provision of housing to those travellers who want it and of properly serviced halting sites for those who prefer to be able to move on when they want to.

Despite various governments agreeing piously over the years to implement these recommendations, the situation of the vast majority of travellers is worse now than at any previous time. There are more travellers living in unserviced accommodation today than there were in 1960.

Hard as things are for most working class people in this part of the "free and prosperous West", the travellers are the most under-privileged group in Irish society. Because of semi-racist job discrimination they can't at present exercise industrial muscle.

As a young traveller, Michael Collins, said in a recent interview, "If we're ever going to get anywhere we need the help of settled people. We haven't got the power."

Many travellers groups welcome support from settled people, and you can find out more from the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group, phone (01) 732802. Even more importantly, pressure needs to be exerted within the unions for them to include the travellers' urgent requirements and rights in their demands, as one of the first steps to breaking down barriers and ghettoisation.

■ NAN DALTON

Students fight SPUC

Students voted in Trinity College Dublin on January 18, whether to continue to defy a Supreme Court ban.

The injunction, obtained by SPUC, outlaws the distribution of abortion information by the Students Union in the college.

Voting in a referendum, 68 per cent, a two-thirds majority, voted in favour of defying SPUC and in support of the Right to Information.

Despite the lack of any real campaigning from Students For Life, campaigners for the Right to Information were nonetheless surprised at the result.

REFERENDUM

The first two referendum points were the distribution of information on abortion, and the provision of non-directive pregnancy counselling, which includes the option of abortion (these being the most contentious points). 65 per cent voted in favour of the first, with an

even larger proportion—82 per cent—in favour of the second! It is possible, therefore, that many students remained confused, despite the high turnout of almost 5,000 voters.

An important victory has been won, however. The effect of the result has been to mandate the Students Union, in the clearest possible way, to continue to defy SPUC's injunction.

But there is considerable pressure on Ivana Bacik president of TCDSU, and other SU officers to back down and for full-time staff to submit to the law and the injunction. The staff are members of the FWUI (now SIPTU) No. 15 section in TCD. A statement from the section at the time of the referendum fully supported the provision of abortion information.

However, late last month the section committee, under secretary Jack McGinley, seems to have changed its tune. A letter to Ivana Bacik from McGinley stipulated that "no service should be offered by the officers or staff of the Students Union which could lead to a request to the courts to sequester the assets of the Students' Union and lead to job losses".

McGinley claims this is based on a SIPTU directive forbidding support for any action likely to place members' jobs in jeopardy.

This approach plays directly into the hands of SPUC and the majority of the staff at the Students Union have decided to comply with the directive. This has put the officers in the position where, although they may be willing to pass information on to students, outside callers seeking information may not be referred to the information network.

The campaign has been long and hard, and it would be foolish to waste what has already been won. The officers of the Students Union must recognise the mandate of the student body, continue to defy SPUC, and continue to distribute abortion information.

A protest demonstration must be organised for International Women's Day on March 8 to campaign for wider support.

Student Union assets may be sequestered, and it is necessary that a working body be set up as soon as possible, to investigate how the worst effects of SPUC's injunction may be avoided.

A student assembly was set to discuss these questions at the beginning of February.

■ KEN MULKEARN

Pancakes up noses in CIA

US officials were cockahoop when a large amount of cocaine was allegedly discovered by US forces in the freezer in an apartment used by deposed CIA employee Noriega in Panama.

This was to be a proof of the drug charges against him in court.

Unfortunately for Bush and Co. it has since been revealed that what was thought to be drugs was in fact tamales (stuffed maize pancakes) wrapped in banana leaves.

Abortion information phone:

(01) 794700



WE THINK

Who are our allies?

AROUND five hundred people met in Dublin last month and agreed to the formation of an Irish National Congress. The gathering drew up a programme and agreed on a number of future activities.

The SWM has no problem with the fact that the Congress agreed, and will actively participate in the campaigns which were outlined. But we believe that the political basis of the new organisation is fundamentally flawed and that this will become clear as soon as a serious effort is made to put the programme into practice.

The basic analysis put forward was that partition is the cause of all the political, social and economic ills in Ireland, North and South, and that campaigns centered on the demand for British withdrawal therefore have the potential to draw in all exploited and oppressed sections in the population.

Thus, looking forward to the 75th anniversary of the 1916 Rising next year, one of the organisers, John Doyle, declared that: "We can get thousands of people back onto the streets demanding a 32-County Ireland."

In a closing speech Fr. Des Wilson of Belfast talked of the marginalisation and oppression of various groups. He mentioned "Jews, homosexuals, trade unionists, republicans, socialists, travellers".

The problem for the INC is going to be that a fight against the oppression of each of these groups does not lead directly or "naturally" to confrontation with British imperialism and opposition to partition.

For example, as the bigotted anti-gay outburst by Archbishop Desmond Connell showed last month, the fight for gay liberation in the 26 Counties comes into immediate confrontation not with British imperialism or with the existence of the Northern state but



On whose side are these patriotic Irishmen?

with the clerical conservatism of the Southern state.

Nor, indeed, do trade union struggles in the South link directly into a struggle for a "32-County Ireland".

In what way will current struggles against job losses and wage cuts and for trade union recognition bring the workers involved into confrontation with partition? Is it British imperialism which is encouraging the management at Pat the Baker in Longford to intimidate workers out of SIPTU?

Or is it Irish capitalism and its political representatives?

Is it British imperialism which is preventing the introduction of civil divorce? Which is behind the shambles which has been made of the hospitals, the cut-backs in the social welfare budget, the cuts in

education which are shutting working class children even more firmly out of higher education?

To attempt to mobilise the various groups which suffer in these conditions around slogans to do with "a 32-County Ireland" is to miss the point and to let Irish capitalism—which is responsible—off the hook.

What's more, precisely because such slogans miss the point, any attempted mobilisation along these lines will simply fail.

Many of those involved in the INC are reluctant to acknowledge this because they fear that they might be "selling out" on partition if they did so. But, on the contrary, it is only by facing the fact of who is responsible for oppression and exploitation in the South that a serious campaign can be built. An-

other campaign based on nationalist fantasy would be a criminal waste of time.

It is because the Dublin government is a capitalist government, and needs the Catholic Church to help it maintain ideological control over the mass of the people, that it presides over the robbery of the working class and the oppression of dissident or "deviant" groups.

It is for the same reason—that they represent capitalism—that Dublin governments collaborate with Britain over the North—despite the occasional, minor difficulty they have in coordinating policies.

The only way the oppressed and exploited of the South can be mobilised in relation to partition, then, is on the basis of a struggle in

the first instance against Irish capitalism.

That would mean raising the slogan not of "a 32-County Ireland", but of "a socialist Ireland".

A united Ireland on the basis of the overthrow of both Irish states.

This would, of course, immediately scare off the Fianna Failers, semi-Fianna Failers and ex-Fianna Failers who hang around groups like the INC and whose presence appears to delight republicans anxious to show how "broad" the group is. As far as the SWM is concerned, good riddance.

Unless these political facts are faced up to, the INC will be merely a re-run of "broad-based" anti-partition campaigns which stretch back to De Valera's Anti-Partition League all the way up to last year's version, FADA.

But the possibility of the leadership of the INC breaking with the failed politics of the past appears to be slight. The organising group was quoted as calling for the building of a movement based on "the ideals of the founding fathers of this State".

No amount of creative re-interpretation of the 1916 Proclamation or of any other document can hide the fact that this was an appeal to traditional Irish nationalism.

Worse: the organisers sought and received a message of "goodwill" from Cardinal Tomas O Fiach. That they thought their organisation would benefit from, rather than be damaged by, the blessing of the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, speaks volumes about how limited, inappropriate and rooted in the past their politics really are.

The SWM will weigh in with activity against repression, in defence of republicans and for the rights of workers and oppressed groups. In doing so we will continue to argue for a campaign based openly on the class realities of Irish society and for the building of a revolutionary socialist party which will have no truck with people who are "sound" on the national question but deep-dyed reactionary on every other issue.

Defend rights for gays

FAMILY Solidarity plan to stop the implementation of gay rights in Southern Ireland.

They hope to force a referendum to stop the recent ruling by the European Court of Human Rights being put into practice.

The bigots are backed by Archbishop Desmond Connell of Dublin, who recently stated that homosexuality is "unnatural" and that young people suffer for being gay.

He wasn't talking about the constant harassment and anti-gay jibes, of course. He was talking about the way in which young people are "lured" into experimenting with homosexuality and then find themselves "trapped".

Of course the logic of gay rights is that no-one

should be trapped in any sort of relationship or sexual "norm". People should be free to choose who to have sex with without interference from church or state.

The bigots constantly worry that if gay rights are implemented "everyone will do it". Their main worry is that if people feel free to choose when it comes to sexuality then they will also demand freedom in other areas of life.

For this reason alone socialists should defend gays. It is no coincidence that in the interview where he attacked gays, Desmond Connell also opposed "social or political revolution".

The European Ruling was a step forward for gays in Ireland. Any attempt to prevent its implementation should be fought.

However, the law itself is



not enough to end discrimination.

There is already a law against incitement to hatred. When rock singer John Bon Jovi made homophobic remarks at his Dublin gig, the National Gay Federation threatened to take him to court under this law.

We have yet to hear of Archbishop Connell or

Family Solidarity being taken to court for their incitement to hatred. And unlike Bon Jovi they have yet to apologise.

In fact, when you think of it, the idea that the Archbishop of Dublin could be fined by an Irish court for homophobic remarks is ludicrous. High Court judges tend to treat Catholic

Bishops with far more favour than they treat New Jersey heavy metal stars!

The fight for real gay rights will not be won in the courts. It will be won by working class people acting collectively to change every aspect of their lives.

Most people have anti-gay prejudices because such attitudes are drummed into people from an early age. But only a minority are hardened gay bashers. There are far more gay men and lesbians in Ireland than there are members of Family Solidarity.

It is possible to win a large number of people to a basic defence of gay rights.

