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Preface

The test of the seriousness: the maturity, the honesty and the ultimate viability of any revolutionary organisation is its attitude to its own mistakes. Marxists make mistakes - inevitably. Those who are serious face their mistakes, analyse them in the light of further experience, analyse why they made the mistakes they did, and thereby avoid making a merely empirical alteration without fundamentally learning from the experience.

Those who are not serious, or who are first of all concerned with 'face', prestige, and factional self-defence seek above all to evade an honest accounting: they subordinate fundamental questions of method and approach to what are essentially secondary and, in the final analysis, unimportant considerations.

One of the biggest mistakes in the history of IS was the line of support - *support* - for the use of British troops in Northern Ireland last summer. To those of us who opposed the line then and who have since watched events rapidly unfold in Ireland, events that smashed the rationalisations of IS's leadership almost as soon as they were uttered, it seems almost incredible that in the last four months there has been no self-correction or self-criticism forthcoming from the leadership.

Unless one considers as self-correction the inclusion in the 12 point programme for the Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign of a plank calling for support of those who call for the withdrawal of British troops.

The fact that this appears when the officially stated policy of IS itself remains adamantly opposed to calling for withdrawal of the troops shows the contradictions that can occur when mistakes are quietly covered over instead of honestly faced and examined. If we take at face value both the IS policy and its policy for ICRSC, we can only understand from it that IS is publicly calling for opposition to its own line! Or, put another way around, that the IS majority is in support of the opposition to it in the group, while still maintaining the line that the opposition has fought against...

According to the well-known formula of democratic centralism, once a party reaches a decision democratically any minority must loyally submit to majority discipline - and wait for events to either vindicate or decisively crush its case.

After a certain time, dependent on the tempo of events, it acquires the right to re-raise the issues. While, in our opinion, the discussion before and at the last

conference was by no means ideal from a democratic centralist point of view, we did accept majority discipline on this question. The purpose of this pamphlet is to re-open the discussion: that is, to discuss IS's line in the light of the recent decisive turns which events in Northern Ireland have taken.

The Easter Conference must discuss this question thoroughly. If the leadership refuses to learn from its own experience, the membership can't afford not to.

Editorial Board, Workers' Fight

Introduction

"Eclectics live by means of episodic thoughts and impressions, that originate under pressure of events, Marxist cadres capable of leading the proletarian revolution are trained only by the continual and successive working out of problems and disputes."

L. Trotsky, *What Next?* (1932)

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's programme on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives - these are the rules of the Fourth International."

L. Trotsky, *The Transitional Programme*, 1938

The line of the EC and NC majority in favour of dropping the slogan "Withdraw British Troops", and against opposing the use of troops in 'Ulster' during August and after, is one of two things.

Either: it is a new vindication of the non-sectarian, non-mechanical and "fresh" politics which IS believes to be its mark of superiority over the 'traditional Trotskyists'.

Or it is the latest example of the short sighted, non-Marxist, non-revolutionary politics which we believe the IS leadership has shown consistently since the Group was started in 1950.

A big majority at the September conference certainly supported the leadership. But a growing body of opinion inside IS has begun to doubt the line on the troops. Some people have resigned from the Group on this issue.

All the eloquence and hysteria-mongering, the pretence of drawing superfine distinctions between agitation and propaganda and between strategy and tactics, have failed to allay the nagging doubts of some of the members. They feel that revolutionaries must do more, even in face of such a complex situation as Northern Ireland, than express relief that the imperialist troops have prevented widespread bloodshed; and that paying lip-service at the same time to the great final goal of the workers' republic is no compensation.

They feel that if revolutionaries are reduced to this role it shows either that they are not living up to their principles, or else that there is something very wrong with such principles as they profess.

The furore that this issue has caused in the Group is remarkable, because there was as opponents of the EC line readily admitted a very strong empirical (i.e. humanitarian) case to be made out in favour of not calling for immediate withdrawal of British troops. They have indeed prevented serious bloodshed, at least in Belfast, both in August and on the third and fourth weekends of October. They most certainly prevented the development of a full scale civil war.

This would have been a war not between the bourgeoisie, neatly lined up on one side, to face a similarly clear-cut proletarian force on the other, but one which saw the working class split in two and taking the initiative in making war on itself. And what good socialist - or humanitarian - could want that to happen?

That there are people who oppose the leadership becomes even more remarkable when we look at the way the sectarian antipode of IS, the SLL, argued the case for demanding immediate withdrawal of British troops. While making the "right" demand according to the Trotskyist political cookbooks, the SLL has had to gloss over the bitter reality of a divided and pogrom-minded working class in Northern Ireland, and even go so far as to pretend that the troops are imposing a military dictatorship to prevent a united working class acting against the system. In Derry the SLL members even refused to man the barricades against the onslaught of the RUC and their Paisleyite auxiliaries. They explained that they were going off to... build a revolutionary leadership in the trade unions instead!

Clearly the SLL have the same standards and methods as the IS leadership, and if only one could convince them of the facts of Northern Ireland they would presumably have no alternative but to agree with the IS line.

That their chief opponents outside the Group need to cover their eyes from reality in order to maintain their line would seem to be the final clinching argument in favour of the IS leadership.

Is it? Or is it merely that opportunists and sectarians are each a side of the same coin, have the same method, and reinforce each other's one-sidedness by a process of permanent mutual repulsion?

This pamphlet attempts to discuss the issues involved in the zigzags of IS policy on Ireland over the last 12 months. It attempts to fill in some of the background, examine IS's record, and to examine the crowning absurdity, at the end of a long list of absurdities - IS's support for the action of the British government in using troops to shore up the Northern Ireland wing of its state system.

Sean Matgamna, December 1969

Chapter 1: Background: What happened and why

To begin to understand modern Irish politics, we must understand the "Irish Settlement" imposed by Britain in 1921/22.

This was determined by the following factors: First, the Empire needed to keep a tight military grip on the British Isles. Ireland was a possible base for hostile operations against Britain. Many times (e.g. 1798, when the French actually landed troops in Killala) attempts were made by powers hostile to Britain to use Ireland and

its revolutionary discontent to strike at Britain. As late as the third quarter of the 19th century there was a permanent threat to Britain of a combined onslaught by an Irish rebellion and some overseas power. Among Irish revolutionaries, this relationship was understood well, and called forth the maxim: "Britain's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity".

This was brought home forcefully to the British ruling class at the end of the American Civil War. There was a clash between Britain (which supported the Confederacy) and the Northern states of the Union - the Alabama incident - which threatened to lead to war.

In Ireland at the same time Fenianism was a mass movement; even the British army of occupation was honeycombed with at least 15,000 Fenians. Faced with a war at a time when Ireland was threatening to explode, the proud and mighty Empire went to arbitration in Geneva and paid heavy indemnities to the US government. Engels at the time was of the opinion that, if it had come to war, Ireland would have had a successful rising and probably would have become a republic under the protection of the USA.

The incident was the final one in showing people like Gladstone the urgent need to begin to solve the Irish social problem. The first Land Act followed in 1870, and within a decade and a half there was talk of Home Rule for an Ireland from which the inflammable social material was gradually being removed.

Trotsky, writing in 1916, explained it thus: "... if for the [English landlords] Ireland was only an object of agrarian plunder and exploitation, for British imperialism it was a necessary guarantee of their dominion over the seas. In a pamphlet written on the eve of the war, Casement, speculating about Germany, proves that the independence of Ireland means the 'freedom of the seas' and the death blow to the naval domination of Britain. This is true in so far as an 'independent' Ireland could exist only as an outpost of an imperialist state hostile to Britain and as its military naval base against British supremacy over the sea routes. It was Gladstone who first expounded with full clarity the military imperialist consideration of Great Britain over the interests of the Anglo-Irish landlords and laid the basis for the wide agrarian legislation by which the state transferred to the Irish farmers the land of the landlords, very generously compensating the latter, of course..."

In 1921, these military considerations still existed, and if anything were intensified by the weakened state in which Britain emerged from World War One. The Settlement gave Britain what she regarded as necessary protection, by allowing her a military grip on the North and military bases in the South (until '38 - and in the early period of World War Two, Churchill and others seriously considered invading the Free State to regain these bases).

Second, one of the reasons why Gladstone and the Liberals became converted to home rule of Ireland was the exceptional (for that time) involvement of the state in the long, slow process of organising an ice-cold land revolution from above (it was only completed in the mid-1920s). The cost of this made it desirable to transfer the whole operation to an Irish exchequer. But the Ulster industrialists, who had the largest taxable capacity in Ireland and therefore the most to lose from the operation, began to resist this move.

The evolution of capitalism, and Ireland's peculiar "combined and uneven" relationship with British capitalism, had produced in the island of Ireland something more like two nations than one - economically, socially, and ideologically. No integrated national market had developed to link the north and south in one country. The economic history of the north was in fact radically different from that of the south, where a modern industrial capitalism had been prevented from developing.

The north didn't want to be "left alone" under Home Rule with the south and its problems. The tenants in the North (under the "Ulster custom") had little in common with the struggles of the southern tenants against rack renting landlords. The Northern industrialists and the Unionist landed interest throughout Ireland feared the plebeian separatism and radicalism of the masses in the south, which was partly dampened down by the then half-finished land redistribution and which the go-between middle classes had only barely kept in check.

Having nothing to gain but heavy taxes and an uncertain future with the unpredictable social and political tensions of the South, the northern capitalists were not at all inclined to allow themselves to be pushed, or pulled, into the uncertainties of Home Rule. In Britain the Tories played politics against the Liberals and their Home Rule Bill. Thus began a process which was to see Ireland torn in two by a split bourgeoisie, one side of which wanted to remain united directly to Britain - the other wanting Home Rule within the Empire, dominion status.

The existence of mass support for the English connection among Protestant workers and farmers, activated by the traditional Protestantism of the 17th century planters in the North and their fear of "Rome Rule", created something resembling a national minority which Britain was able to use against the aspirations of the rest of Ireland. Once set in motion, these elements took on a momentum of their own, in a mass movement amongst the remnants of the 17th century colons who had in some ways, in places like Belfast, begun to emerge as a labour aristocracy. Ultimately it was to allow Britain to tear Ireland in two.

Third: in 1920/21 Britain desperately needed to defuse the mass nationalist revolutionary movement in the south and west which was thrown up after 1916 and which was becoming ever more radical. Ignited by continuing land hunger and opposition to conscription into the imperialist war, and inspired by the 1916 Rising and the age-old desire for independence, it had a mass working-class involvement and even saw soviets being set up.

The middle-class compromise of Home Rule had broken down owing to the opposition of the North, and to the fact that in the South the men of 1916 wrested the tiller out of the hands of the Home-Rule Redmondites (the liberal nationalists led by John Redmond) and, in the conditions of the World War, triggered off an explosion of the Catholic Irish people. After 1916 the middle-class politicians who had - for more than 100 years, with few interruptions - practised trickery on the peasants and workers of Ireland, had to run very fast to regain control of the mass movement. They no longer dared to call for mere Home Rule.

The mass disaffection in the South only gave the North East capitalists another reason for being unwilling to throw in their lot with the rest of the country. They

wanted to stop Home Rule completely if possible, but were willing, if necessary, to settle for partition. The mass movement was finally rendered controllable by a deal between Britain and the bourgeois leaders who had jumped into the position left vacant by the deaths of the men of 1916. Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, with British help and British guns, smashed the Republic and reconquered - literally reconquered, by seaboard landings in the south west - the South for "Home Rule", with the North East left out.

Thus Britain played ringmaster with the divided Irish capitalists and established the twin statelets of 26 and 6 counties, each with a measure of home rule, and with the 26 counties emerging as a pioneering model of neo-colonialism. Churchill and Lloyd George tricked Griffith and Collins by promising a referendum which would allow the border areas of the 6 counties to secede to the Free State and thereby force the Orange rump, rendered unviable, into a united Ireland. No such referendum was ever held. The "temporary" partition became the status quo.

Because of the changing technology of war and of the decline of Britain, the once-vital military interests no longer exist today. Economically, Britain's relations with the 26 counties are in fact now more lucrative than with the North - without garrison costs, social service responsibilities, or the odium of the Orange police state which was once a necessary instrument for controlling the nationalists held forcibly within the six counties. Another change has come about since 1921: direct rule by Britain of her exploited overseas territories is the exception now rather than the rule, and the peculiarities of Northern Ireland - its close and "loyal" links with Britain - do not now carry much weight with the British ruling class.

THE EFFECTS OF PARTITION

When partition was first mooted, James Connolly wrote: "Such a scheme would destroy the labour movement by disrupting it. It would perpetuate, in a form aggravated in evil the discords now prevalent, and help the Home Rule and Orange capitalists and clerics to keep their rallying cries before the public as the political watchwords of the day. In short, it would make division more intense and confusion of ideas and parties more confounded".

This is exactly what it did do. The border was artificial - not a clean break between Orange and Green Ireland; nor even a relatively clean break with unavoidable pockets of "aliens" in each territory. It was a border which penned in a third of the total population of the northern state who wanted a united Ireland, or at least to be part of the Free State. They were forcibly kept in at gun point and amidst Nazi-type terror in the 1920s, to give the state some semblance of viability. A state allegedly set up to safeguard a minority from being coerced contained a minority far bigger as a proportion of its total population than were the entire Orange population within the 32 counties. The result was that those who wanted to play the game of divide and rule, in Ireland as a whole or within the six counties itself, had a field day.

With the economy almost permanently stagnant and basic industries declining in Northern Ireland, whole areas like Derry were simply reduced to degraded slums with the Catholic population living in ghettos. The Orange aristocratic spirit which pervaded also the Protestant working class was maintained and in fact strengthened by the declining economy, which gave the "privileged" Protestant

workers little but gave the Catholic workers less.

The privileges of the descendants of the 17th century planters are today very small - a better chance of a job amidst high unemployment, perhaps. In this they cannot be compared with the colonial settlers of Rhodesia, Algeria, or South Africa. But in their psychology, their hidebound traditions, their bigotry and their pride of caste, many of them can. The chronic weakness of the northern Ireland labour movement was both an effect of the overall situation and a contributory cause of its continuation; even in the brief period of relative boom in the 50s and 60s there was a failure to rouse up a genuinely militant labour movement to unite the Catholic and Protestant workers in the only way they can be united - in a dynamic class drive for general betterment. The overall economic depression is probably the major reason for Northern Ireland's stagnant politics. Where there is general poverty, a job becomes a privilege. The only unity in the Northern Ireland trade unions was and is on a false basis: it is a unity built on a tacit agreement to keep clear of controversy - clear of such questions as the constitution, and the fact that one side of the "unity" was in general discriminated against by the other.

