

Open letter from an Irish socialist

Socialist unity with the UVF?

Platform

ON TUESDAY 9 May, members of our organisation attended one of the strangest and most disquieting meetings ever organised by a section of the socialist movement here in Belfast.

The meeting, entitled "Is there a future for socialism?", was organised by Militant Labour and included on the platform Billy Hutchinson of the Progressive Unionist Party.

This man has no place on such a platform or in such a debate. His party is simply a front organisation for the sectarian gangsters of the Ulster Volunteer Force, set up in an attempt to bypass the British ban on TV appearances by Republicans which indirectly affected Loyalist organisations.

The UVF has a horrific history of sectarian gangsterism. This stretches from the Malvern Street murders (1966) through the Shankill Butchers gang of sectarian killers to last September's attempt at mass murder in Dublin's Connolly station. More recently still, just before the publication of the framework document, the PUP said that if it were not to their liking "all hell would break

loose." We took this as a renewed threat of mass sectarian killing.

Not only are the UVF sectarian killers, even within the ranks of Loyalism they have been the most fanatically right-wing. They have had the most extensive contacts with British and European fascism.

Yet at the Militant meeting Billy Hutchinson confided that he was a socialist. Not one member of Militant Labour contradicted him!

Peter Hadden, the Militant Labour spokesperson, said that everyone at the meeting believed in socialism — endorsing Hutchinson's preposterous claim. A member of Militant then appealed to the PUP to participate in a "conference of socialists" with a view to creating a workers' party in Northern Ireland. The PUP accepted the invitation!

We can only ask with the poet: "What strange creature shuffles towards Bethlehem to be born?"

We have been concerned for some time at the rightward lurch within Militant Labour and at their decision to partition themselves into Northern and Southern parties, but this latest stunt from an organisation that claims to stand in the Marxist

tradition of Lenin and Trotsky goes well beyond anything acceptable even in the widest definition of socialism.

Militant have made a terrible mistake. They are confusing right-wing workerist populism with socialism. In so doing they endanger themselves, their own members and give cause for grave concern to socialist groups in contact with them. More importantly, they cause grave offence to masses of Catholic workers and many Protestant workers by endorsing forces that have always opposed the independent non-sectarian organisation of working people.

Militant Labour have a lot of explaining to do. We would like to hear their explanations and we would welcome the opportunity to publicly debate with them. In the meantime we have no option but to sound the alarm bell for the members of Militant, for Irish Socialists generally and for the broad international movement for socialism.

John Mc Anulty

Irish Committee for a Marxist Programme*

* Irish supporters of the Trotskyist current whose best known member is Ernest Mandel.

Another day

50 YEARS ago the British ruling class won the Second World War. Then, within two months, they were humiliated in a General Election where their chosen party, the Conservatives, was swept out by a Labour landslide.

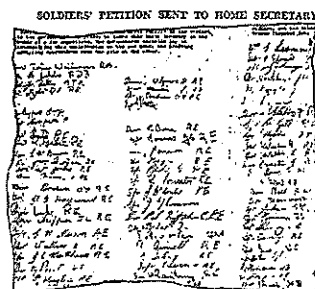
If the Labour Party leaders had used their victory to rouse the workers to take democratic control of social wealth — to make a socialist revolution — then, so the excerpt we reproduce bottom right (from the American socialist paper *Labor Action*, 10 July 1944) indicates, the bosses and bankers would have been unable to mobilise the armed bodies of the State against them.

In 1944 an Eighth Army soldiers' debate had responded to a great press outcry against strikes in the mines and elsewhere by reaffirming the right to strike even in wartime. Soon even many Tories had to recognise that, as one of them put it, "If you do not give the people social reforms, they will give you social revolution." But the Labour leaders did not want social revolution. At the December 1944

Labour Party conference the floor had to overturn the platform to get any definite proposals for nationalisation at all into the manifesto.



The ruling class relies on "armed bodies of men" to maintain its rule



Petition of soldiers of the Eighth Army