Trade unionists in particular should demand that their movement throw its weight behind this battle. Trade unions should campaign against homophobic attitudes among their members and against victimisation of gays.

In turn, the gay rights movement should look to organised workers for support. They are potentially a far better ally than the Southern judiciary.

DAVE McDONAGH

U.S. workers pay more—official

★ According to official figures, the majority of US citizens today pay substantially higher taxes than ten years ago—despite ex-president Reagan's bluster about cutting the tax burden

Figures collected by the Congressional Budget Office shows that while a wealthy family earning \$145,000 a year pay nearly \$3,000 less, a blue-collar family with a joint income of \$33,750 pay a greater proportion of their income in taxes.

The unpublished report shows that the poorer 60 per cent of Americans pay more of their income on federal taxes than before the "Reagan revolution".

While income tax has been reduced, social security contributions have mushroomed. This charge, which falls heaviest on poorer workers, was supposed to fund future old age pensions.

However, the federal government has been syphoning off billions of dollars from the social security fund to mask the budget deficit and to fund star wars.

Proposed legislation by Senator Moynihan to plug this loophole would increase the current budget deficit from \$150bn to a massive \$240bn.

E A M O N N M C C A N N

Talk about talks

LAST month's outburst of optimism about a "breakthrough" on the North was among the most farcical of the recent false dawns.

On January 21 two Official Unionists who are scarcely taken seriously even by their own party colleagues, MEP Jim Nicholson and Jack ("Duisberg") Allen, said in the *Sunday Press* that they'd be prepared to talk to Charlie Haughey if Haughey agreed that the Anglo-Irish pact could be put to one side.

Immediately, Haughey announced that he was "preparing a detailed response", and certain elements in the media held their breath for a whole twenty-four hours. The BBC's "World at One" went so far as to make the "story" their lead item—ahead of the bit of bother in Azerbaijan.

"Ireland may be on the brink of a historic breakthrough," gasped Jim Naughtie.

Then Haughey unveiled his "detailed response", all factions among the Unionists told him to stuff it, and that was that. Until the next historic-type breakthrough.

The incident illustrated just how empty of real content the "constitutional process" now is.

Both Palsley and Molyneux regularly announce that they are ready for talks with anybody (apart from Sinn Féin). All they want is the Agreement "suspended".

Hume never gives over about wanting talks to start immediately, if not sooner, just as long as nobody touches a hair on the head of his beloved Accord.

Brooke babbles endlessly about his door being permanently open, while Haughey drones on about the constant need for "dialogue".

The impression is sometimes created that if only these people could get together around a table the problem would be solved in a twinkling. As if the problem consisted of their difficulty in getting talks going.

But in fact the reason they have difficulty in getting round a table is precisely that they couldn't come up with a solution if they did. The reason they have difficulty in arranging talks is that they have nothing to say to one another.

Hume couldn't possibly settle for less than institutionalised power-sharing—guaranteed places for nationalists in any



A babbling Brooke. . .

devoled administration—as well as some continuing role for the Dublin government.

It would be political suicide for Palsley or Molyneux to accept any such thing.

From the constitutionalists' point of view this has been the crux of the problem since the fall of Stormont in 1972, and it hasn't changed one bit. One reason bourgeois commentators seemingly can't see this might be that they are blinded by the obviousness of it all.

INTERESTING

Another, and more interesting, reason could be that they do see it, but don't dare admit that they do.

To acknowledge that the positions of the Unionists and the constitutional nationalists are so far apart that they could not be bridged by negotiation would be to acknowledge that there is no constitutional solution to the "Northern problem". And that runs counter to what the ruling class parties and their media have been pounding into us for years.

So they are reduced to the ludicrous pretence that a solution is readily available if only a way could be devised of bringing

the constitutional parties together. It's as if there is some marvellous, magical scheme or formula which, mysteriously, nobody has yet mentioned, an arrangement which could be construed by John Hume as involving power-sharing and a role for Dublin and simultaneously defined by Palsley and Molyneux as "majority rule" and an end to Dublin interference.

Many, many thousands of people, particularly in the North, who yearn for peace after two decades of unremitting pain, would be delighted if somebody could and would come up with such a magical solution. It wouldn't work in the long term, but that's not the point. The point is that, sadly, it's Paul Daniels territory anyway.

If such a scheme were possible, then—given how avid these constitutional politicians are for a devoled government that a dozen of them could become ministers in—there's no doubt it would have been thought of by now.

The lesson to be learned from last month's laughable "breakthrough" is that far, far deeper changes than the constitutional politicians are willing to contemplate are needed in Ireland, North and South, if communal conflict is to be ended.

U.S. INVADES PANAMA:

Cracking the whip

SOCIALISTS shed no tears for Panama's General Noriega when the Vatican handed him over to the US at the start of January.

Since the early 1960s when the CIA paid him to spy on his colleagues in military college, Noriega has been a gangster and a drug trafficker.

But the US invasion of Panama was about much more than capturing Noriega.

The 24,000 US troops backed by bombers, helicopter gunships, mortar, rocket and cannon fire that swept into Panama on December 20 could scarcely have been about stopping the drugs trade or ensuring democracy by deposing a corrupt dictator.

If the US were to seek the extradition of former allies involved in the drug smuggling business, it would have to ship

to America virtually the entire leadership of the Afghan Mujahideen, almost every Thai general it has been involved with over the past 40 years as well as the Contra leaders in Honduras.

In May 1986 the administrator of the US Drug Enforcement Agency wrote and thanked Noriega "for the vigorous anti-drug policy you have adopted". Yet, as one of Reagan's aides, Norman Bailey, later testified, there was at the time in Washington "a 21 cannon barrage of evidence" of Noriega's drug-dealing.

If he's accused of obstructing the course of democracy, Noriega has only to cite US support for his handpicked candidate Nicolas Ardito-Barletta in the phoney 1984 elections. Secretary of State George Shultz even travelled south to join in Ardito-Barletta's victory celebrations.

After his Malta summit with Gorbachev, US President George Bush announced that the 1990s would usher in a period of unprecedented world peace and democracy. The invasion of Panama made it

plain that the only "democracy" Bush will contemplate is one he sanctions.

As Gorbachev presides over the crumbling of Russia's empire, Bush is asserting US military and political power.

The invasion of Panama followed the use of US military force against a coup attempt in the Philippines and the imposition on Nicaragua of a new central American peace plan—a plan which involved Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega condemning the rebel offensive in El Salvador.

The invasion of Panama was above all a message to countries like Nicaragua, Cuba, Iran, Libya and Lebanon that Reagan may be out of the White House but his big stick policies continue.

And this sudden assertion of military power is not just aimed at the US's traditional enemies and its "own backyard". It is also a reminder to European governments, especially West Germany, and a warning to Gorbachev, not to ignore US wishes over Eastern Europe.

For socialists, the main message of the US invasion of Panama was that the 1990s are likely to be no more peaceful than the sixties, seventies or eighties.



Sensory deprivation - U.S. style

RORETTI HORGAN

North and South the cops...

SHOOT TO KILL

THE shooting of nine people by gardai in Athy on 12 January and the killing of three men by a British Army undercover unit the following day in Belfast have again raised questions about the existence of "shoot to kill" policies among the supposed defenders of law and order on both sides of the border.

Few members of the nationalist community in the North doubt that the security forces there operate a "shoot to kill" policy—more accurately described as a policy of deliberately murdering political opponents.

There is ample evidence of it—from the killing by British paratroops of 13 unarmed civilians in Derry's Bloody Sunday in 1972 through the ambushing and killing of six unarmed republicans by a secret RUC hit-squad at the end of 1982, to the killing by the SAS on 13 January of three Belfast petty criminals who were robbing a betting shop.

When British policeman, John Stalker, came within a hairsbreadth of proving that the 1987 killings resulted from an official policy of executions, he was sacked under circumstances that are still rocking the British establishment.

Last month's killings in Belfast suggest the policy still operates. No warnings were given, no attempt to make arrests. Maximum fire power was used and the injured men were ceremonially "finished off".

But aren't the police in the Republic very different from the forces of law and order in the North? Aren't the Garda Síochána unarmed? Don't they spurn the emergence of macho hit-squads such as exist in the RUC and British Army?

In theory maybe, in practice most definitely not.

No fewer than 1,700 gardai, a fifth of the entire force, can carry guns. Official figures say that in the last five years they have opened fire on 52 occasions, killing four people and wounding seventeen.

But aren't they protecting



ordinary law abiding citizens?

Most laws in this country are to do with the protection of property, but they are applied very differently to different types of crime against different types of property.

If your car radio is nicked or your house broken into the most you can expect from the gardai, if you even bother to report it, is that they will record it and forget about it. But when five paintings were stolen from Lord Dunsany's castle last month, 60 gardai were assigned to the job full time. Interpol was called in and all ports and airports put on alert. With a houseful of priceless art, the loss of the paintings will not cause any hardship to Lord Dunsany, so the degree of hurt suffered by the victim is not a consideration in pursuing the perpetrators.

HUMILIATED

The Athy bank robbers, who are said to have robbed about £100,000 last year—not an awful lot for a ten-member gang—were under surveillance for many months by 40 detectives employing the most sophisticated technology available. Yet Ireland's crooked businessmen, who defraud the EEC of around £4 million every single week, aren't spied on day and night,

and don't even get their knuckles rapped let alone their heads blown off.

If police fire power matched the seriousness of the crime committed, they'd have to send the entire Special Branch, armed to the teeth, after Charlie Haughey, notorious for his crooked deals and corrupt practices. Few of his cabinet colleagues would survive either.

And what about the coal barons whose "legitimate commercial activity" kills scores of people in every winter smog? Killing for profit is okay if you are a respectable businessman and it helps a lot if you contribute to Fianna Fail.

Today elite garda units like the Security Task Force and Serious Crime Squad are permanently armed. Members of the STF, in civilian clothes, cruise around Dublin in unmarked cars, guns at the ready. But they're not looking for Larry Goodman and his criminal cronies.