In the south also, Connolly's prediction that partition would help clerics of the Roman collar and the "Green" capitalists to "keep their watchwords ever before the people" was proved true. The defeat of the anti-Treaty republican forces in 1922 began a period of parallel stagnation, with the slightly radicalised green Tories of Eamon de Valera able to gain and keep the support of the workers and small farmers.

Always the border and Britain were blamed for the problems of the country. The border, the un-free area beyond it, the fact that the ages-long question of Irish national freedom hadn't been solved, led the best revolutionaries to embark on the often heroic but generally unfruitful road of petty-bourgeois nationalist politics. It was not so much the physical-force fetishism of Irish republicanism as its bourgeois ideology (under cover of the prohibition of any ideology) which misled the working-class youth from any possibility of class action. Republican politics since the 20s has been a process of political leapfrogging back and forth from one-sided physical forcism to one-sided acceptance of bourgeois parliamentarianism. In 1927 the major forces of republicanism - Fianna Fail - accepted the system set up in 1921/2 and went into parliament: when they got power they proved to be abject conservatives, despite the economic measures forced on them from 1932 onwards. In 1944 the old physical forcists of the 30s entered parliament - and so quickly showed themselves up as tame, pale shadows of Fianna Fail, that they soon lost all support.

It had been the same story with the nationalists in the North (led in the 50s and 60s by Eddie McAteer). Yet in their physical force phases all these groupings attracted and misled the best would-be revolutionaries of that period.

Labour remained divided - each Labour Party, north and south, following "its own" capitalist segment and reproducing the divisions of the Irish bourgeoisie. Likewise the two Irish "Communist Parties" (IWP in the South, CPNI in the North). In the North the Protestant masses remained wedded to the Unionist Tories, while the Catholics followed the pseudo-nationalist Tories.

It must be stressed that the border and the unresolved national question were the essential basis of the situation as described above. Fifty and more years ago there had been healthier tendencies, which were disrupted by the control the Orange and Green reactionaries gained over the masses. The Border institutionalised that situation and perpetuated their control.

BRITAIN'S NEW STRATEGY

For at least ten years before the civil rights movement began to gather force, Britain had been gently modifying or attempting to modify the old Settlement. By the early 60s, pressure from Westminster led men like Terence O'Neill (then Ulster Unionist leader and Northern Ireland Prime Minister) to begin timid moves to slowly modernise the system. A reconciliation of the Catholic middle class with the system in Northern Ireland was the first goal. The religious sectarianism was toned down at a government level - though they obviously wanted to keep it to divide and manipulate the workers.

The ultimate objective was generally understood to be some sort of reunification of Ireland: a cold, bourgeois unification, controlled, non-revolutionary, with Britain shedding all responsibilities save that of pump-man to continue to drain the wealth of her weaker neighbour. The Northern Ireland system had become an anachronism.

With the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement of 1965 a decisive turn was taken. It meant that the southern bourgeoisie, after wandering forty years in the desert, were dropping all their pretences of independence - pretences which, apart from the exceptional period of the 1930s, had all been extremely feeble. Relations between Britain's two client states became more cordial as a reflection of the new trend. Since 1965 the 26 counties moved from 9th to 4th place of importance as a trading partner for Britain; Ireland as a whole from 5th to 2nd place. This could only underpin the British government in its desire for better relations with the south and for at least a new coat of paint for the Northern regime.

Until the 1968 explosion there seemed to be a strong possibility of a slow growing together towards some form of federal Ireland, under British auspices as always, and following the good example of the Common Market.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERUPTION - HOW AND WHY?

Britain's interests in Ireland and the interests of the N.I capitalists (epitomised by O'Neill, Brian Faulkner and such industrialist groups within the Unionist Party as the New Ulster Movement) were thus moving, and had long moved, away from the delusions, the imagined interests, of the Protestant masses whom they had for so long duped and misled. Tragically, these Protestant/Unionist enthusiasts - with their faith in the monarchy, in dogmatic religion and in the old six-county set-up (including its discrimination against the Catholic workers) - included many, and probably a majority, of the Protestant working class.

There was, therefore, from the mid-1960s, a serious but seemingly controllable Orange backlash, even against O'Neill's timid gestures.

Meanwhile, the double oppression of the Catholic workers continued, 'beneath' the polite exchanges between the Catholic and Protestant middle classes and the three

governments involved. The Special Powers Act, B-Specials and Great-Depression conditions west of the River Bann were unchanged. Agitation by republicans and Labour Party people led to the now famous demonstration of October 5th 1965, which the police banned and, when it refused to accept the ban, batoned. Making all due allowances for the differences in scale, the effect was the same as that of Bloody Sunday, 1905, when a peaceful demonstration of workers in St. Petersburg was shot down and served to spark a revolutionary mass movement which reverberated for over two years.

Far from nipping the movement in the bud, the Stormont regime, by focusing attention on Derry, aided the movement in its growth. The moderate, institutionalised civil rights movement suddenly acquired an activist wing. The People's Democracy (PD), taking in the same energies as contributed to the student revolt throughout the world, spearheaded the growing agitation. In turn, the agitation led to an increasing backlash from the Orange bigots, epitomised by the Burntollet outrage on January 4th 1969. Free Derry was established, the RUC beaten back. In July and August that year, the clashes reached near civil-war levels in violent confrontations between Catholics on one side and the RUC and its Paisleyite allies on the other.

One result from this was a quite predictable re-sharpening of such lines of division between Catholics and Protestants as had become blurred in the preceding period of eased tensions. Indeed, the necessary logic of the slogans used led inevitably to this. Even the attempt of PD to be 'social', to avoid the old sectarian and 'nationalist' pitfalls, led somehow, against their will, to the re-emergence of the old divisions; to the creation of a situation where the questions they had tried to avoid took on a new importance. Like a hard, rocky outline beneath the surface, the border and the national question, insisted on being taken into account.

It should also be admitted that the whole N.I. set-up probably ruled out any attempt to do what the PD tried to do, and certainly in the way they tried to do it. It precluded unity; it precluded a simple attempt to change the relative situation of Catholics and Protestants in a united struggle: in fact, sectarian division had been programmed into the state at birth. Thus, even the social slogans - one man, one house, one job etc. appeared, against the background of extreme stagnation, to the Protestants as demands to share the little there was. The very attempt to use social slogans and demands to rally a united mass movement of Catholic and Protestant workers called forth only a Catholic, civil rights, movement - and a violent Protestant backlash.

'Man makes his own history', teaches Marxism - but according to conditions he does not control, and which ultimately determine whether or not the result of his actions will be as he desires. Man can, of course, heighten remarkably the chances of achieving a desired result by understanding the laws that operate in the particular field. That is why Marxism is so useful for those who want to change society. That is why a comprehensive Marxist programme, based on a serious analysis, is a useful weapon in any situation - and particularly useful where the situation is very complex and where struggles at different levels (e.g. nationalist and socialist) are superimposed and criss-crossed on top of each other.

PD started out without a serious analysis, and without clearly defining their aims and

the appropriate tactics and strategy needed to achieve these aims. Going along empirically, ignoring the national question, they evoked a movement of protest from a section of the population whose whole reason for protest, whose whole social condition, was determined by the point at which the national struggle of 50 years ago stopped. They did evoke a class struggle, but a muffled one; a class energy from the oppressed Catholic masses, which in turn brought forth only a violent hostility from the majority of the Northern Ireland working class. Transitional demands which might have drawn the Protestant workers into the struggle by showing up the real enemy and indicating a path of struggle which did not appear to threaten them, were hardly used at all. Instead, they talked of the Workers' Republic as if it was, in some mystical way, immediately connected with the present struggle, as if the far-distant prospect were enough to unite the class now. In the event, they were using it like a deodorant or a shroud. Instead of prising apart the horizontal division which exists between the classes in Northern Ireland, their blows produced a crack vertically down the middle of its flawed society. It split along the lines of religion and nationality.

In the brief period of ten months, the petrified edifice of Northern Ireland politics was battered until it began to collapse. On August 12th 1969, the state began to disintegrate and dissolve into chaos and civil war. If it had continued it would have dragged the south into the maelstrom with it.

From October 5th '68 to August 12th '69 the Unionist government tottered between timid promises of concessions to the Catholics in face of violent opposition from the Orange bigots, and capitulation to the Orange bigots which inflamed the Catholics even more. Each attempt to repress the Catholics, whether on October 5th or by the RUC and UVF in August '69, only provoked still more serious resistance. The Orange backlash, out of the control of the sane Unionists, constituted the second millstone which ground the old Orange establishment into ruins. The August clashes made it clear that the old Orange status quo would not be able to restore or re-establish itself. It made equally clear that the old overall British strategy of a slow modification of the Stormont regime and a slow growing together of the North and the South was no longer adequate. It had been overtaken by events.

THE ROLE OF THE TROOPS

The cement had fallen out of the rickety Northern Ireland state, and its sponsors, the successors of the master builders who created the monstrous structure in the first place, had to act quickly. Direct intervention from London (not direct rule, as the soggy left demanded, but the taking of physical control through the army) was the result. Tight military scaffolding was quickly erected to prevent a collapse into chaos.

This was the role of the troops - their meaning was essentially that, though the state structure of the UK had begun to break apart from internal contradictions at one of its extremities, the system was still powerful enough at the centre to prevent chaos. But action to avert chaos by bolstering up Stormont didn't mean that the British government was committed to its continuation in the old form. It couldn't afford to be so committed. The old order had proved untenable. Nor was it a matter of a temporary contradiction between the troops, the B-men and the RUC, who would ultimately resolve their differences. Britain was not merely freezing the old

structure, but attempting directly to mould a new superstructure for its continued economic rule in Ireland.

The conflict between Britain's old dupes and the interests of the British system called for some drastic action, and a new strategy, from Britain - worked out between October '68 and August '69, to take account of the new situation. The strategy became clear when the troops went in.

With the steel fingers of the army, Britain quickly got a grip on the situation, and began a controlled demolition job on certain sections of the Northern Ireland set-up. The objective: to placate the Catholics and isolate the Orange die-hards. Britain was trying to avoid smashing completely the inept Stormont regime; attempting to save what could be saved of Unionism, while purging it of the influence of some of the more incorrigible backwoodsmen and strengthening it by the adhesion of men like John Hume and the moderate, bourgeois, civil-rights leaders, either as a loyal opposition or as members of a new Unionist party (Hume, for instance, called for a purge of the Unionist party and a political realignment). The army provided the essential element of force, the necessary physical control of the situation to allow Britain to begin to forge a new alliance of Ulster industrialists and civil-rights moderates - with their nuptials blessed by the Catholic Church.

Using the fierce heat of the Catholic mass revolt to pressurise and differentiate the sane Unionists and Orange elements from the die-hards, and trusting in the Humes (Opus Dei) and the Catholic clergy to keep control of the Catholic masses, the new alliance has already worked well.

The crucial question here was, whether or not those willing to form part of the new alliance at the top - the moderate, civil-rights, Catholic bourgeoisie (insofar as it had come into existence since the War) and the Church - could keep control of the masses of Derry and Belfast who had been forced to fight for their lives in August, and who had driven the old state personnel out of the free areas of Belfast and Derry. It seems almost incredible that they could have done it so easily. Yet they did.

The arrival of the army stopped the growth of self-reliance of the people of Belfast and Derry. With natural relief they welcomed the troops, but they still kept their barricades up. While some republicans continued to arm themselves, the effect of the troops on mass consciousness was to disarm the people politically and therefore militarily: to provide an external security.

From the beginning there was a necessary and immediate contradiction between the continued existence of the barricades and free areas, and the British troops. The fact that the army

'played it cool' shouldn't have deceived anyone: The old state personnel, the RUC and B-men, merely played the role of 'hard cop' to frighten the Catholics and thereby allowed the army to play 'soft cop' to gain their confidence.

The army could do this because it had overall physical control of the situation. It also had the aid of the Catholic Church. When it was necessary and, they reckoned, possible (i.e. by mid-September '69) to get the barricades down in Belfast, the Bishop of Down and Connor, no less, stepped from behind the curtain and 'descended' on the Falls to persuade the people to 'do the right thing' and take the

barricades down.

One Irish periodical frankly explained the Bishop's concern:

"An area within which people could organise themselves, or be organised... could give the people a taste of what it was like to discipline themselves rather than be disciplined by the police. For these reasons alone ... the barricades were anathema to the government from the start, and eventually even to the Church authorities. The confrontation between Bishop and people in which bitter exchanges took place on the traditionally Catholic Falls, reflected something of the real fear of Catholics of a return of the police and the real fear of the Church authorities of a left wing which is gaining ground rapidly. . ."

Certainly a radicalisation of the people would have gone hand in hand with a conditioning or deepening of the struggle in the old form: that is, if a civil war had developed.

But, beginning with the taking down of the barricades in mid-September, and continuing with a thin-end-of-the-wedge policy, the 'alliance' gradually weaned the people of Belfast and Derry from self-reliance and from their ingrained hostility to ruling power. When the British government demonstrated that it had, perhaps for the first time in the long and terrible history of its relationship with the Catholics of Ireland, 'come down on their side', and later when troops willingly clouted the Paisleyites, the job was completed.

The Protestant backlash may continue for a while; but it looks very much like British and Ulster capitalists have succeeded in shifting their weight from the Orange and Protestant mass base to a new one which includes the catholic moderates and at least a portion of the masses they control, now less alienated from the state than in all the previous 50 years. It is not possible to judge yet how much of their old Orange support they have lost, or for how or long - nor how many real changes will be made, for that matter.

The experience of the free areas, given their impulse into existence by the outbreak of August - immediately surrounded by 'protective' troops, and just as subject to the determined pressure of the Church and moderates - is itself instructive. (And perhaps Stephen Marks should have looked into the 'grim reality' of it before writing that the presence of the troops "... has the effect of buying time in which the defenders of the barricades can arm to defend themselves and also, by opposing attempts by 'moderates' to weaken the defence, rearm politically to turn military defence into a political offensive.") In Belfast, right-wing republicans were able to seize control, because they had the guns. In Derry, the moderate civil rights leaders had control.

"FREE DERRY"

'Free Derry', of which the writer had some experience (being a member - representing the 'outsiders' - of the Derry Citizens' Defence Association (DCDA), from September until the old committee disbanded itself in October and set up a liquidation committee under the same name) shows the weakness of the mass upsurge which allowed the moderates, often unwittingly aided by some of the militants, to keep control.