One of their last reported engagements before Athy was with a crowd of kids in Finglas who spotted them and started hurling abuse. The cops opened up with their Uzi machine guns, scattering the kids. The

fact that no enquiries were held and no-one raised the matter in the Dail suggests that this type of behaviour is now accepted as normal.

A few days before Christmas a detective, gun in hand, chased a young shoplifter through the crowds in O'Connell Street. On 3 January detectives opened fire on a "suspicious" car in Phoenix Park. It turned out to be an off-duty garda and friend.

Armed gardai carry everything from automatic pistols, through high powered rifles and pump action shotguns, to the notorious Uzi machine gun. All of these weapons were deployed against the Athy bank robbers on 12 January.

In Athy it took armed gardai less than two minutes to gun down nine people: three civilians, three other gardai, and three bank robbers. One robber died, riddled from head to toe, and one, with several bullets in the head, will be paralysed for life. The gardai fired first and continued firing even though no fire was returned. The robbers did not fire a single shot.

In the week after the Athy shootings the gardai offered

three different explanations for their behaviour.

They said a "gun battle" was started by the driver of the getaway car, but had to retract this when forensic tests showed the robbers' guns hadn't been fired at all.

It was then claimed that an officer fired first to immobilise the getaway car. Other officers, thinking the driver of the car was shooting at them, "returned" fire.

This was later embellished with the claim that the driver of the getaway car had produced a gun and pointed it at gardai. Only then was he shot.

It has even been suggested that police marksmen first fired on their own cars to immobilise them: they had been left with doors open and engines running, providing potential getaway vehicles for the robbers.

The inability of the gardai to offer a plausible explanation and stick to it suggests there was a lot more going on in Athy than they are willing to own up to.

The Athy shoot-out was the work of the Emergency Response Unit, whose existence is officially denied. It is the most highly trained elite group of professional gunmen within the gardai, trained by the Irish army to SAS standards.

This means, quite simply, that every shot fired is aimed

to kill. Shooting to wound, to facilitate an arrest, is not allowed because a wounded man—or woman—with a gun is still likely to shoot back.

So there can be no doubt that the gardai were shooting to kill. The question is, did they go to Athy with the deliberate intention of killing members of the gang rather than attempting to arrest them?

Gardai claim that the Athy gang had robbed as many as a dozen banks in the past year. But no-one was shot in any of those robberies. It wasn't because this gang was "bloodthirsty", as one of the papers described them, that the gardai went after them with such ferocity, but because all efforts to capture them in the past had failed abysmally. Nor did the gardai have sufficient evidence against the gang to arrest any of them. They were just too clever for the forces of law and order.

The front cover of the January issue of the official police publication, *Garda Review*, published before the Athy shootings, carries the headline "Time to Take on Bank Gangs", a clear statement that policy was hardening up.

One gang member who was not present on the Athy job has claimed that the Special Branch told gang leader, Peter Loughran, that they were going to kill him and other members of the gang whenever the opportunity arose.

FEROCITY

The decision to act on this threat was apparently made in December when the gang evaded capture after robbing a bank in Thurles. The gardai had mounted a massive surveillance operation and had followed the gang to the bank. But still Loughran and friends got away, leaving the elite garda units humiliated and mocked within the force. Morale sank to rock bottom.

To get the egg off their faces they had to make sure this gang didn't rob again. The only sure way to do that was to gun them down. But even the state's very best hand picked killers couldn't do that without botching the job.

With gangsters like this upholding law and order, who needs criminals?



Front cover of Garda Review published a few weeks before the Athy shooting

Marxism and freedom

by GER FRANCIS

THE revolutions in Eastern Europe have been characterised by a simple demand—democracy.

Freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and elections have been to the forefront of the opposition movements. The denial of these basic democratic rights in supposedly "socialist" countries illustrate the corrupt nature of these state-capitalist regimes.

However in explaining the nature of such repressive societies some socialists blame not just stalinism, but marxism itself.

The idea that socialism can be equated with the repressive, grey, all-powerful bureaucracies of the stalinist states is entirely foreign to marxism.

For Marx and Engels socialism meant above all real democracy and equality.

Writing about the Paris Commune of 1871, Engels saw its strength as the measures taken to prevent its subversion by a bureaucratic elite:

"In the first place it appointed to all official posts in administration, in the judiciary, in public education, persons elected by universal suffrage, and also introduced the right to recall those elected at any time by a decision of the electors. Secondly it paid to all officials from the highest to the lowest only the same wages paid to other workers."

Only by mass democratic involvement could workers prevent power being usurped from them. Under socialism, Lenin argued, this could be prevented because:

"For the first time in the history of civilised societies the mass of the population will be raised to independent participation not only in voting and elections, but in day to day administration. Under socialism all will administer in turn and will quickly become accustomed to no-body administering."

DELEGATES

For Lenin the means to such participation lay in the new workers councils, *soviets*, that sprang up during the course of the 1917 revolution. Composed of delegates of workers and peasants, the *soviets*—in particular the factory committees—provided the backbone of the Bolshevik Party and the new workers state.

They became the organised expression of the will of the people. John Read describes in *Ten Days that Shook the World* how:

"No political body more sensitive and responsive to the popular will was ever invented. And this was necessary, for in time of revolution, the popular will changes with great rapidity. For example, during the first week of December 1917 there were parades and demonstrations in favour of the constituent assembly—that is to say against the soviet power. One of these parades was fired on by some irresponsible red Guards and several people killed. The reaction to this stupid violence was immediate. Within 12 hours the complexion of the Petrograd soviet changed. More than a dozen Bolshevik deputies were withdrawn and replaced by Mensheviks. And it was three weeks before public sentiment subsided—before the Mensheviks were one by one retired and the Bol-



Marx stood for freedom, Stalin stood for oppression

sheviks sent back."

The extent to which this soviet power could flourish, however, was to be ultimately determined by the success or failure of workers revolution internationally. The misfortune for Russian workers was that their revolution occurred in one of the most backward capitalist countries in the world.

The "breathing space" while they waited for solidarity from abroad was very short. Within weeks the new workers' state found itself diverting its meagre resources to a fight for its very survival. Vicious civil war raged until 1921 with 14 foreign expeditionary forces joining the White armies.

Eventually the attempted counter-revolution was defeated—but at a terrible price. Industrial production collapsed. Hunger and epidemics stalked the country, claiming nine million Russian lives between the end of 1918 and the end of 1920. The war itself claimed four million victims. Hunger was so severe that cases of cannibalism were reported.

FLIGHT

There was a massive flight from the cities to the countryside to find food. In autumn 1920 the population of the USSR's 40 capitals had declined by a third. Workers in factories took to bartering pieces of machinery with peasants in order to find food.

The situation was desperate, and with most of the best militants fighting at the front and with the working class becoming weak and demoralised, the *soviets* became increasingly redundant. Administration became more and more undertaken by state officials.

By 1920 there were an estimated five times as many state officials as industrial workers. The Bolsheviks found themselves left holding power on behalf of the masses but without mass participation. Increasingly they became forced to use thousands of

members of the old tsarist bureaucracy in order to prevent society from totally disintegrating.

However in the decimation of the *soviets* and the growth of a bureaucracy staffed by large numbers of individuals whose ideals were very different to those of the makers of the revolution, the basis of social groups developing separate interests from workers and peasants was sown. The development of Stalin's future power lay in this process.

Lenin, recognising the dangers, attempted to put things right. He wamed in 1920 of the USSR being a "workers' state with bureaucratic distortions". He introduced the Rabkrin, the "Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate", a body whose aims were to guard against the excesses of bureaucracy and help regenerate mass involvement in government administration.

Its members were to be elected, working for a short period only so as to ensure that everyone could be drawn into the work. Ultimately, however, the Rabkrin proved ineffective.

Without a confident and aggressive working class the process of guarding against the bureaucracy developing separate interests to the workers was to prove impossible.

With Lenin's death, and the political marginalisation of a genuine opposition around Trotsky inside the Bolshevik party, the process of degeneration of the workers' state continued until every gain of the October revolution had been wiped out by Stalin.

EXPERIENCE

The experience of workers' councils and *soviets* is as relevant for marxists today as was the Paris Commune for Marx, Engels and Lenin: firstly, in understanding that the eventual destruction of Soviet power lay in real material conditions, not in some quasi-religious notion of "human nature"; and secondly, in terms of the struggle for real democracy and freedom in Eastern Europe.

At present in East Germany, Romania, and Czechoslovakia new structures are being set up not to institute real change but to stifle the revolutionary dynamic and initiative of the masses. In Poland there's "power-sharing". In East Germany and Czechoslovakia "round-table" discussions towards forming coalition governments are taking place. In Romania there is the new "National Salvation Front".

In all, the hated figure-heads have been removed, but the old ruling class remains in power, albeit with changed titles.

The only basis on which the aspirations of the masses for real democracy will be fulfilled is when workers start to organise their own power. When that happens we will see workers' councils, and the embryo of future socialist society emerge.

End of Glasnost

AN atmosphere of crisis pervades Russia at the moment. Numerous commentators, including Boris Yeltsin, the popular Moscow deputy have given Gorbachev a few months to survive.

Despite almost five years of perestroika, simple consumer goods such as fresh fruit, toothpaste or sausages are in desperately short supply.

And despite all of Gorbachev's supposed victories over the conservative forces inside the Russian Communist Party, the old style Stalinists are making a come-back.

The signs of the crisis are everywhere. Food riots have broken out in many parts of the country. In Sverdlovsk, in the Urals, hundreds took to the streets when even rationed foodstuffs were cut.

In Chernivov in the Ukraine a riot occurred when the car of a prominent Communist party official was found to contain plenty of food and drink while the rest of the population went hungry.

Shortages of supplies have also disrupted industry. Oil wells in Siberia were shut down when there was no aviation fuel available for maintenance engineers. In Tiblisi, in Georgia, 140 enterprises had to close due to a lack of energy supplies.

BRUTALITY

The nature of this crisis can only be fully understood in Marxist terms. Marx argued that an epoch of revolution opened when the social system became a brake on the development of the productive forces. In the past, Stalinism, despite its brutality and horror, allowed the economic base of society to expand.