During mid-August, the people of Bogside defended themselves and their home: against the RUC and Paisleyites. Relying on themselves and a few 'outsiders', they drove back the police and demoralised them until, in the end, their officers had often to use physical force to prevent weeping and hysterical policemen from running away from the fight. What would have happened if the B-men had been let loose with their guns is an open question: there are some in Derry who argue that they could have been held off. Frightened British pacifists assume there would have been a massacre. But revolutionary experience shows that a popular rising can succeed against the most 'overwhelming' odds (assessed quantitatively and formally), arming itself, as it develops, from fallen enemies, etc. One recent example is of Hungary '56, when the workers, arming as the struggle developed, fought and beat tanks and regular troops, starting out with the same weapons the Bogside used - petrol bombs.

With the police defeated and the troops forming a cordon sanitaire around them, the people began to organise life in their own area; street patrols were formed, mainly of the unemployed, who manned the barricades and watched the soldiers suspiciously. (The initial friendliness of Bogside people to the troops didn't survive the first feelings of relief.)

But politically they were without perspective. A struggle whose whole logic was republican found the Catholic masses without even a minimal republican ideology - having been kept to the level of the Green Nationalist Tories, and then moved to illusions in men like Hume. The youth, though, those who threw the petrol bombs, quickly learned a revolutionary republicanism, learning about Connolly's socialism too.

But the republican movement itself was lamentably without a perspective. The Dublin leadership could only offer the youth of Derry a perspective of 'pressurising the government'. The 'United Irishman' sank to the lowest and crudest common denominator of the republican movement: "Blame Britain".

After August, a mass coalition or popular front council, the DCDA, took over. This was no soviet, no elected council, but a political Irish stew - deeply undemocratic, involving all the political tendencies in the area, from the 'extreme' left to the extreme right. Acquiescence in this was a deadly mistake for the left (LP, and republicans, who vary greatly from area to area and in Derry are very left wing). Had an elected council been set up, the left would have been initially smaller in representation, but with a chance of healthy and solid growth in proportion as they were able to interact with, and help clarify, mass revolutionary consciousness. (All of which presupposed a programme, perspective and serious organisation. Neither PD in Belfast nor the Young Socialists (YS) in Derry came anywhere near to fitting this bill; and neither did the republicans - either right-wing in Belfast, or left-wing and subjectively revolutionary in Derry.)

As it was, the left were the prisoners of the majority of right-wing bourgeois, Nationalist and Catholic committee members. They became partially cut off from direct contact with the workers; the political level of the masses didn't advance beyond the stage reached immediately after the fighting in August. Indeed, under the influence of the Humes and Paddy Dohertys it regressed.

There was no mass programme for transforming society - nor could there have been. The left was divided, generally inept, and unable to provide either a programme or a serious lead. Given the failure to create a democratic council for the area, with all the concomitant popular involvement, this meant that the rightists - the men most in line with the Church and able to draw on the support of the most backward people - dominated, and finally liquidated 'Free Derry' back into the hands of British and Stormont rule.

The youth had borne the brunt of the fighting in August. They wound up bitterly dissatisfied and very much against the DCDA - but without a programme or an organisation. The dropping of the old brave demands - barricades stay until Special Powers, B-men, etc. go - brought general disappointment which aided the rightists in their work.

All told given the general level of consciousness of the people, the lack of real democracy in the free areas and, above all, the lack of even the rudiments of a serious revolutionary organisation, meant that control stayed in the hands of the right.

Three months after August 12th, the RUC were back in all areas of Northern Ireland. The future may hold shocks, but it is very unlikely that there will be disruption on the scale of August.

What might have been a decisive breakdown in the British bourgeois state system has resulted in a new - not as yet completely stable - equilibrium, with the same rulers essentially in control and certain concessions granted to the minority.

From the point of view of revolutionary socialists, one other 'result' must be mentioned. Almost certainly, years, and perhaps decades, will be necessary (unless revolutionary events outside Ireland intervene to change the political and social climate) before the newly reinforced inter-working class animosities die down. The re-fanning of the old divisions to white heat is of course a major 'conquest' for imperialism and the local capitalists. It will allow them - within the stifling artificial statelet of theirs which has survived the last year - to maintain their grip on the working class, to continue their manipulations. The break-up of the state, the carrying of the Catholic upsurge to its logical goal by challenging Northern Ireland as such, would have been a far better outcome.

Chapter 2: The Troops

The situation in Northern Ireland came to a head in August, 1969. The reaction to these events was a decisive test for revolutionaries - who spend their entire existence preparing themselves precisely for situations of a breakdown of the system. IS's reaction was to do an about-face, abandoning its previous opposition to British government intervention - thus adding a final astonishing political twist to an already chequered record over the preceding 10 months of involvement on Ireland. The issue of SW on August 14th, in the middle of the fighting, began promisingly, with a piece written by one "Sean Reed": "British imperialism can no more aid the struggle of the Irish people than petrol can quench fire. Instead the British and international labour movement in alliance with the mass of Irish people everywhere must rally to bring real aid to the beleaguered people." For months

previously, IS had insistently repeated the demand, "British Troops Out".

This was all, of course, only stating the ABC of revolutionary politics:

no practical or political confidence in the intervention of an imperialist state, the necessity at all times to deny them the right to intervene;

reliance on the self-mobilisation, self-activity and self-defence of the working class or oppressed people, not merely as a ritualistic recital of a credo but for the very practical reason that all these things are necessary for the working class to develop and maintain that self-reliance and confidence necessary for taking power;

no seeking aid from forces which exist precisely to destroy independent working-class action.

Thus we opposed the soggies' call for the intervention of British troops in Rhodesia, and instead called for the arming and self-reliance of the Rhodesian people - even though at the time it was by no means an immediate prospect. Our task was to fight for an independent working-class outlook as the necessary prelude to any possibility of working-class action. It was also to fight against the development of any illusions or confidence in the British government - either by the Africans or the British workers. Nor did anyone consider altering this stance because of the mass repressions, the tightening grip of Rhodesian apartheid, or the large scale judicial murders of African militants which the Smith regime began to carry out.

Marxists understood that whether or not Britain intervened would be determined by her fundamental interests and that even if it immediately meant the saving of hundreds of African militants, it would neither have led to real freedom for the Rhodesian people nor would it have helped - on the contrary! - the growth of independent activity by the Africans. And this was our view, whatever the contradictions, temporary or otherwise, between Britain and the Smith regime (read Paisleyites) caused by commercial interests in the rest of Africa (read Irish Republic).

Having thus begun with the basic revolutionary principles, the EC panicked in face of the fierce fighting. By the August 21st issue of SW, the experts on contradictions, the "dialecticians" on the EC, had taken over. The whole issue was on Ireland, and carried the main headline slogan: "The Barricades Stay Until: B-Specials Disbanded; RUC Disarmed; Special Powers Act Abolished; Political Prisoners Released." No mention of the British troops in the slogan department, though there were odd remarks in the small print aimed at preventing too many illusions developing in the troops.

The conference that followed two weeks later endorsed the EC line on the troops.

But by September the EC had decided it had better defend itself on this question. Stephen Marks was given the job. His piece had the misfortune to appear on the centre pages of SW on September 18th while the back page carried a report by Chris Harman showing the real role of the troops in getting the barricades down.

Marks on behalf of the EC made the following case: In the long term the troops and the Paisleyites serve the same interests; in the short term there was a contradiction

between them, which could be exploited by socialists to avoid the losses and blows which might have been dealt the Catholics and their leaders had the clash - between Stormont and its helpers, and the Catholics - been allowed to take its course without British intervention. The troops hid the effect of "freezing" the conflict, "buying time", providing a "breathing space" for the Catholics. Self-defence was not being abandoned, merely "postponed" while arming would take place. The contradiction between the troops and the Paisleyites was immediately the main contradiction - the contradiction between the troops (and the state and ruling class they represented) and the barricades and workers' self-defence would only become acute "at some future turn". Therefore in the "short term" the troops should stay, but in the long run they should go. To fit this, a formula was worked out whereby in slogans and headlines the troops shouldn't be mentioned, but in the text we should "warn" about their future role. In subsequent arguments the headlines and slogans were labelled "agitation", the small type was the "propaganda". We were told that one must "understand the difference between propaganda and agitation".

These were the arguments put forward in favour of abandoning the basic revolutionary position on imperialist troops. The NC of October endorsed them as summed up in a resolution from the EC, with four votes against. In replying to Marks, we reply to the EC and the NC majority.

AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA

Underlying these arguments, those at the Conference and at the NC, was an absolute lack of clarity on the basic question. Why do we make demands? What are they for? Who are they addressed to? Throughout the discussions on the troops, the political effects (as opposed to the alleged physical effects) on the people of Belfast and Derry of either having or not having the "Withdraw Troops" demand was never considered. The role of demands, of agitation and propaganda, in raising and developing consciousness and self-confidence among the workers, never came into it. The only people we were talking to, according to the conceptions of Marks and the EC, were the British authorities.

Unless we have a clear conception that the reason for putting demands, for making agitation and propaganda, is directly to try to raise the level of consciousness, to show the necessary direction of the struggle, to sharpen that struggle so that the masses, or at least those of the vanguard that we reach, learn the best political lessons from it, we are hamstrung from the start, we are tied down to a reformist conception - to a stance of petitioning the powers that be, looking to their actions and decisions for alleviation, rather than to the direct action of the working class. If that were the case, we would never make a demand that wasn't likely to be realised immediately.

Moreover, if we do not see the various forms of "communication" (demands, slogans, agitation, propaganda, headlines and small print) as necessarily bound together by a single aim and programme, with the single purpose of raising consciousness (whether this be "purely" literary or whether it be linked with immediate action) then what is there to link them, to prevent them flying apart into contradictions and inconsistencies?

HOW MARTYNOV, HAVING RENDERED PLEKHANOV MORE PROFOUND, WAS

REBORN IN IS

For revolutionaries, there can be no contradiction between the content of agitation, propaganda and theory. The difference is one of form, of style and technique, and of scale. The content and meaning does not differ according to whether action might or might not follow, or whether that action might be on mass scale or on a tiny scale. This is the essential meaning of the well known definition of Plekhanov: "A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator present only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people".

Marks, having no conception of the purpose of demands, departed quite explicitly from this formula: "Of course, this very situation" (of contradictions, with the troops' presence being approved) "increases the need to expose on every occasion *in propaganda and discussion* [our emphasis] the role the British troops are playing; and the side on which they must ultimately come down. But those who conclude that raising the demand for withdrawal *in the present situation* [emphasis Marks] must therefore follow, do not understand the difference between propaganda and agitation."

We say one thing in "discussion and propaganda" and another "in the present situation".

He continued: "Marxism is not an alternative description of the world but a guide to action. And slogans are not just an expression of the fine feelings of those who utter them, or even a stylistic device for the summing up of a political argument. For those involved in a struggle they are calls to action".

Marks might have been paraphrasing Martynov, in that passage which Lenin (in *What is to be Done?*) sarcastically described as rendering Plekhanov more profound. "By agitation, in the strict sense of the word, we would understand calling the masses to certain concrete actions..." In reply, Lenin demonstrated that all types of political writing were more or less directly connected with "action". One couldn't make that a criterion for separating out one type of work.

"To single out a third sphere, or third function, of practical activity [as well as propaganda and agitation] and to include in this third function 'calling the masses to certain concrete actions' is sheer nonsense, because the 'call', as a single act, either naturally and inevitably supplements the theoretical tract, propagandist pamphlet, and agitational speech or represents a purely executive function".

Lenin gave an example of a "concrete action", the signing of petitions: "The call for this action comes directly from the theoreticians, the propagandists and the agitators, and, indirectly, from those workers who carry the petition lists to the factories and to private houses to get signatures." (See Chapter III section B for the rest of the argument.)

Explicit though he is about "calls to action", Marks is still not clear what it's all about. In discussions, when challenged to define agitation and propaganda, he and other EC members have trotted out the Plekhanov definition, not realising where they had departed from it. The practice, however, shows clearly just which method and definition they do adhere to.

The point about the Plekhanov formulation is, of course that the "single idea" put over in agitation is not just any old idea but a correct idea; not in antagonism to the larger complex of ideas that is propaganda, but flowing out of it and, again, leading back to it. Taking this definition together with IS's practice, the only thing it can mean is that you tell most of your audience (if only by your failure to tell them otherwise, not to mention polemics such as Marks' - in which he repeatedly emphasises that the troops are indispensable to the Catholic workers) that the troops "for the moment" and "in the present situation" are doing a good job; while you tell an initiated few, who probably don't really need to be told anyway, that things aren't so simple.

The justification for having a different line for agitation and propaganda was that given by Marks and Martynov: that agitation must lead to action, but propaganda is about the general, overall picture, about the future. Only propaganda is seen as educational. Martynov, the Russian "Economist", counterposed agitation leading to action to Plekhanov's propaganda and agitation, because he wanted to fight for reformism and to "free" his reformist tactics from a too rigorous connection with revolutionary Marxist propaganda and the agitation spun from it. Marks and IS use the very same distinction, for the reason that they want to free themselves to react impressionistically with regard to the long-term interests of the class. They want to free themselves from theory, programme and basic principles.

EDUCATION AND ACTION

To say that agitation and propaganda are both essentially educational is not to say that they don't lead to action. It is to say that education and action must be integrated, must interact, that the most important and chief reason for anything to be said and done is that it educates the masses and raises their consciousness, preferably in action. The distinction between agitation and propaganda being a matter of scale, the immediate effect often varies in scale.

The agitation of a mass party, counting among its members hundreds or thousands of the grassroots leaders of the working class, might lead more directly to mass action - because it is directed immediately to the masses - than would its propaganda, or the propaganda and agitation of a much smaller group.

Even if one accepted the view of Marks and Martynov, that there is a fundamental difference in aims between agitation and propaganda, it is yet another question whether this can be applied to IS. If it is not big enough for its agitation to be a "call to action" in any practical sense, then even if one wants to follow Martynov, one is nevertheless bound by the Plekhanov conception.

On the level of a factory, or maybe in certain conditions in an industry, IS can agitate and can aspire to have mass influence which can at times either lead to action or affect action being taken. On the level of national and international politics, however, IS is confined to a propaganda role. On Ireland, propaganda and agitation converge for a group like IS. IS could only agitate in the Plekhanov sense, seizing on illuminating facts to illustrate and highlight propaganda, summing up and underlining an argument in a slogan or demand. We could not make "calls to action" to the masses in Derry and Belfast, or even "to the masses" in Britain - except in the spirit of propaganda and education. Any other estimation of IS's influence is illusory.

WHY, IN THIS CASE, DEMAND TROOPS OUT?

Apart from the need to restate the basic ABC principles, what was the specific educational need in this situation? Where was agitation and propaganda aimed?

In Britain, we had to work to show up the usual state pretence that the troops went (as of right, of course...) to stop the Green and Orange wogs from killing each other (q.v. Aden, Cyprus, Congo, etc.) If we are to be taken seriously, we can hardly say all this and simultaneously concede to all the bourgeois propaganda about how necessary the troops are, by our own acquiescence in their use. Not to contradict the bourgeois press is to agree to their view being the only one being put. The demand "Withdraw the Troops" is essential, both to highlight and dramatise the propaganda, and to show that we mean what we say. Not to call for the troops to go is to make all one's "self-defence" and "self-reliance" talk, all the talk of arming, hollow, unrealistic, unserious.

If we were aiming at Ireland, the demand that the troops go was many times more vital. Its effect would have been to alarm, to warn and to arm politically the small number of people we could reach in Belfast and Derry. In that the immediate and obvious effect of the troops was to dampen down the workers' activity, to ease them into relaxing their collective vigilance, into putting away or giving up their weapons, into taking down their barricades and liquidating the free areas, the demand for their withdrawal would be aimed at counteracting those effects wherever we could.

Who would we have reached? Obviously not the people who took cups of tea to the troops. But the cups of tea did not come issuing out of every house in the Falls and Bogside, as Cliff would have us think. Marks began his article by talking about the "strange reversal of traditional attitudes. Irish nationalists and republicans behind the barricades... expressed relief when the arrival of British troops gave them a breathing space..." Maybe, but it was these very people who, having done a bit of breathing, were the first to feel the adverse effect of the troops, as their position was quickly undermined by the church and moderates. These were the very people whose "traditional attitudes" of distrust and hatred of the troops, of understanding of the role of Britain in Ireland, should have been reinforced by us. To be of any help to them, we should have provided them with political ammunition against the effects of the troops and the moderates. Moreover, these people contained many who could have been taken forward and consolidated as revolutionaries. In Derry the left republicans and the unemployed youth had the slogan "Troops out - Barricades Up." They can't have been too impressed with the IS line...

Instead of linking up with this vanguard and giving it political support and political ammunition, IS went in for the cups-of-tea, opinion-poll politics - it trailed along behind the vanguard, using whatever backward attitudes it heard about to justify itself. Its line on the troops was in fact more a reflection of the outlook of the moderate, middle-aged and petty-bourgeois people in the civil rights movement than of the youth and rank-and-file revolutionaries.

In view of this, Marks' talk about "opposing attempts by 'moderates' to weaken the defence, rearm politically to turn military defence into a political offensive" is pretty sick. The moderates could only do their work because the troops were there, and

the illusions in the troops too. The one and only way to have turned "military defence into a political offensive" was to call for the troops to go, thus counteracting the illusions and the feelings of security. But the shilly-shallying on this question IS, to the extent that it had any influence, strengthened the moderates.

DID WE REALLY WANT THE TROOPS TO GO?

Once they were there, the question really is: "Who will get them out?" Unless you think you are talking to Harold Wilson who will listen patiently and then get on the phone and order the troops home, we envisage that they are removed by working-class action. And if, by dint of raising the slogan in the Catholic areas, we would be able to drive them out, we would certainly be able to beat the Paisleyites too.

OK, so that's a bit fanciful. But, supposing we had even a moderate influence, the following is fairly realistic: the call for the troops to go is from the start coupled with calls for arms, for volunteers, etc. If the call to get the troops out has any effect, it will not be in isolation from the other demands - it will be precisely because the other demands, calls, etc., have caught the imagination of the masses, have found a response among the masses. To say "Troops Out" with any seriousness demands a concrete alternative, which our propaganda and the call to get the troops out will call into being, first of all by political preparation.

THE BREATHING SPACE

In Marks' scheme of things there is no place for such an organic development and interaction between working-class independent action and opposition to state intervention. Not only is there no interaction - he explicitly sees a contradiction: "To combine a demand for withdrawal with a demand for the arming of the Catholic workers is to solve the problem on the level of the mouthing of slogans. In real life (sic!) the two demands are in contradiction if both raised at the present time, for the arming of the Catholics is dependent on the preservation of the precarious breathing space the presence of the troops provides".

To say this is to leave the real world behind. The arming of the Catholic workers is dependent on their consciousness that they and they alone can defend themselves. This consciousness was not enhanced by the presence of the British troops - on the contrary: it was retarded to the point where even the barricades were delivered up. As long as the people of Falls Road had any illusions in the protection provided by the troops, their preparations for self-defence were inevitably damaged. (And this also applies to the period before August, when an energetic campaign by, say, PD might have resulted in the Catholic areas being better prepared to meet the onslaught when it did come.)

The call to arm the workers begged the question: who arms them? They arm themselves, as in every revolutionary outbreak (the use of the slogan for the South "Open the Arsenals" is a separate item). And mass arming, self-arming, that is, presupposes a climate of urgency. It was the role of the troops to undermine, smash and throw backwards the mass consciousness of urgency which alone would have led to the self-arming of the people. If not mass self-arming, who is to provide the arms? Unless IS was in the (gun) running, this could only mean the IRA.

These people, in the very middle of the fighting, refused to release more than a handful of the weapons they undoubtedly had in Belfast. Had the fighting continued they might have produced more. But not in a "breathing space": especially as it was obvious to all but IS that the "breathing space" was going to be a very long one indeed.

The troops protected the Catholics not because of the high ideals that motivated the EC in accepting their presence - nor just because of "contradictions" with the Paisleyites and commercial interests in the Republic. They did it largely to prevent the Catholics defending and arming themselves. For them the saving of lives was incidental.

Any pacifist has the right to say, "They incidentally did good work in the process". But if he combines that with talk of arming the oppressed population, and talks also about the fight for the Workers' Republic, he merely shows his own delusions. (How did the EC and Marks visualise the arming they predicted taking place during the breathing space? Obviously as a slow, orderly process, perhaps done in an open market with the troops waving in convoys of arms - run in by IS perhaps - and throwing in stocks of old army weapons to help things along so that they could pull out sooner?) Stephen Marks' breathing space must be between his ears!

The troops came in not to supplement the Catholics' self-defence but to substitute for it. Marks wrote of the troops' presence having "the effect of buying time in which the defenders of the barricades can arm to defend themselves". But actually it was troops and the British government who "bought the time" - and used the feelings of confidence and security that time evoked to take down the barricades and make sure that no serious arming occurred behind them, let alone such a thing as a state of dual power. And yet, in the very week when the barricades were being taken down, Marks could write of a "future turn (!) in the situation when the demolition of the barricades may (!) be needed in the interests of British capital itself, and not merely of its local retainers."! Very far-sighted of him!

"British capital itself", of course, wanted them down on the very first day; never wanted them up, in fact.

To talk about the Catholics arming "in the short run", in a "breathing space", in "time bought", was to ignore the process which set in immediately after the troops stopped the fighting, to ignore the conditions in which revolutionary self-arming could take place. It was to under-estimate, ludicrously, the forces working for British capitalism.

Of course the people didn't arm themselves behind the barricades and the troops. To do this on a mass scale required the immediate feeling of crisis which the troops removed. Britain proved herself willing to do the job of hitting the Paisleyites, and with help of the church, the army grip was tightened to the point where the barricades could be removed without a fight.

FIRING ON THE TROOPS?

Having "proved" thus conclusively that arming of the Catholics was "in real life" in contradiction with calling for the troops to go, Marks went on to argue that, if not based on a false evaluation of the relation of forces (which he saw as being quite

static), the Withdraw Troops demand was based either on a conscious desire for a massacre; or on the assumption that raising the demand wouldn't lead to their actually going - in which case he said it was unserious.

But it is Marks and the EC who should not be taken seriously. Their horror of the possibility of bloodshed, and their lack of faith in the possibility of the northern Catholics defending themselves (with aid from the workers in the South and in Britain) led them to shun almost superstitiously any talk of getting the troops out. They turned their backs to the basic revolutionary case, refused to argue with it, and instead sought weird "Machiavellian" explanations for why anyone could be so crazy to call for the troops to go. And they set up special standards that should allegedly follow the Troops Out demand, which would not be expected from any other demand.

One makes all kinds of educational agitation and propaganda demands, despite knowing that they will not be implemented immediately or precisely. Agitation, the spotlight of the steady beam of propaganda, is seen as preparing the way. The implementation of the demand presupposes a whole series of changes, which the raising of the demand will help to bring about. As strength is built up it becomes possible to act, to plan.

One might, here, ask what Marks and IS would have done if the troops had not been sent in. The whole logic of his argument about the troops being indispensable to arming of the Catholics and to defence of the barricades could only mean one thing - if he was "serious" he would have had to call for troops to be sent. Yet when Ray Challinor suggested this at the EC in a spirit of logic and seriousness, he was howled down by Marks and co., who recoiled before the logic of their position.

Marks made cheap cracks: would we fire on the troops now? Or did we think they'd leave by sheer persuasion? In these two alternatives he leaves out the workers entirely, and shows yet again that he doesn't understand the purpose of the demand. The demand is neither simply aimed at the troops going as he seems to be suggesting here (in isolation from the whole question of consciousness); nor is it only made for "effect", with no desire for the troops to go. The demand is not made to advise a government eager to comply. It is made to advise the people involved in the struggle. Whether or not to act on it immediately is a question of the relationship of forces. If at the time of raising the demand we are not strong enough, we would use cautious tactics in line with a strategy of political preparation. Whether or not we would, as individuals, fire on the troops, would, again, be a tactical question. (If by agitating on wages and conditions we reach only a handful or one worker, do we advise action of an individualistic sort? No!) We would only become strong enough to act by first educating those we reach, helping them to educate the masses against the moderates who were disarming them politically. To repeat, there is no wall between agitation and propaganda; the former is spun from the latter and retains an organic connection with it. Action is not always an immediate prospect. But not to have the nerve to begin this process on the level of propaganda and slogans, is never to reach the possibility of revolutionary action in real life.

Thus to say that the "Troops Out" slogan implied immediate violence against the troops is a cheap evasion. The task was to arm the masses and their vanguard

politically. That Marks apparently thought it unthinkable and shocking to fire on the troops (of course in theory he knows we will have to in the distant future) is not accidental since his and the EC's whole approach was pacifistic on this question.

THE MAIN CONTRADICTION

The rationale for supporting the use in Ireland of British imperialist troops was the 'chief contradiction' argument. This is of course an old favourite of Stalinist apologists, and has been used to justify all sorts of betrayal of principle. One well-known example: first defeat Franco, then we'll deal with the bourgeoisie. Meanwhile subordinate to the bourgeoisie, whose contradiction with Franco is at present greater than with the workers. Or one can go back further than Stalinism: the German Social Democrats in 1914 justified their support for the imperialist war on the grounds of defending the German labour organisations, the most precious conquests of international labour, against the "main enemy", Russian imperialism.

In this case the whole class relationship was dressed up as a simple time sequence. "Time", said Marks, "is of the essence". "To say that the immediate enemy in Ulster is the British troops is incorrect". Now the troops provide a "breathing space", they stand "in the short run... between the barricades and the Orange lynch mobs" (and a very short run it was indeed, because those very barricades had ceased to exist by the time Marks' article was printed!). He talks about the side they "must ultimately come down on" - ignoring completely the side they are already down on. The whole thing implies that they are either on the side of the Paisleyites or the Catholics, at any rate in the short run. This is nonsense; they are "on the side of" British imperialism, are its direct agents; they do not become friends of the Catholic workers, defenders of their barricades, assistants in arming the Catholics, merely because they are clobbering the Paisleyites.

Merely to say abstractly, as Marks did, that the troops served the overall long-term interests of British capitalism, disguises the necessary view of how they were operating there and then. They were the masters of the situation which they were manipulating, and if they were playing off against each other the Paisleyites and the Catholics that could hardly be said to be to the benefit of the Catholics. But the whole implication of Marks was that if the "immediate enemy" "at the present time... is the Paisleyites", and if the troops were fighting the "immediate enemy", then the troops were "on our side". Only "ultimately" and at "a future turn in the situation" would we ourselves be faced with them.

FREEZING THE SITUATION

Alongside the talk of British imperialism being a lesser enemy, came the talk of the troops freezing the situation - inevitably suggesting passivity, almost paralysis, on the part of Britain and further minimising the dangers from the troops. The main effect was to eliminate any real perspective, to foreshorten the political sights to the immediate tactic relating to the "short run" - i.e. acceptance of the troops.

"Their strategy was to defuse the situation by bringing together the 'moderates' on both sides while leaving the basic repressive structure untouched. In the course of doing this, they must freeze the situation and act against anyone who wishes to change it." Marks' thermometer obviously needs fixing: not to freeze, but to bolster

and then systematically demolish and replace - these were the aims. Precisely in order to maintain the basic repressive structure of capitalism, and to ensure "normal" conditions for its operation, the particular repressive structure of the old Orange disorder (which had caused the Catholic revolt) had to be remodelled and replaced by a new structure less needlessly repressive

The image "freezing the situation", central to the whole illusion of Catholic arming behind a protective cordon of passive troops, was thus misleading. The contradiction between the old Ulster establishment and British capitalism wasn't only at a military/police level - but on a social level of which the military/police relationship was only an expression. The idea that, although the contradictions were so explosive and strong as to force the British to intervene, for some reason they wouldn't try to force changes on the Ulster backwoodsmen establishment was extremely naive. Connected with this was the idea that no change could be acceptable to capitalism under any conditions.

THE BARRICADES

One of the major effects of the acceptance of the troops, and the "lesser contradiction" line, was that IS played down - in fact, backed down from - the major areas of immediate (yes, immediate) conflict with the troops.

The initial formula "barricades stay until B Specials etc. go" meant some sort of a bargain or threat. But the barricades were only a possible bargaining point if those bargaining were prepared to attempt to physically prevent the troops from taking them down. The formula, with its implied threat of action, and the headlines "defend the barricades" were quickly forgotten at the very instant when defence of the barricades actually became a physical issue.

In the situation where the troops were dismantling the barricades, to continue to call for their defence would have meant to call the Catholics into conflict with the troops. So SW stayed silent. Having ignored or explicitly minimised (with such talk as the troops needing to demolish the barricades at some "future turn in the situation") the real contradiction between troops and barricades, SW had now to choose between supporting the troops and defending the barricades. Its choice was no less definite for being accompanied by total silence.

The week the barricades were taken down in Belfast found SW with its main centre-page policy article defending SW's failure to call for the troops to go, and, in the course of the argument, necessarily defending the troops themselves. The week the barricades were brought down in Derry - prelude to the liquidation of "Free Derry" - found SW utterly silent on the question.