But today, its success means that it has outlived itself. Its very survival leads to the disorganisation and stagnation of industry. Thus, in the 1950s, the gross national product of Russia grew at the rate of 5.8% a year. Today there is zero growth.

There are a number of specific reasons why the Stalinist command economy is a failure today. First, pressure and terrorism can compel millions to produce—but it becomes progressively less efficient. It leads to apathy and silent resistance when increases in productivity and worker involvement are demanded.

Second, the huge reserves that Stalin and his successors could draw on, are no longer available. The abundance of oil and surplus labour from the countryside is in decline.

Third, and most crucially, the

growth of a world economy means that it becomes virtually impossible to maintain the same levels of productivity through isolation.

The first Russian micro computer, for example, the Agat, cost ten times the equivalent machine in the West.

Gorbachev attempted to introduce a number of reforms from above to deal with this situation. But his "Glasnost from above" was met by a massive clamour for "Glasnost from below". From every sector of society there came demands for an end to privilege for the putting right of past injustices.

An example of the type of

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All reports of the activities of the Russian army have effectively been banned. Officially 98 people were murdered when the army imposed a regime of terror on Baku. Local reports, however, indicate that the death toll ran into hundreds.

The pretext for the deployment of the troops came from the pogrom launched against Armenian citizens in Baku. The tragedy was that extreme nationalists have taken over the Popular Front in Azerbaijan and whipped up hatred against the Armenian minority there.

Nevertheless national tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis has been long

stoked up by the Moscow Stalin maintained a policy of oppression against non-Russian nations by settling them at each other's throats.

In 1923, Stalin handed Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan Republic despite the fact that 90 per cent of population were Armenians. The Armenian language and culture was quashed in decades.

When Gorbachev came to power with talk of an end to injustice, the population of Nagorno-Karabakh then demanded their right to join Armenia. Gorbachev dithered and hedged. Finally, he confirmed that Nagorno-Karabakh would remain in Azerbaijan despite the expressed wishes of the population.

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by KIERAN ALLEN

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The tremendous discontent in Russian society has come smack up against the privileged

bureaucracy in the top echelons of the Communist party. The *nomenklatura*, the party nominated managers of enterprises, have grown wealthy through bribery and thieving.

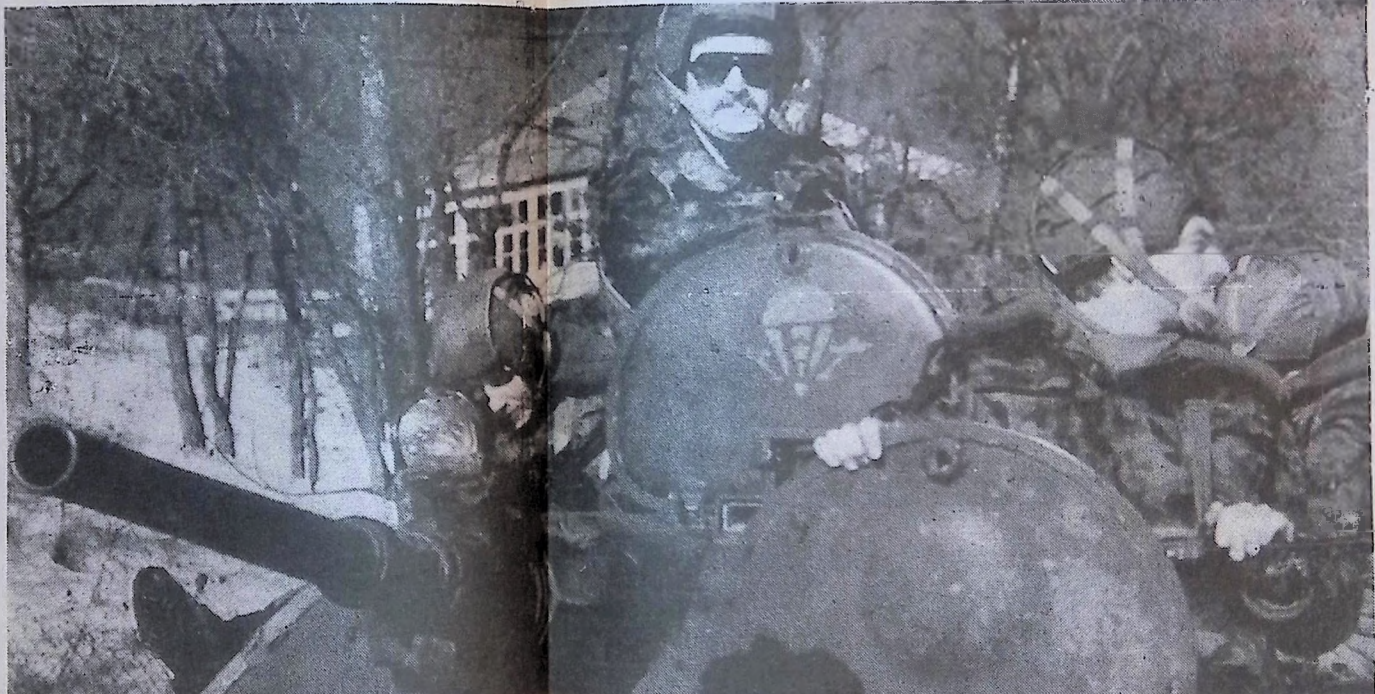
Even legally, they are entitled to more comfortable flats, better foodstuffs from special shops, special hospitals and even, in one case, special cemeteries.

Over the last two years, they have carried out a series of manoeuvres to defend their positions. In areas such as the

Baltic states, they have ran ahead of the nationalist movements to stay in power.

Throughout Russia itself they have combined a pretence of democracy with covert repression to meet the movement from below. Now, however, the crisis in Russian society has given sections of them an opportunity to make a bid to re-impose the authoritarian straitjacket.

The massacre that the Russian army carried out in Baku has strengthened the hand of those who want a Chinese solution. The imposition of martial law, the use of soldiers against civilians is seen as excellent training for the streets of



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Stalin's policy in the area and produce a decisive and democratic solution has fueled nationalist hatreds.

The conflicts in Azerbaijan and Armenia could now be solved if both were allowed to secede from Moscow and their national oppression ended. Sending in the Russian army offers absolutely no solution.

DESTROY

The Russian army's primary concern is to stem the move towards independence in this oil rich region. The Defence Minister Dmitri Yazov made this clear when he said that "Our task is to destroy the structure of power that has formed at all enterprises and offices".

He was referring to the growing amount of control in

the hands of the Popular Front. The army commanders have not the slightest interest in fostering peace between two nations that could all too easily turn into a common struggle for national liberation from Moscow.

In Russia itself the army's intervention is preparing the way for a tough crackdown on the streets of Moscow and Leningrad. Already there is talk that "too much democracy" has led to all the trouble.

Backed up by an atmosphere of increased Great Russian chauvinism, the army commanders are already itching to impose an iron fist on the whole country.

Socialists therefore condemn the Russian army's massacre and call for their withdrawal from Azerbaijan. The army of an oppressor nation can never solve the conflicts between the oppressed.

Glasnost

by KIERAN ALLEN

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The massacre that the Russian army carried out in Baku has strengthened the hand of those who want a Chinese solution. The imposition of martial law, the use of soldiers against civilians is seen as excellent training for the streets of

Moscow and Leningrad. But the refusal of reservists to be called up for army service in Armenia-Azerbaijan shows the real difficulty of this policy still.

The growth of Russian nationalism will also aid the bureaucracy to stamp on the movement from below. In the local elections in March, the conservatives have formed an electoral front on the dual basis of promoting Russian nationalism and an "end to capitalist restoration".

Stalinists have traditionally resorted to the worst forms of nationalism to defend their privilege. In Poland in 1969, they whipped up an anti-semitic campaign against student protestors.

In Bulgaria, they have ran a racist campaign against ethnic Turks. In Russia, itself the seeds of what Lenin called "Great Russian" chauvinism have been well and truly nourished by events such as the Afghan conflict.

How will Gorbachev respond to these pressures from the conservatives?

Gorbachev's differences with them are entirely tactical. They are about how best to defend the privileges of the elite in Russian society. It is the equivalent of the difference in 1969 between the liberal Unionist Terence O'Neill and the backwoods of his party over how to respond to the nationalist revolt.

Already, it has been Gorbachev who has signed the order that led to the massacre in Baku. He is still defending Article 6 of the Constitution which guarantees the CP a leading role. Even this may not be enough, for the conservatives who yearn for a period of order.

NETWORK

Gorbachev's head may still be demanded. But one thing we can be sure of, if this is the case, is that Gorbachev will not favour any movement that wants to take the party bureaucracy on headlong.

The key question is whether the Left or the Right can make gains over the next period. The largest opposition network are the Popular Fronts. Within the Moscow Popular Front, sections around Boris Kagarlitsky, are establishing a Committee for a New Socialist party.

They have built strong links with the independent union that grew from the miners strike last year, Sotsprof. They oppose the trend to what they call "market stalinism" where there would be "a market at the bottom and a Pinochet at the top".

But the legacy of Stalinism often means that the ideas of these groups are not yet clarified. Thus, they often argue for a strategy of "revolutionary reform" where power is wrested step by step from the bureaucracy.

Sections of them took a highly ambiguous position on the sending of the Russian Army to Azerbaijan arguing that "Gorbachev had no choice".

A period of revolutionary upheaval presents tremendous opportunities for left organisations to grow rapidly. But the key is decisiveness and clarity.



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Kagarlitsky calls for aid



Boris Kagarlitsky is one of the leading activists in the New Socialist Party.

LAST year miners in Siberia and other parts of the USSR went on strike. They demanded payment for time spent going down the pits, better health care and more food in the shops.

Most importantly, they demanded the right to independent, free trade unions.

From this struggle SOTSPROF was born—the first independent trade union for decades in the USSR.

Now they are desperately in need of funds to extend their organising drive. Here we reprint an appeal from Boris Kagarlitsky, a leading activist in the New Socialist Party.