If the call for the barricades to stay had any real meaning for IS, SW in those two weeks should have carried banner headlines against the troops that were taking them down. But that would have meant calling for their withdrawal. Thus the decision that the troops should stay outweighed the talk in small print "against" them, outweighed the need to warn against them, outweighed the defence of the barricades, and outweighed the whole question of working-class self-reliance for which the barricades were so vitally important.

The earlier short-sightedness and abandonment of basic principles had trapped IS in

a net of contradictions. So that when the crunch came, it was no longer even able to defend the barricades against the troops, the Church and the moderates.

VOLUNTEERS FROM THE SOUTH

To give a flavour of working-class action where it was otherwise totally missing, Marks inserted at the end of his article some talk of a "national struggle in the north" becoming a social struggle in the south, through seizure of British firms as an act of solidarity with the northern oppressed. Typically magpie-like, Marks took what he needed in the position put by the League for a Workers' Republic (LWR) in Dublin. He ignored the rest: the fact that it was there as part of an overall programme opposing troops, and allowing for the possibility of secession of the Catholic areas to the Republic. Typically, and true to the IS tradition of eclecticism, he picked the phrases he needed about a national struggle, utilising them with the ease of the very facile to make an inconsistent patchwork with no conclusions, fitting in to no strategy.

The call, made elsewhere, for volunteers from the south to help the north, was of course in open and violent contradiction to the presence of the troops: or were they supposed to enrol into the British army when they got up north...?

For that matter, did Marks expect the British troops to stand around "freezing the situation" in the North, while British factories and farms were being seized? Are there no limits to the benevolence of British imperialism?

THE CHANGE OF LINE

One of the oddest things about the position on the troops was that for the months before August 21st IS had demanded their withdrawal. Only when they went into action, when their presence began to mean something, did the IS line change.

Defenders of the change say, quite brazenly, that they were "right both times" (perhaps mimicking Tony Cliff who had "always been right" on the question of the revolutionary party, though he had gone through a 180 degree turn!), and in fact would be right at any future date if they changed the line again "in response to changes in the immediate role of the troops". It all depends, they claim, on just what the army is doing at any particular time.

This approach is, of course, typical of the empirical method IS has used throughout on the Irish question. But the task of Marxists is to understand and state the overall character and role of such things as an imperialist army or bourgeois-state police force. Obviously their actions from day to day vary, their role and function undergoes changes depending on the situation. Policemen help old ladies across the road, and are helpful in showing the way if we are lost. At other times they bash through picket lines or clobber demonstrators. If we take the empirical method we will have to say that in some actions we support them, in others we oppose them. The whole purpose of a class analysis is to ascertain which aspect dominates.

TACTICS AND STRATEGY

Comrade Marks says that those who want to call for the withdrawal of troops "do not-understand the difference between... strategy and tactics." Thereafter he didn't

bother himself with the subject again, neither to define strategy and tactics nor to consider "the difference" and how this difference related to IS practice. The truth is that IS had no strategy in Northern Ireland to relate its tactics to.

Strategy is the bridge linking one's present day-to-day activities with the overall, long-term goal. In this case the goal is summed up in the Workers' Republic slogan - the goal is socialism. The means by which we move from the present state of affairs where the working class is divided, to a united working class ready to take power, is the strategy. The Trotskyist Tendency saw, as part of this means, the break-up of the 6-county state whose entire framework militates against class unity. This was to be achieved not merely by shouting "Down with the Stormont Regime", but by the secession demand which posed the possibility of an actual, physical break-up that would really have a chance of destroying the Stormont regime.

IS, to the extent that it initially had a strategy, supported those moves which constituted an offensive against the state. It of course overestimated the extent to which the civil-rights demands as such threatened the state; a common idea, used to defend relying on the most minimal demands, was that the reforms couldn't be reconciled to the system. Whilst that may be true for N. Ireland in isolation, the essential point here is that N.I. is a part of British capitalism as a whole, for which the reforms are not only possible but also, in fact, highly necessary.

Be that as it may, up to August the undefined strategy of IS was for an attack on the Orange state, however much that attack was weakened by the reformist demands.

Tactics are the bridge linking sitting quietly on one's backside doing nothing, and one's strategy. They define one's everyday activities, alliances, short-term advances and retreats, etc. They are far more flexible than a strategy, can be altered to suit circumstances, can allow for trial and error. But anything which links two points must be connected at both ends. At one NC someone defined tactics as "derived from the present situation". That is only one end of the link. They must lead into the strategy, they must build up to "create" the strategy. Above all, they cannot and must not contradict the strategy, just as agitation must not contradict propaganda, theory and principles.

Even at the low and undefined level it was at, IS strategy was contradicted completely by its tactical reactions to the British troops after August. Essential to any offensive strategy are working-class self-reliance and opposition to any bourgeois barriers set in its way. The defensive situation in the Falls Road completely obliterated for IS its entire previous strategy. The new aim became the saving of lives, for which the optimum conditions are peace and quiet, and certainly not the undertaking of any offensive against the state. The logic of it was that in order best to serve the new aim of safety and peace, it would have been better if everyone had kept quiet in the first place. Thus the whole of the previous movement was superseded by the one defensive moment.

Despite some occasional mention of strategy, there simply was none after August. A great gap yawned between "defence of the barricades" (by the British troops...) and "the only way out is to fight for a united workers' republic". The border was criticised, the Orange Tories criticised, and the troops - a barrier between the

workers and actually demolishing either of these - were permitted. The whole thing was topped off with talk of... socialism. Truly a blind, day-by-day opportunism and an abstract, millennial sectarianism are two sides of the same coin. In this case the coin is a very thin one - so thin that no transitional or strategic conception can exist between the two sides.

Having abandoned its strategy by the wayside, IS could not see how the troops were a barrier "in the short term". They might be "at some future turn", or in that other time when we'll be making the revolution. But if one has a strategic conception, socialism isn't a matter of a far-off future. The fight for socialism becomes a question of the here and now, with every small step pointing in that direction. And such things as British troops do stand in the way - particularly, in this case, in the way of the advance of working-class consciousness.

In this matter, IS is of course no pioneer. The empirical grabbing at any and every short-term solution, with no reference to the longer-term struggle for socialism, which is merely trotted out at the end of each article - or "on Sunday" - is as old as the Second International.

The lack of seriousness and the demagogic intention in the use of the 'Workers' Republic' demand becomes clear if we examine it even briefly. Marks concluded his article thus: "We are concerned to save the lives of the oppressed and heroic defenders of the barricades so that in the time given them by the contradictions between Paisleyism and British capitalism they can rearm themselves physically and politically and at last place on the political map the demand for the only real solution: a united workers' republic." Marvellous! But, unless the workers change the situation by taking over in Britain or the 26 counties, it is a perspective for decades. How long did Marks envisage the troops remaining? Does he mean an exclusively Catholic workers' republic in two and a half counties? With a majority of the N. Ireland workers against it? (Marks didn't challenge either N.I. or the Border.)

IS simply lacked a perspective based on a real estimate of the situation and possibilities. Where there were possibilities - for self-defence and self-mobilisation, it was frightened of them. There was no realism at all in SW's comments on N. Ireland. There was, on the one hand, a gross delusion about the level of the struggle and its prospects (amounting to a sort of "Catholic economism") - and, on the other, a prostrate acceptance of the troops. As if to overcompensate, SW continued to talk about big struggles long after the troops - that is, the overall bourgeois system - had obviously got a grip on the situation. Just a few days before the barricades came down in Belfast, SW (11.09.69) carried a front page caption which established a new record for banality and today reads like a fairy story for backward children: When The Catholics Are Armed They Can Tell The Troops To Go.

THE ISSUE

The issue for revolutionaries was - confidence or no confidence in the British government. Despite a lot of noise, IS, in fact, through acquiescence and through the attacks it made in SW on those who wanted to call for the Troops Out, expressed actual confidence in the government.

An interesting comparison can be made with a discussion between Trotsky and

Shachtman in 1937, relating to the Spanish Civil War. Trotsky relates. "On September 18, 1937, Shachtman wrote me: "... You say, 'If we would have a member in the Cortes he would vote *against* the military budget of Negrin.' Unless this is a typographical error it seems to us to be a non-sequitur. If, as we all contend, the *element of an imperialist war* is not dominant at the present time in the Spanish struggle, and if instead the decisive element is still the struggle between the decaying bourgeois democracy, with all that it involves, on the one side, and fascism on the other, and further if we are obliged to give military assistance to the struggle against fascism, we don't see how it would be possible to vote in the Cortes against the military budget ... If a Bolshevik-Leninist on the Huesca front were asked by a Socialist comrade why his representative in the Cortes voted against the proposal by Negrin to devote a million pesetas to the purchase of rifles for the front, what would this Bolshevik-Leninist reply? It doesn't seem to us that he would have an effective answer ..." [My emphasis]

This letter astounded me. Shachtman was willing to express confidence in the perfidious Negrin government on the purely negative basis that the "element of an imperialist war" was not dominant in Spain.

On September 20, 1937, I replied to Shachtman:

"To vote the military budget of the Negrin government signifies to vote him political confidence ... To do it would be a crime. How we explain our vote to the anarchist workers? Very simply: We have not the slightest confidence in the capacity of this government to conduct the war and assure victory. We accuse this government of protecting the rich and starving the poor. This government must be smashed. So long as we are not strong enough to replace it, we are fighting under its command. But on every occasion we express openly our non-confidence in it: it is the only one possibility to mobilize the masses *politically* against this government and to prepare its overthrow. Any other politics would be a betrayal of the revolution." (*In Defence of Marxism*, p.128)

Imagine Marks arguing the Shachtman case: "But of course in our propaganda we explain the perfidious role of the government - but we don't refuse to vote money to save the lives of heroic Republican soldiers at the front. Oppose the Government in propaganda - but not now, not immediately, not in agitation... and certainly not in tactics..."

Undoubtedly he would go on to remind Trotsky, who demands that revolutionaries in Spain openly proclaim their intention of smashing the government, that Lenin did not immediately call for the overthrow of the Government in 1917. (He did call on the Socialist ministers to take the power, as a prelude to being able to call for their overthrow or replacement.)

Finally there is the argument that one must know how to choose the moment, that Lenin too in July 1917 restrained mass action. The difference is that then it was a calculated self-restraint in which the revolutionary workers continued to gain strength (rather than the capitalist regime doing so). In N. Ireland the mobilisation and self-reliance of the Catholics hasn't just been restrained for a moment, while continuing to grow. It has been wiped out. There is no comparison.

CONCLUSIONS

Once it accepted, and defended, the presence of British troops, IS's line became, in essence, the same as that of the Tribune left. Where the latter called for direct political rule from Westminster, the IS leadership were content with direct physical control. The only difference was that the IS leaders knew enough to feel a need to cover their tracks with all kinds of pseudo-Marxist arguments.

But to defend a false, pacifist, non-working-class position imposed its own demands and its own logic on those who undertook the task. We have seen that it involved a complete retreat from the Marxist, Leninist conception of propaganda and agitation. When Marks accused us of not understanding the difference between agitation and propaganda, he was right - in so far as it applied to his conception. We believe that we have shown that his conception is the very opposite of a Leninist conception. Likewise with strategy and tactics. For us the two are connected organically, necessarily, dialectically. They interact. But the application by IS has seen no interaction. They are entirely separate. Strategy and tactics don't talk to each other. Tactics relate exclusively to "what's going on around". The necessary link (which is what tactics should be) between what is going on around and that which we want to see going on - our programme - is entirely absent.

Defence of the pacifist and squeamish vulgar "humanitarian" element in IS's panic retreat during the fighting in August also imposed its own logic on the rationalisers. Concern for the physical safety of some of our sympathiser in N.I. was a major element in the case made for not opposing the troops. Marks wrote with tender concern for people in the forefront of the struggle in N. Ireland - who probably found his squeamish concern insulting.

If one abandons the objective position, one necessarily must present a false picture of reality. To be minimally political, revolutionaries needed to do more than heave a sigh of relief. It was necessary to sum up reality completely, not one-sidedly (subjectively, arbitrarily). But IS didn't even make the basic revolutionary case and then say why N. Ireland was different. Instead IS ignored the very existence of such a case, treated the reality with short-sighted and perspectiveless empiricism - and miseducated the membership.

Even if we heave a sigh of relief, we are still obliged to "state what is" in N.I. SW didn't just heave a sigh of relief and stop at a prostrate acceptance of the troops. It whistled in the dark to delude those we reached "and the members too."

Thus: Marks' line about the side the troops would "ultimately come down on" helped support the paper's line, but prevented SW from ever seriously analysing the role of the troops. SW has slid from saying "they will arm behind the barricades", to commenting on the big changes in N.I. which see the Catholic workers politically and physically disarmed. For those who took the line of the paper seriously these are indeed mysterious changes.

Thus: the talk of arming behind the barricades (behind the troops) was whistling in the dark to cover the noise of the big sigh of relief. Or it was an almost incredible ignorance of the most elementary processes of revolution - presumably the thought of bloodshed drove everything else out of the leadership's pacifist heads.

Thus: Marks wrote that to equate B-Specials and Troops was to "say that the presence or absence of British troops in the existing situation makes no difference to the struggle". Of course it makes a difference - otherwise we wouldn't want to call for withdrawal! We all saw that the troops indeed made a difference - but four months later it is beyond argument that the difference they made was not that predicted by SW but the very opposite.

Thus: people like Palmer covered up the realities and the very limited perspectives open to the movement in N. Ireland, with loose talk about the Workers' Republic, demagogically implying that Catholic struggle would lead directly and in the not-too-distant future to that possibility. That it was never precisely formulated made it all the more effective as a piece of demagoguery.

On Ireland, IS's leaders showed themselves to be afraid of the collapse of the system from its internal contradictions, afraid of the necessary leap into the unknown, afraid to face the fact that, before a new order can grow, the old must begin to disintegrate, and that it will not disintegrate peacefully, evenly or according to our ideal preconceptions. The leaders of IS refused to base themselves on the actual struggle. Their acceptance of the troops shows this clearly, while the sectarian 'Trotskyist' groups (RSL, SLL) hide it [i.e. their failure to base themselves on the actual struggle] behind ritual objection to the troops and millennial Workers' Republic propaganda. The idea that the British workers might be drawn in if the N. Ireland situation had proved uncontrollable and provoked a real crisis of the system seems not to have occurred to them. Nor, that if this happened, it would radicalise the British political scene and make possible new levels of struggle in Britain. Faced with civil war, instead of supporting and helping to develop the self-activity of the Catholic masses that would arise out of it, they recoiled in horror, saying: "No, we aren't ready - and were glad to see the troops establish order."