Despite the limited, precarious but real political advances already achieved in the era of Glasnost, economic developments in the same period have been proving a bitter experience for ordinary people in the Soviet Union.

Perestroika has done little to reduce the dead weight of bureaucratic inefficiency, privilege and corruption, the Soviet economy is in a state of virtual collapse.

The working class is increasingly being forced into action to defend basic living standards, as the wave of miners' strikes in 1989 showed most dramatically.

Crisis

In these circumstances, it is vital for socialists to put forward a clear alternative perspective, emphasising democratic planning rather than market-inspired reforms which offer no solution to the crisis.

SOTSPROF—the recently founded Federation of Socialist Trade Unions—seeks to develop an independent trade union movement with clearly defined socialist ideas.

Of course, the first task of socialists in Britain is to fight against your own government. If you defeat Thatcher and throw the New Right onto the defensive, that will also be the greatest help you could give us.

Support

But we need material help too. We do not want to be dependent on external support, but we urgently need money for printing equipment for SOTSPROF.

Far right bodies in the West, such as the Heritage Foundation, are already backing right wing liberal organs in the Soviet Union.

As things are, socialist activists are sometimes forced to use these journals because they do not have their own outlets.

Development of international socialist links could not have come at a better time.

What you can do:

★ Raise the following motion in your union branch/stewards committee/trades council/student union:

This branch/stewards committee/etc, welcomes the establishment of SOTSPROF—an independent socialist trade union federation in Russia—an agrees to support their financial appeal to raise funds to expand office and printing facilities.

We agree to sponsor the SOTSPROF Appeal and make a donation of £ . We also agree to invite a speaker to our next meeting and/or sponsor a local public meeting.

★ Support the SOTSPROF Appeal benefit gigs in your area.

★ Send all money to: Matt Merrigan (treasurer), SOTSPROF Appeal, c/o 24 Croft Ave, Dublin 12.

ANALYSIS

THE REVOLUTION UNFOLDS

THE OLD RULERS ARE STILL IN POWER

ACROSS Eastern Europe regimes have fallen over the past few months as revolutionary students and workers have taken to the streets.

The Communist Party monopoly of power is a thing of the past. Multi-party elections are promised for the next few months in Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Non-Communists are even in government in Poland with a Solidarity aligned prime minister and in Czechoslovakia where former political prisoner Vaclav Havel has been made president.

In Hungary the old ruling party has split in two and in Romania it has been wound up.

In Poland last summer "round table" discussions of party, opposition and "independents" paved the way for elections.

Round tables now exist in East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, while in Romania the government is run jointly by former Communist ministers, armed forces officials and representatives of the insurgents who risked their lives on 22-25 December.

CRISIS

The upheavals in eastern Europe come at a time when these societies are in deep crisis. And this fact opens up revolutionary possibilities.

The crisis affecting the old order is three-fold.

First the performance of these economies has been declining. At the end of the second world war, the subordination of the relatively weak competing capitals under the state resulted in impressive growth rates. The single party dictatorship suppressed not only dissent from below but also rivalries within the national ruling class.

But world competition today demands capitals which can operate on a multi-national basis. As a result despite the fact that East Germany is a far stronger economy than Poland, the economies of the east are being left behind. Industry suffers from low productivity and shops are short of consumer goods.

Secondly, the economic changes being forced on the economies by this crisis are exposing the ruling classes to frictions as conflicts break out between those wanting changes and those clinging to old methods.

Thirdly, the crisis in Russia has removed the guarantee of Soviet troops putting down internal revolt. In East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, the use of the Russian army "restored order" for the local ruling class.

When Gorbachev visited East Germany in November last year he told Erich Honecker that the use of Soviet troops against the mounting revolt in that country was not on. Within a week Honecker had fallen.

But the crisis in the ruling classes also exposes weaknesses in the opposition.

The opposition movements started off as protests against the undemocratic

one-party states for democratic reforms. Alongside this were widespread illusions in Western bourgeois democracy and markets.

While the opposition was a harassed minority these ideas were not put to the test. But now as the regimes grant democratic concessions the inadequacy of these ideas is coming to the surface.

Many people thought they were organising against socialism. In fact their enemy was the state capitalist ruling class. Nationalist illusions made many unclear who their enemies were and who were their allies.

The imposition of martial law in 1981 in Poland took many by surprise. The feeling was that the Polish army would not act against the Solidarity movement.

A couple of months ago Prague students were able to build up a large movement to have Vaclav Havel made president. But Havel made it clear that he was against radical change in the old structures of the state apparatus. He denounced as "trouble makers" conscripts who went on hunger strike for a reduction in military service.

But a process of differentiation is taking place where numbers of workers are beginning to see it is necessary to discard former allies.

This is a feature of every revolutionary situation.

In Russia in February 1917, masses of workers, peasants and soldiers rose up demanding "bread, peace and land". But the leaders they supported, while seeking democratic reforms, had every intention of demobilising revolution. The Provisional Government was first led by Prince Lvov, a scion of the nobility and later by Kerensky, a reformist lawyer.

CONCESSIONS

Despite concessions, the capitalist class remained in place and bread, peace and land were not delivered.

It took eight months of revolutionary upheaval for the mass of workers to become convinced of Bolshevik arguments and to abandon the reformist Mensheviks.

That process has begun in Eastern Europe. It was not his round table partners but nationwide strikes that forced East German prime minister Hans Modrow to abandon plans to create a new secret police last month.

At the same time in Romania crowds of workers on the streets forced National Salvation Front president Ion Iliescu to promise to outlaw the hated Communist Party and hold a referendum on using the death penalty on the butchers of the Securitate—promises he reneged on.

And as political ideas are openly discussed the process of clarification and ideological struggle is beginning.



East Berlin: Demonstrators ransack secret police headquarters

Learning the lessons

IN Poland, Solidarnosc is now in the government.

So great was its infatuation with market reforms and privatisation that Solidarity's leaders have enlisted the ultra-monetarist Adam Smith Institute as advisors.

The rush to introduce market reforms has seen food subsidies abolished with prices rising on average by nearly a half. Is this what motivated the striking shipyard workers nearly a decade ago?

One Polish socialist said: "People are getting very cynical about the Solidarnosc leadership, about Lech Walesa calling on them to tighten their belts. They say he's forgotten what it's like to live on an electrician's wages."

Solidarnosc first emerged in 1980-81 in the Gdansk shipyards fighting for trade union rights. Heavily influenced

by Catholic moderation and Polish nationalism it was nonetheless based on working class resistance. It quickly became a national movement spawning Rural Solidarity and uniting behind it the mass of the oppressed in Poland.

From the start leaders like Lech Walesa made it clear that Solidarity sought reform and dialogue with the regime. Walesa explicitly ruled out any challenge to "the leading role of the Communist Party".

The experience of Jaruzelski's military coup drove the movement underground. There appears to have been in

this period a differentiation among the smaller number of underground activists between those who sought compromise and those who wanted a more militant fightback.

When the movement revived two years ago, it was on the basis of a strike wave that the leaders of Solidarity sought to moderate. When, in an effort to defuse the situation, the government offered round table discussions last summer, Walesa and Co were quick to agree. The elections that followed saw Solidarity take government posts including prime minister.

The Polish Left—the Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution—was born out of the strike wave of two years ago. It was a reaction both to the increasingly right wing, nationalist stance of much of the opposition and to the failure of social democrat elements in the opposition—with which its activists had tried to build a unified socialist party—to relate to the strike movements.

The party succeeded by its activism and militant rejection of the round table approach in attracting to it both factory level Solidarnosc activists and radical youth. By last summer it had grown to several hundred strong.

It did not build on the basis of any clear ideology. Its founding statements simply referred to marxism as one among many traditions which had influenced it. Its main commitment was to self management. But it did not spell

out whether this was of individual factories or of the economy as a whole.

It took it for granted that self management structures would have to exist alongside a conventional parliament.

At its first conference in Wroclaw in December, three trends emerged within the PSP-DR in response to experience of Solidarnosc in government.

Some argued for Western style left social democracy with complete reliance on parliament.

NOTORIOUS

The majority—the "centre"—believed it was necessary to struggle for a fully democratic parliamentary system that would operate alongside self management of individual factories, leaving the old hierarchies of the state—police, armed forces, etc—intact.

The left, however, argued for social self management of the whole economy by workers challenging the power of the state. But they saw these organs of workers' power sitting alongside a conventionally elected parliament.

As the space is opened up for political argument and ideas are put to the test the differentiation of the opposition into different trends is a pre-condition for clarification of ideas.

Only on the basis of a clear struggle against the compromisers and reformist and nationalist illusions can the left wing in Eastern Europe arm the workers with the clarity necessary to grasp real victory from the unfolding revolution.

DESPITE the massive changes that have taken place one fundamental fact remains: the old state-capitalist ruling classes are still in place.

The army generals, police chiefs, factory managers and judiciary continue to dispose of the real power behind the scenes as they have for forty years.

For the last four decades, despite the participation of Communist Parties an effective instrument of government. But it was one instrument among many. By controlling the army, police force and factories they maintained their tight grip on society. And that has not changed.

In Poland, for example, despite the participation of Solidarity ministers in the government, General Jaruzelski is still president. Party members hold the foreign and defence ministries. None of the hack judges who for years placed a legal figleaf over stalinist tyranny have been removed.

And the factory managers who got their positions by bureaucratic horse-trading remain in place—if necessary by putting themselves at the head of newly-privatised enterprises.

Indeed the modernisation and restructuring of the Eastern economies, so necessary for the survival of the bureaucratic ruling class, is made easier by the presence of former oppositionists arguing for wage cuts, closures, removal of subsidies.

Workers are being asked to pay the price for improving the profitability of enterprises they do not own.

Forced by revolt from below the bureaucrats are conceding democratic reforms—a freer press, legal rights for opposition parties and even elections. They hope to incorporate

"independents" who still have some credibility with workers, students and intellectuals into running their system. This trick has been used to good effect throughout this century by the bosses of the "Western democracies".

But the possibility of real freedom opened up by the appearance of mass movements requires the smashing of the power of the state capitalist ruling class and its replacement by a state organised on the genuine, collective power of the working class.