IS's line on the troops has been an opportunistic abandonment of Marxism - an opportunism whose whole tendency has been conservative.

Conservative because it boiled down to relief that the UK state was strong enough to stop its artificial Northern Ireland section from breaking up.

Conservative and time-serving because of the anti-Marxist attitude:

that our tactics are impressionistically derived from what's going on around us without being related organically to strategy; and

that agitation and propaganda are not two differing presentations of the same world, but two different conclusions leading in opposing directions - split-personality politics.

Conservative and sectarian because it wound up counterposing the final goal in Ireland, the Workers' Republic, to the immediate logic of the real struggle, real tendencies and real possibilities, of which IS never had - and never attempted to make - a serious analysis.

Sectarian because it finally adopted the Workers' Republic slogan as a cover for its perplexity in face of the real, immediate situation.

Conservative, above all, because it feared to launch its frail craft on the seas as they were - and waited, content at the strength of the bourgeois state, for better, and more ideal conditions.

Revolutionaries with such characteristics will never help make the revolution in Ireland. They will never make a revolution in Britain They will never make a revolution anywhere at all. That is why the members of IS who take revolutionary politics seriously must grasp the significance of the line that IS's leaders took on the troops.

Chapter 3: The Secession Question

The reason why the EC was perplexed by the troops question is quite simple. If one relies solely on the self-defence of the Northern Ireland Catholics (aided from the south by mass action) one is faced with the question: on what political basis, with what perspectives, would one organise armed Catholic groups? Certainly not for a Workers' Republic in their tiny part of Ireland (two and a half counties) - ignoring for the moment the question of the necessary level of consciousness. The logic of armed Catholic self-defence units was that the nationalist thread in the N. Ireland political complex would inevitably come to the forefront, raising the question of the border. In any event, it was inescapable that the nationalist consciousness would have grown had the struggle gone on.

The alternatives in the situation were either: troops to take control in the name of the state; or Catholic/nationalist self-defence which would pose in the circumstances no other goal than the breaking up of the Six Counties. If this had developed as a fighting movement of the Catholic workers in the North it would have had an incalculable effect on the South - and in Britain itself.

Yet no single issue raised such a storm at the IS Conference than the Trotskyist Tendency's advocacy of the secession slogans. None called forth more deliberate distortion than this. When a Trotskyist Tendency member admitted that the breakup of the Six Counties would probably lead to population exchanges he was denounced as a callous fascist advocating that.

When we drafted the resolution at the end of June or beginning of July the situation in N. Ireland had already developed sharp outlines. Unity of Catholics and Protestants remained a distant ideal, and seemed to have grown more distant as the civil rights movement forged ahead, activating Catholics in its support, galvanising Protestants against all it stood for. The sectarian pattern of division widened and an inter-community clash loomed closer, it seemed less likely to have an effect in the immediate future.

One undercurrent in the success of the Paisleyites was a demagogic appeal to the Protestant workers and poor people against the landed gentry and bourgeois Orange elements. The Independent Orange lodges - which had been responsible for the odd occasions this century (e.g. 1907 and 1934) when Protestants and Catholics united - were a special field of operation by the Paisleyites, with typically fascist radical demagoguery. Thus the vague class and social approach of PD was undermined with the mass workers of Protestant workers by a competing 'social' approach with the added appeal that it fitted in with their traditional caste attitudes instead of opposing them.

Perhaps by definition a Civil Rights movement in N. Ireland is necessarily divisive, if it has the character of appearing to look for a re-division of existing jobs and houses. It takes, for practical purposes, as its starting point the existing divisions. Thereafter appeals to good will, or to Protestants to join in, are not enough to control the exacerbation of the divisions. To say that, is no more to condemn the Civil Rights movement than is acknowledgement of a white backlash to condemn the movement of the black people of the USA.

The hardening of divisions and the receding hopes of working-class unity raised questions of perspectives and slogans for revolutionary socialists in Britain and Ireland. Our programme is for working-class unity in a positive struggle for betterment and the ultimate goal of class power. But a Marxist appreciation of Ireland, its complex history and current struggles doesn't stop there. There is the national question also, Marxists demand self-determination for Ireland. Deepening divisions and the postponement, perhaps for a whole period (even before and without the events of August and after), of the possibility of class unity in the six counties meant that the national question and self-determination were pushed sharply to the fore with all their implications.

As we will show, it had never fully been explained in Socialist Worker or International Socialism what self-determination involved: that it meant Ireland as a 32-county unit, with the border as artificial and to be challenged, even if, in principle, we would accept the idea of autonomy for the Protestant areas. Above all it meant opposing the existing partition imposed by imperialist force.

The widespread sentiment to leave the border out of current politics was, at best, an evasion, justifiable perhaps by its emphasis on immediate six-county struggle; at worst, it was unprincipled. While even the possibility of class unity existed in the six counties, it was perhaps tolerable. As this receded and there was talk of civil war within the six counties, threatening to leave those who adopted this stance helpless and without a response to likely events, it became intolerable and sharply unprincipled.

Socialists needed to bring forward the national struggle, to stress that the underlying division is false and arbitrary, and that any talk of autonomy for the Protestants could not be on the basis of six counties.

While making revolutionary socialist propaganda, we must stress the democratic demands for self-determination. The duty of revolutionists in a situation like that of N. Ireland (and Ireland as a whole), where the national problems and social/political currents remain, is to give as sharp an expression as possible to the democratic non-socialist movements. If the sectarianism and national divisions are going to immobilise the united working class in N. Ireland for a whole period, we must give those tendencies a sharp expression that a) shakes the system and b) creates the preconditions for future class unity. Not merely the border as such was the source of conflict, but the jagged, irrational border is a permanent and self-renewing source of conflict and class division.

We must question that which imperialism has decreed for Ireland. We must put forward the self-determination demand not as a mere piety, but as a living democratic demand, as a necessary adjunct to the socialist programme.

We felt that to fear to put this forward as a slogan in England and Ireland was to sink to the level of sectarian socialists, mouthing inconsistent talk about the (far) future united Workers' Republic, and platitudes about the need for class unity, whilst accepting the national carve-up that was designed, among other things, to prevent any united working-class struggles that might lead to a Workers' Republic.

At worst, a secessionist movement would have led to a more rational border. At best, it might have produced a catastrophic shake-up of the Irish side of the British state system that has existed since 1922. It would probably make a rump Orange state unviable. (As such, the secession call is, in effect, a call for a United Ireland - i.e. a practical application of the otherwise abstract phrase "self-determination".) It would take away many of the alibis of the southern bourgeoisie. It would probably create such crisis and division within the UK ruling class that a possibility of the UK working class being propelled into the arena might arise. (Many times in history a state which has become eroded internally, yet remained stable, has been shaken to its foundations by a relatively small shock, an incident - e.g. the Dreyfus affair.) That, in turn, would radically alter the prospects of class unity in action in Ireland itself. The political paralysis and conservatism of the IS leaders and their hysterical reaction to the advocacy of the secession demand, was a reflection that they were incapable of looking beyond the immediately horrifying reality of a senseless inter-class slaughter to other and more constructive possibilities beyond it.

From the above, it followed that by giving the Catholic movement that had welled up a republican orientation; a lever could be found to break open the establishment set-up at its weakest point, and to propel the movement forward in its logical direction. (In 'answer' to this, Palmer and co. colluded in the "Catholic economist" pretence that the movement was socialist or had immediate socialist potential - thus failing to pose slogans that might have helped it reach the potential that it did have.)

We felt that those, ourselves included, who had dismissed the idea of a revolutionary unification of Ireland this side of the socialist revolution, might be proven wrong. We still think the objective possibility existed, though it no longer does, and hasn't now since August. But the Catholic movement in the North, with the self-determination slogan raised rationally and given a goal, might have radicalised the whole scene. Instead, it ended in a blind alley.

The alternatives for socialists were either:

a) the sectarian position, of refusing to take sides in a 'religious' split, and instead preaching class unity, seeing socialism as an essential precondition to a united Ireland; or

b) to take the side of the most oppressed section, take part in its struggles and give them a sharper and more logical direction - which might form a link between the present divisions and the class unity necessary for working-class power; and to give support and expression to the demand for a united Ireland now as part of the struggle for Catholic rights. In short, to see the roots of Catholic oppression in their lack of self-determination.

IS tried to compromise - to fight alongside the Catholics, whilst confining itself to slogans (e.g. the Workers' Republic) whose precondition was class unity - and to

reject the task of striking at the six-county state as the structure and framework for working-class division and national oppression.

THE CASE AGAINST THE SECESSION DEMAND

We were accused of pandering to Green Toryism. But the secession slogan in practice came far closer to the feelings of the young left republicans who were, in the course of the fighting, feeling the need for a coherent programme in line with the struggle, and against both the Green Tories and the right-wing republican leaders whose prostration before Stormont, Westminster and the play-acting of Lynch had already implicitly exposed them. The 'insertion' into the situation of a programme for real radical action would, by contrast with the right-wing inertia, have exposed them quite explicitly, and could have been a rallying point for the vanguard.

We were told that the demand had been made by the fascist O'Duffy in the 1930s. So what? It is a characteristic of fascist movements to use working-class demands and aspirations demagogically. Does that mean they become taboo for us? It is also characteristic of shoddy arguments and an Oxford Union debating style to use such questions to obscure reality.

Most of all we were accused of wanting to bring on a bloodbath, and it was even suggested that in some 'Machiavellian' way we saw such a bloodbath as a way of raising consciousness. On the contrary, our resolution made it clear that the demand was to be raised "in the... event of a communal eruption" — "In a situation of deepening working-class division and conflict, this demand could be the only way for the movement to advance." (See Appendix I for the complete resolution, which we suspect not many of those who voted against it bothered to read.) Admittedly, it could, in the short term, have worsened the conflict. But we saw it as a weapon in the hands of the Catholic movement: and while any weapon produces bloodshed, it is only a pacifist who will spurn a weapon which creates the possibility of a better outcome after the struggle is over. (And if Marks and co. want to object that a weapon is a weapon and not a slogan, or that you can't fight guns with slogans, let them also say that a movement without a goal or direction is just as well able to equip itself against guns as is a movement with such a goal!) The better outcome in this case was the possibility of breaking up the divisive six-county state, of creating maximum havoc with the imperialists' structure, and thus abolishing the inevitability of sustained and repeated, long-term, religious-sectarian clashes... and bloodshed too, of course.

We were informed that the added strife would bring down upon us more British troops!... "and we thought you wanted them out." Would Comrade Marks like to extend this argument of his to Vietnam? He could then advise the NFL that if they hadn't been so irresponsible as to start a struggle for national liberation, there wouldn't be a single G.I. in Vietnam now...

We reproduced a map from 'The Economist' showing the areas of Catholic majority population - as an indication of the irrationality of the present border and the obvious adjustments that could be advocated in agitation. The response was a quibble about population densities, and a demographic "argument" for keeping things as they were. There is only one meaning, politically, to this kind of argument:

that the border we have is the best of all possible borders. There could have been no more explicit a statement of acceptance of the status quo.

It was said to us that secession was a right-wing demand, a 'stages theory' meaning an abandonment of working-class independence. But of course, while putting it forward, a revolutionary group would maintain itself, its program and its class propaganda. Working-class participation in national struggle, keeping its independence, has nothing in common with the Menshevik/Stalinist stages theories. In the same resolution we advocated working-class transitional demands. There would be no contradiction. The secession demand would have been raised in the spirit of "Better fight Southern bosses than northern workers."

Neither did we raise the slogan as a means of factional self-differentiation. Those who said we did merely showed that they so completely misunderstood it as to be at a loss to think of any genuine, political reason for raising it. We raised the slogan because, among other things, we felt (and still feel) that if all revolutionaries can do is go in for either opportunist shilly-shallying or else mouthing strictly millennial slogans (and IS did both), then they had better throw in the towel. Marxism is a tool to allow us to deal with reality on all its levels and in all its complexities or it is nothing.

For British Marxists the secession demand meant propaganda on the lines of 'Withdraw the Troops' and support for a referendum call. This would be the opportunity for showing up in the most graphic way what British imperialism had done with its border. In N. Ireland itself, in places like Derry, where there is gerrymandering, the possibility of organising parallel elections (by the people themselves) to contest power with the Unionist system, was a very obvious possibility, which would have taken the masses forward.

We felt that the possibilities in the situation were either:

a) that the revolutionary upsurge of the Catholics would produce some reforms and then subside, leaving in its wake inter-class bitterness and the same powers in control; or

b) that it would lead to a break-up of the system, as outlined above.

We regarded the approach of Palmer - that minimum demands were revolutionary and couldn't be met by the system - as hysterical delusion. We regarded the Black Power analogy as false because Britain, the main actor, has room for manoeuvre with the Catholic workers and can shift part of its weight from the Orange working class onto them. We felt: that the Catholic movement couldn't go forward without a programme; that it didn't have a programme; and that the only programme it could have (a purely Catholic Workers' Republic being ruled out) was a republican one.

We have been taunted with dropping the demand, presumably (applying Marks & co.'s own political methods?) because of the volume of opposition to it. That once again shows the lack of any understanding of the dynamics of the situation, or of how the slogan was meant to enter into and interact with that situation. It was not an all-time panacea. At one point it could have taken the movement forward. When the movement itself had receded, the slogan was no longer appropriate.

If, on Black Power and Northern Ireland, the SLL are wrong, in their preaching of an abstract class unity regardless of differences in history, consciousness and conditions, it does not exculpate those (PD and IS) who ran a campaign with a nationalist logic and shirked the outcome and the logic - fitting instead, by sleight of hand, socialist slogans where they had no meaning, and finally using the previously rejected Workers' Republic slogan as a fig leaf in the face of events.

In the event, the masses, involved in a struggle which the troops stopped, remained not merely far from a socialist consciousness, but on a sub-republican level. The republicans themselves were woefully inadequate and had essentially no line other than self-defence; even that they did badly. Despite that, they have grown in Derry and Belfast - absolutely by default (particularly in Derry).

The struggle, having shifted from an offensive against the state to a defensive position without a goal, subsided having got the promise of reforms. British capitalism is more secure than ever.

Chapter 4: IS's Record on Ireland: The Campaign in Britain

IS responded energetically to the events in Ireland. But the IS record on Ireland, like PD's record in the North, is an example of the road to hell being paved with the best political intentions. The confusion on the troops question was the culmination of a great deal of confusion and shilly-shallying during the previous nine months. Let us examine it briefly as recorded in the EC and NC minutes.