Otherwise the danger remains that having demoralised the workers with the collaboration of former oppositionists, the old rulers will re-apply repression to make workers pay the price for economic reforms.

BUSH MAKES YOU SPIT!

A woman in Florida celebrated her 115th birthday last month.

When in front of the television cameras somebody read out to her a telegram of congratulations from President George Bush, she turned and spat over the side of her chair with great force.

Bush had just reaffirmed on television his support for the government of El Salvador.

"I think the Bush administration made a great mistake in calling them (the guerillas) terrorists. If you call young men and women fighting planes and tanks with hand-held weapons terrorists, what do you call those who have murdered Archbishop Romero, priests and nuns and thousands of people?"
Robert White, former US ambassador to El Salvador

Bolshie Beano

Crisis is a left wing political comic for young adults. At £1.25 for a fortnightly copy, it doesn't need the warning it carries: "Not for sale to children". It is published by that socialist stalwart Robert Maxwell, and is a spin-off from the Judge Dredd cartoon.

Its content varies from straight political propaganda, attacking myths about the Third World, to stories with an overt political message. Alongside these there might be a single grotesque portrait or a story peopled by depressed, nihilistic urban youth.

In illustrative style it owes more to the American Marvel

Transparent Glass fraud

IN 1987 workers at Waterford Glass were told that if they accepted job losses and a worsening of conditions the company's problems could be solved.

Now, over two years later, they are being told that they must accept further attacks as the company's crisis goes from bad to worse.

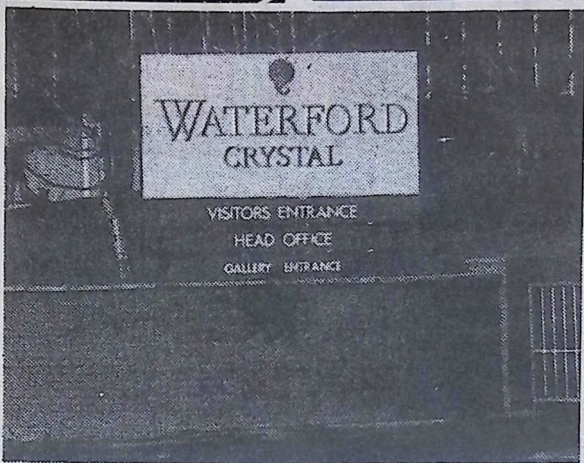
Management say that expected profit levels have not been reached and that profits of £10 million are needed by the end of 1990. They now want to introduce further draconian measures, including:-

- Cuts in wages
- Longer working hours
- Shedding of 250 contract workers' jobs
- Abolition of time off for mass on church holidays
- Raising of the retirement age to 63 years (In 1987 it was 55 years)
- The abolition of bonuses at Christmas and summer holidays, amounting to the equivalent of four weeks' pay per year
- Redeployment and other "flexibility" measures.

One worker told Socialist Worker that the measures "turn the clock back to the 1940s" in trade union terms.

The workers made 40 years' non-stop profit for Waterford Glass up to 1987 and should not have

Jimmy Kelly: Waterford Glass Convenor

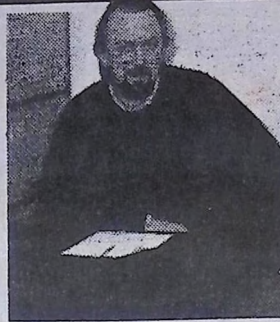


to pay for management's disasters. As another worker said:-

"Our hard-won wages and working conditions should not now be forfeited just so that they can have a quick return on their investments."

The strategy being put forward by the union leadership is to demand that the workers see the company's financial records. As we go to press a 3-day, 2-hour strike has been called to force the company to disclose information.

But getting a look at the books will not solve the problem. This strategy implies that if the company is in real dire



straits then maybe some cutbacks should be accepted.

The union should certainly point to the enormous personal wealth of the company directors to argue that they are not paying for the crisis so neither should the work force.

Any fightback should be based on the principle of not accepting an erosion of conditions.

Waterford Glass workers have proved their strength time and time again. That strength is still there and is the key to winning at present.

WATERFORD SWM

comics tradition, but its subversive political intent is a direct, though more explicit, descendant of a British tradition best represented by the Beano and Dandy.

The most important thing about Crisis is that it exists and seems successful. Maxwell's market researchers must have identified a developing left wing, anti-capitalist current among the young to whom the comic could be sold. The bold use of a popular, attractive medium to disseminate politics is to be welcomed.

To be welcomed, too, is the way it destroys the stereotypes usually foisted on minorities. Women, blacks, Rastas, young people and environmentalists are portrayed as strong, aggressive, independent and positive. There is a tendency for their resistance to "the

system" to be violent and unfocused, but generally the "new image" is a gain.

Paradoxically, this strength



only serves to underline the comic's weakness; and it's a serious one. The comic's politics are those of the GLC/Rainbow Coalition/Right Ons, who exist in the political space between the Trotskyist left and the right wing Reformist Labour politicians.

They believe that the working class is no longer central to socialist politics, and instead a coalition must be forged between the marginalised minorities—gays, blacks, women, single parents, the unemployed etc.

In no copy that I have read has the exploitation of anyone at work been depicted. This exploitation and the collective resistance to it in trade unions is a fundamental experience. Any politics that ignores this is centrally mistaken.

JOHN STITT

What's on: SWM meetings and activities

- **Belfast Branch**
Meets every Monday at 7.30 pm in the Ulster People's College, 30 Adelaide Park, Belfast (between Lisburn Road and Malone Road, opposite Queens Elms Halls of Residence)
- **Bray Branch**
Meets every second Tuesday at 8.00 pm in Hibernian Inn, Marino Terrace

- **Cork Branch**
Meets every Tuesday at 8 pm in the Anchor Inn, George's Quay
- **Derry Branch**
Meets every Tuesday at 8.00 pm in Dundoo Bar, Waterloo Street
- **Dundalk Branch**

- Meets every second Tuesday at 8.00 pm in ATGWU, Francis Street
- **Dublin Branch**
Meets every Wednesday at 8 pm in the Bachelor Inn, O'Connell Bridge
- **Kilkenny Branch**
Meets every Tuesday in the Club House Hotel

For more details of regular branch meetings in BRAY, DERRY, DUBLIN, DUNDALK, DUNGARVON, GALWAY, KILKENNY, PORTLAOISE 6 WATERFORD contact: SWM, PO Box 1648, James's St. Dublin 8

What we stand for

The Socialist Workers Movement is a marxist organisation fighting for a workers' republic in Ireland and for socialism internationally.

FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

We begin from the proposition that what determines the nature of any society is the system by which its wealth is produced. In the system we live under, capitalism, production is geared to profit, not to human need. Among its inevitable features are poverty, war, racism and sexism. Capitalism cannot be destroyed and these evils thus eradicated by piecemeal reform. It can only be destroyed by revolutionary action by the class which creates all the wealth, the working class.

The machinery of the capitalist state - parliament, courts, army, police etc - is designed to protect the interests of the ruling capitalist class, not to regulate society in a neutral fashion. At most, parliament can be used sometimes, to make propaganda against capitalism. It cannot be used to smash capitalism. Only a workers' revolution can do that and establish a truly democratic society in which workers hold power directly through delegates elected from workplaces and areas and are re-callable and replaceable at any time by those who elect them.

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

This kind of socialism does not exist anywhere today. Workers do not have control in Russia, China, Cuba etc. Instead, power is held by a state-capitalist class. A workers' revolution is needed in these countries too. We are against NATO and the Warsaw Pact and all weapons of mass destruction. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

FOR AN END TO PARTITION

The Northern State was created by British imperialism in its own interests. Sectarianism and bigotry were built into it and will continue to exist for as long as the state exists. The marginal privileges given to Protestant workers are just that: marginal. It is in the immediate interest of Protestant as well as Catholic workers to fight against their exploitation. It is in the interest of all Northern workers to unite against the state and aim at socialism in Ireland. We support all forces struggling against imperialism and the Northern state, regardless of differences we may have with them.

The interests of the Southern ruling class are no longer in fundamental conflict with those of imperialism. Southern capitalism is a junior player in the world capitalist system. The Southern state too, props up partition, despite occasional nationalist rhetoric.

The "national question" can be solved only by mass working class struggle against both states. Republicanism, by limiting the immediate struggle to the achievement of "national unity", and by appealing for all-class alliances in pursuit of this goal, can never lead the working class towards the defeat of imperialism.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We fight for free contraception, abortion on demand and the right to divorce. We oppose all discrimination against gays and lesbians. We stand for secular control of hospitals and schools. We fight for the complete separation of church and state.

FOR A FIGHT IN THE UNIONS

Trade unions exist to protect workers' interests under capitalism. The role of trade union leaders is to negotiate with bosses over workers' position within capitalism. To destroy capitalism, we need a rank and file movement in the unions separate from the leaderships and fighting for workers' interests regardless of the needs of capitalism.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To destroy capitalism and achieve socialism the most class conscious sections of the working class must be organised in a revolutionary party. The SWM aims to build such a party through spreading its ideas and through its activity in the working class movement.

Join us!

If you would like to join the SWM or want more details, complete and send to:
SWM PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

- Please send me more details of SWM
- I want to join the SWM

NAME.....
ADDRESS.....



REVIEWS

Can Palestinians defeat Zionism?

Intifada, Zionism, Imperialism and Palestinian Resistance by Phil Marshall, Bookmarks, £5.95 plus £1 postage from SW BOOKS, P.O. Box 1648, Dublin 8.

IN December 1987 the Intifada began.

Thousands of Palestinian youths, some as young as ten years old, began to wage a war of stones against the occupying forces of the Zionist state, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A generation of Palestinians that had spent their entire lives under Israeli occupation, denied most of their basic human rights, living in appalling conditions, discriminated against and exploited, now stood before Israeli guns and armoured cars in fearless defiance.

Such scenes should be an inspiration for all socialists, but what are the real hopes for the Palestinian resistance?