The EC minutes of Dec 12th 1968 carry a report of a tone-setting discussion in which Gerry Lawless harangued the EC for the general failure of the British Left to do serious work on Ireland:

"Comrade L. felt that the British working class had a racist, chauvinist attitude towards the Irish question. The British left was not very much better informed, IS should educate its own members as this attitude was also amongst them, If IS is serious it should not simply organise demonstrations on Ireland but try to educate the working class (and IS members) to campaign and organise on the Irish question (remembering there are over a million Irishmen in this country, mostly workers).

There was perhaps scope for a campaign along VSC [Vietnam Solidarity Campaign] lines which should be more fruitful because it could bring workers into contact with the revolutionary left. The Campaign should take in questions coming from the south as well, although main emphasis on the North. Cde Palmer felt that, as the Irish Question was so complicated, the left's attitude was not so much racism as ignorance. Cde Lawless felt that the resources for a revolutionary Trotskyist Group in Ireland were very small, and it would need an organiser and a press.

He felt there would be very little response to a campaign amongst Irish exiles unless there is evidence of a large campaign to educate the British workers on Ireland...

Cdes Harman and Protz felt a serious analytical piece on Ireland was needed which could set out the complexities of the Irish situation. Reported that Comrade Gillespie is expected to have something ready for the Spring IS... It was agreed several things were needed: a) to educate the Group (and the British left, especially revolutionary Marxists); b) start an Irish campaign; c) assist the re-formation of an Irish Group. The EC must discuss these and present some proposals to the NC."

SETTING THE TONE

This long excerpt is necessary because the ideas there uttered were to dominate the Group's approach for at least the following five months. The idea that we could only get at Irish workers by campaigning to educate Britain on the Irish question was implemented as meaning a pseudo-anti-imperialist campaign - that is, we could only expect to reach Irish workers by pretending to attune absolutely and unconditionally to their existing level of nationalist consciousness. No question about our duty to bring specifically socialist analysis and comment to those we can reach of the one-million-strong group of the working class who originated in Ireland.

The VSC analogy was to bear fruit in the Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign (ICRSC) five months later. But, at best, it is a doubtful comparison. Solidarity with Vietnam, with a revolutionary movement struggling against imperialism in the most advanced way possible (and which we directly influence) is, in itself, a semi-revolutionary step for those who take it. Solidarity with the Civil Rights movement in Ireland - per se - can mean simply liberalism or Irish nationalism.

The job of 'educating' both British Marxists and British workers was given to ... Gerry Lawless! On January 4th SW carried a 'programmatic article' called, 'ULSTER - WHAT THE LEFT MUST DO'. It was signed "from Sean Reed" (which is a pseudonym "or, perhaps better, euphemism - used by Lawless). This article explained all about the Special Powers Act etc. and attacked the British left for its alleged habit of "telling the Irish how to run their own affairs." Lawless asked: "What is to be done?" and answered: "First and foremost" (!!!) "British socialists must refrain from penning long, high-flown theoretical articles (which all end by telling Irish socialists what to do) and instead (!) launch a campaign of solidarity with the Irish movement." No question now of the serious theoretical analysis Protz and Harman called for in December. Had it been made, it might have led British socialists to an independent view of the situation, tasks and goals of the Irish movement, and any solidarity movement in Britain; in turn, this might have led them to question Lawless' and Palmer's views which dominated the early solidarity work. (The article in IS, useful in the historical sections, of course merely codified their views on current politics.) His article concluded "In this campaign, the best thing British socialists can do is demand:

- 1) The withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland;
- 2) An end to the supply of British military equipment to the Northern Irish Tory Party and para-military Black Hundreds, the B-Specials;
- 3) Stop British subsidies to the Tory police state of Northern Ireland."

This third demand is one which no-one in Ireland, North or South, ever agreed with. It implied the very opposite of the real relationship of N. Ireland and Great Britain - that is, the fact that Britain draws more from N. Ireland in profits than she pays out in social service subsidies. Much more. This slogan, acceptable to no workers in N. Ireland, Catholic or Protestant, disguised the real nature of the relationship, and could legitimately be accused of miseducating British workers.

SELF-DETERMINATION

The first two demands are anti-imperialist demands. But a strange anti-imperialism - which called for certain things, and then, surprisingly, avoided the essential and

logical conclusion: the call for the right of self-determination for Ireland as a unit.

To raise the self-determination demand would have been to raise the question of the border, because, to have any meaning in the present state of Irish politics, self-determination must mean self-determination for those explicitly denied it: the Catholics of N. Ireland. It must mean to regard the existing Irish state structure as fluid. The absence of this demand was a strange omission from the list which Lawless (obviously with the agreement of the EC and probably with the collaboration of Palmer) was putting.

But a section of the article made it clear that this was no accidental omission. It read: "The northern worker will never be won by a programme which calls for the absorption of the six counties into the present southern regime, with its Rome rule in the schools, which tends to confirm his ever-present fear that a break with Orange will open the floodgates and relegate him to the position of a second-class citizen.

He will only be won for the establishment of a Republic when it is clear in his mind that what is envisaged is a Workers' Republic in which he as a worker will control his own destiny without fear of Thames or Tiber."

Obviously the demands had been deliberately tailored to take the above into account: only under socialism would self-determination - that is, concretely, the abolition of the border - become a desirable possibility. This might be a defensible position for a group in N. Ireland to take but to omit it from a campaign in Britain would have amounted to treachery. Marxists in imperialist countries who raise demands for self-determination do so only to defend the right of the people of the oppressed nation to take self-determination even to the point of seceding if they want to, and even without socialism. The choice is theirs. Why therefore omit this from the slogans for a campaign in Britain? Because, in the actual case under discussion, it would have meant to implicitly differentiate from those in N. Ireland who didn't raise the national question, self-determination and the border, and for IS, in effect, to put the position of the People's Democracy (PD).

The problem for Palmer and Lawless was that their N. Irish co-thinkers (Farrell and co.) had a position which committed them to accepting the given partition, this side of socialism. They had a sectarian socialist - a pro-Leninist - position. As Mike Farrell said at the last IS Conference, they had more sympathy than people imagined with the (sectarian) position of the Scottish IS comrades on this question.

At the January NC meeting there was a long discussion on Ireland, with the EC minutes (above) and "Sean Reed's" article as the basis of the discussion. The minutes for this NC are inaccurate, in that they miss out one of the central ideas put by the Workers' Fight members. The February NC agreed that the minutes were in fact inaccurate, and the actual WF case is made in a letter by S. Matgamna to SW no.106.

We argued that the three demands presented as the basis of the Irish campaign were not "nationalistic" enough for the task of educating the British workers on the Irish question, insofar as they omitted the demand for self-determination with all that it implied. At the same time they were too exclusively nationalistic for the task

of educating Irish workers in Britain - many of whom, the most nationally conscious of whom, we would be likely to reach - in a class understanding of Ireland's problems.

Two additional slogans were proposed, representing, in our opinion, the two essential prongs of a serious campaign on the Irish question:

- 1) The right of the people of Ireland to self-determination;
- 2) For a United Socialist Republic of Ireland.

A number of people objected to the self-determination slogan (interpreted in discussion as above) on the grounds that it was 'pre-judging the issue'. Comrades Palmer and Cliff (the Group's 'Irish experts') were among those who took this line initially. At the time their attitude was hard to understand - later it became clear that they were subordinating their duty as socialists in Britain, to the need to keep in step with their supporters in N. Ireland. However, the proposal was carried by a big majority.

But after the NC had decided to carry the fourth slogan on self-determination, its spirit was never adhered to by those running the Irish campaign. With consummate political disloyalty, John Palmer chose to interpret the self-determination demand like this in IS Journal 36: "Point 4 above also has the advantage that it allows for a possible decision by the whole people of Ireland to merge the two statelets on the basis of some degree of autonomy for the Protestants..." Interpreted thus, it allowed the leadership to relegate the whole thing to a distant future and still treat the imperialist set-up (the border, etc.) as given, as unmitigated. Ultimately this was to be one of the factors leading to the acceptance of British troops after August.

FOR AN IRISH WORKERS' REPUBLIC?

The Workers' Republic slogan led to a long discussion. The idea behind it was that IS's campaign needed to have one prong aimed at Irish workers. It could have been raised as an expression of solidarity with the left in Ireland, and this would have been IS's specific line with the Irish workers in the campaign.

Those who had forgotten or opposed the self-determination slogan were not in the least inhibited in this discussion in saying that to raise the Workers' Republic slogan in Britain would be an intolerable qualification of the self-determination demand, and would be "telling the Irish people what to do". The proposal to include it in the campaign was rejected by the Chairman's casting (second) vote. Cliff and Palmer were also among those opposing the inclusion of the demand.

In the interest of clean living, it should also be pointed out that some of the Scottish comrades who now take refuge from the wrath of the Scottish Orange men behind abstract propaganda around the demand "for an Irish workers' Republic" voted against it in January (specifically Joan Smith and Ian Mooney). Unfortunately, there was no recorded vote (our much-touted factional experience mustn't have been in operation that day - or maybe we've only really learned factionalism from our ensuing experience over the last year in IS).

The line, then decided, dominated the Group until the 15th March 1969. At the same time the struggle in Ireland flagged a little - so, naturally, did the interest of the

leadership.

A SERIOUS CAMPAIGN?

At the NC meeting on the 15th March, Constance Lever and Noel Tracy (of DC faction) moved the following motion. Its fate is interesting in the light of later developments. It reads:

"The NC resolves that the Group should take the initiative in the formation of a united-front, single-issue campaign, based on the following slogans:

- 1) Withdrawal of all British troops and subsidies from the 6 counties;
- 2) Repeal of the Special Powers Act;
- 3) Critical support for PD;
- 4) For a United Workers' Republic.

That the Group should bring its influence to bear openly for the creation of a united Irish revolutionary organisation, to which IS would offer fraternal links. There will be no dual membership in the Irish organisation."

It was moved that paragraph A) be amended to read ... "formation of local ad hoc committees in areas of Irish concentration as and when issues arise, based on the following slogans:"

This was carried with Cliff and Palmer's support, voting in effect against the serious campaign approach. At the same time, the Workers' Republic slogan, which provoked such a storm at the NC in January, was carried as Group policy... for the moment anyway.

But now Bernadette Devlin was elected to parliament, and her willingness to collaborate with IS made a campaign a serious possibility, which even Cliff, Palmer et al couldn't ignore. The EC minutes on 28th April talked of a rally in June.

EC ON THE 5TH OF MAY 1969: Decided that IS would help PD launch a socialist paper. Discussion on Irish campaign; it should be a mass campaign around a basic programme. But not committed to a precise plan or a precise objective because of the imponderable (!?!) situation in Derry. The demands agreed were: 1) withdrawal of British troops; 2) solidarity with the Civil Rights movement; 3) for a United Socialist Republic.

NC 17th MAY 1969: Cliff reported that B. Devlin was working with IS on factory gate meetings. A motion from Constance Lever followed Cliff's report:

"The NC instructs the EC to envisage the Irish campaign as a serious, long-term campaign to be integrated with our industrial work." Cliff, Irish co-expert with Palmer (who was absent) voted against, specifically objecting to the words "long-term".

EC 19th May 1969: Palmer reports the setting up of Revolutionary Socialist Alliance. But despite the earlier NC decision on a united movement in Ireland, this was organised in such a way as to exclude the League for a Workers' Republic

EC 26th May 1969: Reported that the ICRSC was having its first meeting in two days' time. There was agreement that IS should play a key role in launching ICRSC. After launching it on its way, IS's role would be to put forward a clear minority view within the campaign. The campaign would be on a minimum programme - presumably it would differentiate from the GP-front group (on, at that time, a similar programme) by sheer militancy. Palmer and "Reed" were to see if collaboration with the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was possible for their planned rally on June 22nd. If not possible, a meeting should be organised by ICRSC on about the same date. A resolution from Kilburn was put forward, requesting clarification on B. Devlin and the ICRSC. In reply, it "was felt that it was necessary to stress that Cde Devlin was not a Group member, and" (despite the evidence to the contrary in the rest of the minutes) "the ICRSC was not a Group front."

2nd June 1969: Palmer reported NICRA suspicious of ICRSC - had refused Group collaboration while willing to accept M. Farrell and B. Devlin as speakers.

NC 2nd June 1969: "Comrade Palmer reported that the ICRSC set up to draw left organisations and Irish groups together to mobilise Irish workers on a programme similar to PD's in Ireland."

"Comrade Lever wanted to know what had become of our demand for a United Socialist Ireland in the campaign programmes. Comrade Cliff said that the programme of the ICRSC was that of the PD, which is the only really meaningful organisation in N. Ireland at the moment. This was not our campaign, we participated as a minority."

The fruit of this keeping in close step behind PD was to be the ironic repudiation of the ICRSC by the somewhat radicalized PD a few months later. Once an organisation surrenders its political independence, even to 'friends', it lays itself open to the buffeting of all the cross-currents; and becomes a mere feather in the breezes

"Several comrades felt that we should make our politics perfectly clear within the campaign. They also felt that we should have been more critical of B. Devlin in SW. Comrade Palmer said that IS -as part of the Solidarity Campaign - remains free to put forward the demand for a Workers' Republic". But of course the first time IS did so in SW was in the special issue in August. By then, the leadership seemed to think that the road to the Workers' Republic was lined with British troops gallantly protecting defenceless Catholics from the Orange thugs: not only a Workers' Republic, but an exclusively Catholic Workers' Republic at that.

There followed the period of Bernadette Devlin's activity with the Group. Many people in the Group were critical- ultra-critical - of Devlin. The people to blame, however, were her 'managers', Palmer and Lawless. Devlin herself, considering her background, age and political experience, was better than we had any right to expect: she behaved heroically during the fighting in Derry, and subjectively she is undoubtedly a revolutionary. Her IS 'managers' must bear a lot of the responsibility for the fact that her theoretical and political development hasn't yet matched her courageous practical commitment to the struggle.

The ICRSC, on IS initiative (following a suggestion by Lawless) decided to field a

candidate in the Islington by-election, G. Lawless being first 'favourite' for the nomination. But thieves fall out, and even if it does not necessarily follow that honest men come into their own, at least one of the villains gets hurt. Lawless was ousted as candidate.

PD REPUDIATES ICRSC

EC 29th Sept.'69: It was reported that PD had sent Cdes Toman, Cosgrove and Quigley to the ICRSC Conference on Sept. 27th and 28th, and that PD had agreed to give moral support to the candidate in the Islington by-election.