As the Intifada enters its third year, the prospect of real self determination for all Palestinians looks as far away as ever. While Yasser Arafat and various world leaders sit around and talk about a mini-stage solution, the Zionists continue their colonisation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with US backing, financial if not always verbal.

Phil Marshall in this essential work illustrates how the Palestinian struggle for self determination against the Zionist oppressor is inextricably linked to the wider workers' struggles in the region against Arab capitalism and its ally, US imperialism.

He demonstrates how, for over thirty years, the Palestin-



After two years is victory in sight?

ian leadership, while calling for struggle against imperialism as manifested in the Zionist state,

has in fact sought compromise with that same imperialism in the form of its allies, the Arab

ruling classes.

That is to say, the leadership—the dispossessed Palestinian bourgeoisie—advocated a policy of non-interference in the domestic political affairs of the Arab regimes.

Ironically they denounced struggles or demonstrations within these states that had very often been inspired by or made in solidarity with the resistance of the Palestinians themselves.

The truth is that the leadership cared little or nothing for the struggles of ordinary workers, but simply sought a state where, as well as enjoying the economic fruits as they had within the various Arab regimes, they might exercise the political power denied them.

Any real solution for the Palestinian masses, as Marshall shows clearly, is dependent on the emancipation of the mass of Arab workers from the oppression and exploitation of their own ruling classes in the surrounding states.

Palestinian resistance, and particularly the inspiration of the Intifada, has already and will again act as a catalyst for general workers' struggle throughout the region. The failure of the stalinist oriented left to take a lead and argue beyond the narrow nationalism of Arafat and the predominantly bourgeois Palestinian leadership has ensured that the mass of Palestinians are still without a land, and those on the West Bank and Gaza remain—though defiantly—beneath the iron fist of Zionist oppression.

With the demise of stalinism as a pretender to marxism and the failure of Arafat to achieve any progress whatsoever, the best hope lies in the emergence of a genuine current of revolutionary socialist ideas both within the Palestinian movement and among fellow workers in the surrounding Arab world.

■RICHARD BOYD BARRAT



No glasnost for women

Women and Perestroika Chanie Rosenberg, £3.95, Bookmarks.

CHANIE ROSENBERG has done an impressive amount of research into the realities of women's lives in Russia in the period before the revolution, during it, during the years immediately after it and into how women were and are affected by the dismantling of the gains of 1917 during the long years of stalinist state capitalism and the present phase of Perestroika.

Glasnost has opened a Pandora's box for the Russian ruling class as massive amounts of damning information, long suppressed, come to light about the real conditions forced on the Russian working class by a bureaucracy claiming to be following the goals of the revolution.

Most striking, perhaps, are the similarities between the lives of women workers East and West (and this book concentrates mainly on women). Lack of nurseries, inadequate and overcrowded hospitals and housing, the double burden of working and caring for families, high accident and sickness rates caused by the negligence of factory managers, essential (let alone non-essential) goods and services often beyond workers' means, prostitution, pornography, a high rate of divorce and domestic violence as a result of stress... The list goes on.

STRIKING

Also, as in the West, a wide disparity in housing, health care, services and consumer goods between the wealthy few and the mass of workers.

Women played a very important role in the Russian revolution, striking over factory conditions under Tsarism (worse for women even than for men) and food shortages. From being regarded as passive and subordinate, even by many revolutionary men, they became among the most militant fighters.

Trotsky said at the time: "A revolution does not deserve its name if, with all its might and all the means at its disposal, it does not help the woman—twofold and threefold enslaved as she has been in the past—to get out on the road of individual and social progress".

Soon after the revolution a vast number of revolutionary decrees was issued: for example, the full right of women to vote; ending the authority of heads of families;

divorce; ending the distinction between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" children; equal employment rights; paid maternity leave; ending the criminalisation of adultery and homosexuality; free abortion on demand; freely available contraception, the establishment of the eight hour day. Maternity and child care provisions in the 1920s were the most advanced in the world at the time.

Communal institutions were set up to free women from so-called "women's work": kitchens, laundries, creches etc. Prostitution disappeared after the revolution. There was, as Rosenberg says, "discussion and argument on every street corner about every subject under the sun".

The failure of revolutions in other countries resulted in the total isolation of the Russian revolution, and forced the Bolsheviks to bring in the New Economic Policy (NEP) and to cut back on many of the crucial benefits gained by workers.

Even so, until towards the end of the 1920s the regime, even in the words of a Menshevik opponent, encouraged "work for women as a means to raise their status. The controlling point of view was women's emancipation rather than labour market policy."

EXPLOITED

Stalin's claim to be "building socialism in one country" was in fact the reversal of the revolution and the reinstatement of capital accumulation and "national interest" as the driving goals of society, with the working class being exploited and repressed in order to extract the maximum amount from their labour for the minimum of state expenditure. This particularly hit women (and the ethnic minorities, a fact which is now coming home to roost in the widespread nationalist demands for secession from the Soviet Union).

So what about Perestroika, and its much vaunted claims to be improving the lives of Russian workers, including women, and bringing them freedom?

Food shortages and queues grow longer. Unemployment is set to increase dramatically, with women being the most severely affected. Economies will be made in provision of services.

In fact, women's lives will be very little improved, and in many cases made worse. Nevertheless, there is an anger and impatience among workers in Eastern Europe, including women, that is not likely to settle for long with being short changed, and which could cause shock waves in the West in the coming years.

■NAN DALTON

FILM

IN THE SHADOW OF THE NAZIS

Au Revoir Les Enfants Director: Louis Malle. Screen, Collage Street, Dublin

FRANCE, 1944, during the Nazi occupation. A Catholic boys' boarding school somewhere in the countryside. The rough and tumble of horseplay, fights, laughs, interesting and boring lessons, wet dreams, homesickness, reading under the blankets by torchlight, sexy pictures, cold dormitories and confessions of "bad thoughts"...

A new boy arrives at the school, bright and lively but with an element of differentness and some mystery about his family which cause him to be given a hard time at first. Gradually he comes to be accepted as one of them by the other boys, and especially to be the mate and comrade of a boy called Julien. On the whole it is a relatively happy

school where the boys are leniently treated by the priests and other teachers.

Into the ordinariness of young adolescents growing up and the peace of the surroundings, the encroaching war and Gestapo and anti-semitism intrude as a background of increasing menace and grotesqueness.

Little by little Julien comes to realise that his friend, Jean Bonnet, is a Jew, and what it meant to be a Jew in France at that time—the constant fear of discovery, fear for his parents, the need for continual disguises and wariness, the ugliness and insanity of racism that condemns people not for what they have or haven't done but for what they were born as.

Bonnet and a few other Jewish boys are sheltered and protected by the headmaster and other teachers, who try to carry on as normally as possible until any normality becomes impossible.

Based on a true story, it's a brilliant film and it makes a powerful point about what the Nazis and their collaborators did to the Jews although (or perhaps because) no actual violence is shown on the screen. Also the subtleties and differences—people don't fit

into neat boxes and categories, as they don't in life—add to this film's ability to show people involved in horrific events in a new way, helped

Unhappily ever after

Last Exit to Brooklyn.

IN THE sixties the book on which this film was based was prosecuted in England for obscenity. The publishers got off on appeal by saying the book was arty.

Set in 1950s Brooklyn, the film sketches the oppression and degradation of working class the Italian-American community living there.

A factory goes on strike. The shop steward attempts to leave his wife for a transvestite. But when he loses his job with the union his lover doesn't want to know.

The local hooker has a scam that involves luring sailors on leave from Korea into a back alley where her mates mug them and take their money.

The neighbourhood kid with a heart of gold has a crush on the hooker. He saves up his nickels and dimes and buys a clapped out motor bike to impress his paramore.

She is unimpressed—she is

by great acting and photography.

It's a film that stays with you long after you see it.

■NAN DALTON

too busy being degraded in a gang bang she drunkenly invited (No, she really did).

The strike is settled after a fierce fight with scabs. The workers go back to work and the sailors go back to Korea and everyone lives unhappily ever after.

The filming is atmospheric. The characters, despite being stereotypes, seem believable. This is probably because there are no knights on white chargers, no heroes. Just ambiguous, miserable people.

You don't get told if the strike was won or lost. It doesn't make any difference. And this is the weakness of the film: everyone is eating shit and nobody expects it ever to end. The power of the workers' strike is reduced to the violence and oppression of having your head cracked open by company police.

I don't think the film is pornographic. Although it is obviously "arty". Worth two quid on a wet afternoon.

■STEVE GREEN

INDUSTRIAL

No democracy for super-union

AT midnight on December 31 a fireworks display heralded the arrival of SIPTU (Services, Industrial, Professional, Technical Union), formed through the amalgamation of the ITGWU and the FWU.

SIPTU, with 200,000 members, will organise one in three trade unionists in Ireland and control about 40 per cent of the votes in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The merger was carried through by a secret postal ballot of the members of both unions. Only 23 per cent voted and the breakdown of figures has never been revealed, except to say that the merger was "supported by an overwhelming majority".

Opponents of the merger, including the Socialist Workers Movement, argued that the merger was a move to the right. It was arranged by Bill Attley and John Carroll, the new joint presidents of SIPTU and chief architects of the Programme for National Recovery.

The speed with which the merger took place was to ensure the place in history of John Carroll of the ITGWU, who was to retire on January 8, 1990, and who was to hold the position of joint president for just one week.

But to put the merger—and more importantly, the terms of the merger—down to the vanity of John Carroll would be a mistake.

The undemocratic nature of the terms of the merger is designed to mould the union's structures and policies and to exclude dissent from the course already mapped out for SIPTU.

This involves a further dilution of class struggle, seen as outmoded and unpopular. The introduction of the "New Realism" or, as SIPTU puts it, "a beacon for the twenty-first century", involves offering members a range of consumer oriented services, in conjunction with marketing, finance and advertising agencies. The members are not to be seen as people who can organise and fight in their own interests, but as a passive mailing list that can be sold to the highest bidder.

No effort was made to involve the membership in discussions about the merger or the structures of the new union. Only now can the lack of democracy be seen for what it

is. No conference at all will be held in 1990.

It will be five years before SIPTU holds its first policy-making national conference and just as long before elections are held for the National Executive Council.

It will be 1997 before elections are held for any position held by the general officers. The six general officers made sure their positions were secure until they retired. Even with the retirement of John Carroll, the salary package of the remaining five comes to over £300,000.

During the next seven years the top five will revolve jobs, thus ensuring that each retains a top position until retirement.

The removal of the new union's head office from Liberty Hall and Parnell Square in Dublin's city centre to suburban Palmerston Park has further widened the gap between the top officials and the ordinary member. It has made the general officers and the headquarters staff practically inaccessible to ordinary members.

The merger is now a fact of life and members of SIPTU must start organising to ensure that real trade union principles are rebuilt within SIPTU. The starting point must be opposition to any new Programme for National Recovery.

The members must show Bill Attley that they control the union and its policies, and will not put up with the bureaucratic manoeuvres of the officials. The next five years will decide the direction of SIPTU for some time to come. Despite the lack of democracy it's up to us to produce some real fireworks in SIPTU. A decisive rejection of the Programme for National Recovery is the first step in building the one big union that Connolly and Larkin envisaged.

■ SIPTU MEMBER

As profits boom workers suffer under PNR

STILL I.C.T.U. WON'T FIGHT

AS we go to press the special ICTU conference to decide on whether to continue support for the Programme for National Recovery (PNR) has not yet been held.

But all the indications are that the conference will vote overwhelmingly in favour.

This should not surprise anyone. Within the unions there has been little or no discussion on the matter. Meetings or ballots, which are always insisted on by the union bosses before taking industrial action, were never even suggested. It is likely that most union members were not even aware that the conference was to take place.

The bureaucrats of the ICTU and the major unions have made some noises about the difficulty of continuing to sell the deal to their members.

But their aim has been to try to get the Fianna Fail/Progressive Democrat government to make some minor concessions in the budget. These could then be held up as victories and evidence of the benefits of the PNR.

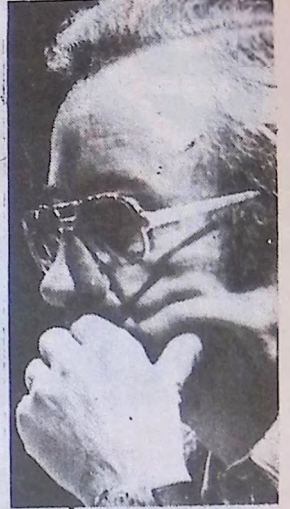
They have referred to the scandalously low levels of company taxation. It is likely that these will be increased slightly in the budget and that some of the loopholes in company taxation law will be closed.

One, for example, allowed a company to claim that by ripening green bananas in their warehouse they were involved in a manufacturing process and so were eligible for a reduced rate of tax.

But Ireland has the lowest rate of company taxation of all the OECD countries—lower than those havens of enterprise, Thatcher's Britain and Bush's USA.

A small increase in the rate of company tax, while welcome, is no great victory.

The promise that was made for the PNR was that in return for low wage increases unemployment would be sub-



Attley and Carroll: backing Fianna Fail

stantially reduced. 20,000 extra manufacturing jobs would be created each year.

In minute detail where these jobs were to be was laid out.

Aer Lingus, for example, was to be involved in "the establishment of an expanded flight simulator facility preserving 15 jobs and creating four more".

But as we said in last month's *Socialist Worker*, "In 1989 227,000 people worked in manufacturing industry in Ireland. In 1987 when the PNR was agreed, the number was 181,500.

"Almost 46,000 industrial jobs had disappeared in just seven years, a 20 per cent cut in the work force...even if all the jobs promised in the PNR were to be realised we would still be worse off than a decade ago."

Redundancies and natural wastage have meant that job levels have remained virtually unchanged. The job losses are continuing. January saw the announcement of eventual closure of Nixdorf in Bray with a loss of 500 jobs.

Fianna Fail finance minister Reynolds has announced that staff levels in the civil service should be at 1977 levels—this would mean the loss of a further 800 jobs.

When the PNR was signed the pay increase was just around the level of inflation. Now, with inflation over twice the rate of the pay increases and with three rises in the mortgage rates in 1989, work-

ers are experiencing real wage cuts.

And it must be remembered that real wages had already decreased by five per cent in the six years before the agreement of the PNR.

As Charlie Douglas of the ATGWU put it, "the question is who is benefiting? Certainly not the poor or the people at work".

Pretax profits have soared during the PNR, increasing by between 17 and 25 per cent. It is quite clear that the "recovery" of the PNR was not for the working class but for the rich that have controlled this state since its foundation.

Fianna Fail had always presented itself as the free-spending party of growth, the party of the "common man" as opposed to the monetarist Fine Gael and Progressive Democrats.

In the mid-1980s Haughey, forced by the economic situation, changed line and was shown to be as enthusiastic a cost cutter as any of the other right wing parties. This presented a real opportunity to develop independent working class politics.

While negotiations were taking place for the PNR, thousands were marching throughout the state against the Fianna Fail health cuts.

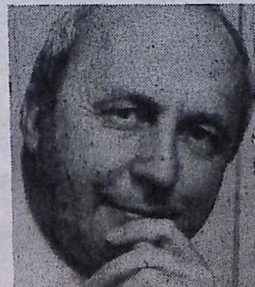
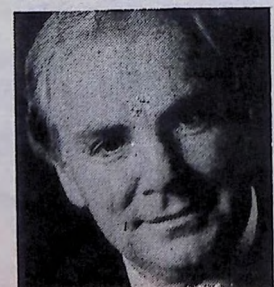
Rather than call off the negotiations and help generalise the fight against Fianna Fail, the union bosses called off the protests. A chance to build an alternative to the right wing Tweedledum and Tweedledee politics was effectively sabotaged.

Within the unions there is talk about what should be included in the next pay deal. Whatever the outcome of the ICTU conference, militants need to organise now to ensure that we are not sold a PNR Mark 2 when the present deal expires.

■ WILLIE CUMMING



Albert Reynolds and below bosses O'Reilly, Kilroy and Hayes



WATERFORD:

Cans strike

EIGHTY members of SIPTU are on strike at Nacanco Irl. Ltd., a can top manufacturing plant in Waterford.

The dispute is over a number of issues, including:

- The filling of promotional vacancies from outside the company's work force, 20 of whom applied for the positions

■ Cuts in holiday entitlements

■ A cut in entitlements for absence due to industrial accidents.

SIPTU official John Dwan does not seem to see management as the main enemy, however.

Dwan warned against "lefties and radicals approaching the picket line offering solidarity".

Socialist Worker

North exposed in Stalker cover-up



by EAMONN McCANN

THE latest twist in the Stalker affair demonstrates yet again that all efforts to reform the North are doomed to failure.

What John Stalker set out to do was to discover the truth about the circumstances in which six people were shot dead by the RUC in Co. Armagh in 1982.

What has subsequently emerged is that the RUC would have been unable to withstand the impact of this truth coming out.

So, as the British Attorney General was eventually to admit in the House of Commons, a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice was organised soon after the killings.

When it looked as if Stalker might stumble on this conspiracy, and on the facts which the conspiracy was designed to keep hidden, another conspiracy got under way. This one involved an effort to frame Stalker's friend, the Manchester businessman, Kevin Taylor.

When the case against Taylor collapsed at Manchester Crown Court last month, it was admitted that senior detectives had perjured themselves to a judge in order to get a warrant to search Taylor's



house. They'd claimed they had reason to believe he was involved in laundering money for an international drugs ring.

In fact, they had no such suspicion. What happened

was that Stalker had been taken off the RUC enquiry supposedly because Taylor was up to something shady: the Manchester police then went on a trawling operation against Taylor in the desperate hope of find-

ing something—anything—which they might be able to pin on him.

And they came up with nothing.

It's worth recalling the circumstances in which

Stalker was taken off the shoot-to-kill enquiry in 1986.

He was informed that he was suspended on the day before he was scheduled to travel back to Belfast to question RUC Chief Constable John Hermon under caution. Not even the most naively credulous supporter of "law and order" can possibly believe this was a coincidence.

FRAME-UP

He was taken off the case in desperate haste because he was on the brink of discovering something which the British establishment desperately wanted to keep hidden. That is, they authorised the frame-up of Taylor to stop John Stalker unearthing the truth about the 1982 RUC operations in Armagh.

The question which arises is: why?

It cannot have been that they were desperately concerned about the repercussions for the individual RUC men who actually carried out the Armagh killings. If the matter could have been sorted out by throwing a handful of low-level RUC men to the

wolves, the British establishment wouldn't have thought twice.

But there was more to it. The reason Stalker was set to interview Hermon under caution was that the trail of guilt threaded up through the ranks of the RUC, via Special Branch chief Trevor Forbes, to the office of Hermon himself. If Stalker had followed that trail—which had been his intention—the RUC would have suffered catastrophic damage right at the top.

There was no way out of this dilemma. Rank and file RUC men had made it abundantly clear that if they went down for the Armagh killings and cover-up, they wouldn't go down quietly.

So the cost of bringing somebody to book for the Armagh killings would have been a shattering blow to the entire RUC. In the circumstances of 1986—with the RUC already reeling from the initial protests against the Anglo-Irish Agreement—the force could well have disintegrated.

And yet there is no possibility of the RUC becoming acceptable to

nationalists in the North, particularly in Armagh, unless—among other things—the culprits are brought to book for these killings.

NECESSARY

Making the RUC amenable for wrongs done to nationalists is high on the lists of reforms which constitutional nationalism aims at and insists can be achieved.

The police force is a crucial element in the machinery of any state. In this instance, the reform which would have been necessary to make the relevant piece of the machinery of the Northern state viable would have had the effect of destroying the piece of state machinery in question.

This is what we mean when we say that the Northern state is irreformable. It is not a matter of abstract analysis, much less a suggestion that sectarianism is inherent in any group of people.

It is a practical matter, easily observable in operation.