Then, suddenly, and almost inexplicably in the light of his earlier report, Palmer had to tell the EC of 20.10.69 that PD: was in fact unhappy with the line of the ICRSC; felt that it should only have been in solidarity with PD and not with the broad movement; and was not "supporting less than revolutionary programmes." PD was disassociating from ICRSC (Later, in a document containing PD's letter of disassociation, Palmer put all the blame for the rupture on G. Lawless. Many in PD would bracket another name with that of Lawless in this respect - J. Palmer). The Islington candidature was now being abandoned. Palmer went on "The whole basis of Civil Rights had changed. The emphasis had to be on working-class demands... which challenged the capitalist system and raised the demand for a Workers' Republic. Similarly the ICRSC had to change ... we have to be more overtly socialist, in solidarity with PD and not the broad Civil Rights movement."

But, as we have seen, IS had always been in close 'solidarity' with PD "that for much of the troubles IS had feebly tailed after PD and the broad movement, as it often simply follows in the wake of industrial militants "Catholic economism". In the end, PD itself, having become a little clearer, found the ICRSC just a little too right wing! That is, the broad Civil Rights movement was dying, and PD was in a position of having to make general socialist propaganda or die as well by accommodating to the earlier, more primitive PD. IS's leaders helped to hold back its political development. With the Civil Rights polarisation, which should have been foreseen and prepared for by a serious socialist faction within PD, PD found the IS-dominated ICRSC a relic of its past now standing in its way - and simply jumped over its head. That this initiative was taken by anarchists only shows the still-primitive level of PD, and the febleness and lack of organised political struggle by the IS supporters within PD.

The ICRSC had always been a blatant IS front; But it never put policies left of NICRA. There was in fact no legitimate political reason for a separate campaign. SW rarely went nearer to a socialist analysis (certainly not before August) than did the ICRSC. Then, in panic at PD's repudiation, Palmer & co. moved to the opposite extreme and accepted the demand that ICRSC should be in specific solidarity with PD only. Such a sudden switch within a campaign built on a broad Catholic/Liberal/Civil-Rights basis can only speed up the decline and demise of ICRSC. The new 12-point programme is more likely to be an ironic obituary notice commenting on the missed chances of the past than a birth certificate for a newly regenerated solidarity movement.

IS's relation to PD is cloudy to say the least. For a start, IS's supporters in PD represent the past that IS has been trying to shed: most of the time in the last year these people have had little in common with Marxism, as far, anyway, as their public

political actions are concerned. They did behave as idealistic, activist champions of the oppressed Catholics - and while this is to their credit, it is not the same thing. They had no analysis of the Irish situation as a whole. They have and had - and, given their IS background, it couldn't be otherwise - no conception of transitional slogans. They had no conception of building a revolutionary party: they simply liquidated both the Young Socialists in Belfast and the abortive RSA into the mish-mash PD, which included liberals and anarchists - some of them waved the Union Jack (to placate and 'disarm' protestant workers: considering the history of that flag in Ireland, the best equivalent that can be suggested is of a sincere but idiotic socialist in the Sudetenland in 1938 waving the Swastika as a means of getting German workers to listen to him). They simply avoided the national question and the border - when they weren't declaring the six counties sacrosanct this side of 32-county socialism. Ultimately they were borne aloft by a wave that they didn't foresee and probably didn't understand.

IS regarded these people as its faction (naturally not an organised faction...) in Ireland and both influenced them and tenderly 'cared' for them (being influenced in turn by them, as on the self-determination issue). Despite a number of pronouncements by the NC in recognition of its own influence in Ireland, in favour of an attempt to form a united revolutionary socialist organisation in Ireland - the people concerned - Palmer specifically, have always worked against any rapprochement (from which both would probably benefit) between the Trotskyist LWR (which publishes a quarterly magazine and a fortnightly newsletter in Dublin, and runs a number of IS branches throughout the country) and the Marxists in PD.

CONCLUSION

The Trotskyist Tendency in the last year has attempted to fight for a comprehensive and consistent approach, anti-imperialist and socialist: at each turn we have found ourselves at cross-purposes with the leadership of the group in their various unstable zig-zags. We have been hindered by the fact that the National Committee, not to mention the rest of the Group, has been deliberately misled on many occasions regarding the situation on the left in Ireland. Speaking bluntly, many of the reports presented by the regular reporter on Ireland to the NC, have simply been, to give him the benefit of the doubt, misleading.

We were and are, of course, critical of PD, and, in general, are in solidarity with the LWR, and with Eamonn McCann in Derry. (There has been no indication in the reports inside IS that McCann has refused to join the reconstituted PD, nor has it been made generally known, not even to the NC, that McCann's decision on this was quickly followed by a scurrilous and slanderous attack in the Anarchist paper FREEDOM by a leading member of PD.)

We believe that the duty of Marxists in Britain and Ireland in face of the recent events can be summed up thus:

Marxists in Britain:

The first duty was to raise simultaneously the national oppression of Ireland as a whole, and particularly of the Catholics in the North, and to support them in their struggles - i.e. solidarity, in general, with the existing movement on its existing

level of struggle.

At the same time the existence of one million Irish workers in Britain made it necessary to try not only to draw them into activity in solidarity with the struggle, but also to educate them politically in a socialist understanding of the Irish situation, and help to integrate them into the labour movement of the country they are living in.

These two tasks are summed up in the two demands: a) for self-determination; b) for the Workers' Republic; that is, in solidarity with the revolutionary left in Ireland. (The problem for IS was that its supporters or co-thinkers in N. Ireland didn't behave as a revolutionary left in any serious way for most of the time, and in fact IS's actual attempts to be in 'solidarity' with them were usually disastrous!)

Marxists in Ireland:

To make propaganda for the full socialist programme and build a 32-county organisation around it. To join in, and attempt to lead, all the struggles of the working class, including the struggles of the most oppressed section of the working class in N. Ireland - the Catholic workers. (To refuse to join in the Catholic agitation, as per the SLL, and as the Scottish IS comrades would presumably advise, is to become the prisoner of the 'aristocratic' upper layer of the Protestant working class.)

To declare for the national independence of Ireland - for the democratic rights of the mass of the Irish people: to combine propaganda for the Workers' Republic with democratic demands on the national question which are still important in the Irish situation.

To attempt to forge Protestant and Catholic working-class unity - without subordinating the interests of the Catholics to the complacency of the Protestants; Marxists had the duty to either raise or interpret the demands of the Catholics so as to reach, or at least have a chance of reaching, the Protestant workers.

This was probably a real possibility in the early stages before the breach in the class had been widened by the actual campaigns. Transitional demands (see appended Conference resolution) - because they 'expand' (i.e. allow the workers to see the possibility of expanding) the 'given' number/amount of jobs, houses, wealth - might in the initial stages have had a chance of involving Protestant workers. Whereas, as we have pointed out, the bare, unelaborated one-man-one-job approach implied (the press made sure of that) a fairer share-out of the limited number already available, and was naturally seen by the Protestant workers as a threat to what little they already had.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF BRITISH AND IRISH MARXISTS

The correct relationship of Marxists in Britain and Ireland is not just to be pally and helpful at the same time as avoiding undue interference in each other's domain. It is to work out a common programme. It is only when neither has a coherent programme that we get the relationship that existed between the avowedly Marxist leaders of PD and the leadership of IS in the last year. Marxists in the oppressor country are not obliged simply to follow in the wake of their nearest co-thinkers - in

general - in the oppressed country: to think so is simply a fruitless inversion of the old Second International approach. Take the Lenin/Luxemburg dispute on the national questions. In Poland, Luxemburg and the Polish Social Democratic party opposed the demand for an independent Poland. The Bolsheviks accepted their right to have such a position but objected when the Poles tried to get them to remove recognition of the right of Poland and other nationalities to self-determination from the Programme of the Russian party. It would have been a complete abandonment of principle for the Bolsheviks to have tail-ended behind the Poles. Nor was their implied 'solidarity' with the popular Polish demand for independence qualified by the fact that, in general, they had agreement with Luxemburg's party. In every case our demands and stance must flow from an independent assessment grounded in our programme. Marxists in an oppressor country who give unconditional solidarity to those struggling in an oppressed country do not necessarily support - or endorse or base their propaganda on - either the specific ideas of a broad movement or even on the ideas of the nearest equivalent to themselves in the oppressed country (unless there is an International with a coherently worked out programme). We express solidarity with the NLF (National Liberation Front in Vietnam), but do not accept its ideas or programme; yet it would be equally unprincipled either to refuse it solidarity on grounds of disagreeing with its ideas - or to endorse its ideas because we support its anti-imperialist struggles.

Finally, the unfortunate experience of a number of left groups with the Algerian revolution should be sufficient deterrent in this field. The SLL, the SWP-USA (for a while), IS and the USA Shachtmanites all specifically supported the MNA (Algerian National Movement) which had a socialist programme and a long-established proletarian orientation and composition. They were quite hostile to the petit-bourgeois nationalist FLN (National Liberation Front). In the event, all the above-mentioned groups found they were supporting an organisation which, in the course of the struggle, quickly became a stooge of French imperialism, against the FLN which bore the brunt of the struggle.

To sum up: general solidarity with those who struggle; selective, specific solidarity with the left, based not on mimicry, but on an independent analysis and judgement.

Chapter 5: The future

"The decisive element in every situation is the force, permanently organised and pre-ordered over a long period of time, which can be advanced when one judges that the situation is favourable (and it is favourable only to the extent to which such a force exists and is full of fighting ardour); therefore the essential task is that of paying systematic and patient attention to forming and developing this force, rendering it ever more homogeneous, compact, conscious of itself. One sees this in military history and in the care with which at all times armies have been predisposed to begin a war at any moment. The great states have been great precisely because they were at all times prepared to enter effectively into favourable international situations, and these situations were favourable because there was the concrete possibility of effectively entering them." Antonio Gramsci: The Modern Prince

For the last year in N. Ireland there has been ferment - and in the South echoes of it. Many people, mainly young people, have been brought into action on the streets;

Whole areas rose in revolt, beating back the police - and forcing the imperialist state, in alarm, to take control. In the course of this, the leaders of the minority - the Nationalists - were shown up and partly pushed aside. The right Republicans in areas like Belfast lost a lot of their credibility. Even the Church came into sharp conflict with the people of the Falls over getting the barricades down. The national Republican leadership was shown to be simply without a policy; the NILP an irrelevance.

These were conditions where revolutionary socialists could have expected to make big gains. Particularly since people calling themselves revolutionary socialists spearheaded the militant wing of the Civil Rights movement. And in Derry, Eamonn McCann built up a real support amongst the people of the Bogside.

Yet at the end of a year, with the struggle rapidly losing heat, the result is a reorganised PD, very unclear in its aims though generally socialist, with 200 nominal members in N.I., almost no cadres, a tremendously low level of politics and an organisation whose looseness is best expressed in the fact that it has no subscription payments from its members! Its prospects of becoming a national organisation - despite claims that it is now a 32-county organisation - are slight to say the least. Not having a base in Derry, it is not even a six-county organisation in a serious sense. The suggestion, until recently common in IS, that PD will gradually evolve into a more serious revolutionary organisation, (after the recent 'model' of IS) has now been abandoned even by those IS leaders who were most given to illusions on PD, and illusions too on how revolutionary cadre organisations are built anyway. In Derry PD is non-existent; McCann, believing a much clearer revolutionary organisation than PD is needed, is not in the 'new' PD. The Derry YS is small; most of the radicalised youth in the area are republicans (revolutionary socialist republicans). In the South the LWR has grown slightly, despite being cut off geographically from the main scene of action; but it remains a strictly southern Irish organisation.

These are very meagre results for revolutionary socialism from the gigantic events of the last year, The forces of revolutionary socialism could reasonably have been expected to do far better. The reason they didn't is that they are fragmented - without a national organisation, programme, nor even a paper. If, at the beginning of last year, even the embryo of a serious organisation had existed, with a national presence and a national paper, it could have had an immensely more powerful effect on events. It could have co-ordinated the work, North and South. Above all, while working in broader groups like PD, the LP etc. it could have recruited many of the revolutionary youth who went to the republicans by default (particularly in Derry) .

It is no accident that the revolutionary left is fragmented. Two years ago many of the strands were in the old Irish Workers' Group (IWG), which had a monthly agitational paper and a quarterly discussion journal (Workers' Republic, still produced by the LWR). But the IWG broke into fragments. It would be very instructive to discuss in detail why it did, and particularly the major responsibility of two of IS's leaders for the break- up. We had planned to have a section of this pamphlet on the IWG. But to do so would be to re-open old sores. It would be instructive " but, as we see it, the major task is to assist a revolutionary socialist regroupment in Ireland. To assist in bringing about a rapprochement between the LWR, the Marxists in PD, the Derry grouping around McCann and as many revolutionary socialist republicans as we can possibly involve. For this reason, we

omit the planned section on the IWG.

IS can play a major role in bringing together the various people and grouplets with which it has contact and influence in Ireland. For our part (the Trotskyist Tendency) we fought in the IWG for the sort of serious group which might have played a serious role in the last year's struggles. We did not want a split, nor did we want (as Lawless put about) the expulsion of the northern comrades. Perhaps, with the removal from the scene of Lawless, it will be possible to bring some of the fragments together again. This will be hard, uphill work. There is a great deal of bitterness remaining from the past. There are of course political differences. Moreover, unity is more difficult to achieve in the ebb tide of a movement. Yet the attempt must be made.

At the December IS NC meeting a resolution (moved by a Trotskyist Tendency member) was passed on this question:

"That IS use its influence towards the formation of a revolutionary socialist alliance to work within broad movements in Ireland. That IS resolves to press for schools, meetings, discussion groups in Ireland and the dissemination of theoretical material. That a written statement on the united Irish revolutionary organisation be produced, for discussion at the next NC. When ready, it would be circulated among Irish groups and contacts."

The point is that IS has finally realised that a major cause of the vacillating of the last year has been the absence of a reliable and consistent all-Ireland revolutionary group to work in solidarity with. If a serious and honest attempt is made to assist the formation of such a group then big gains can still be made.

In the past, resolutions in IS in favour of such Irish unity have not been carried out in the most loyal fashion by those entrusted with the task! This time a real effort at unity must be demanded by the IS members. There must be no more manoeuvring behind the scenes.

In our opinion all the groups bear various degrees of responsibility for the missed opportunities of the past year. But recrimination is beside the point. The lessons will have to be thrashed out in a comradely spirit. The basic lesson is that various mistakes, blunders and capitulations to regional pressures arose because of an absence of an organisation to collectively guide and correct the comrades involved.

The point of the Gramsci quote above has been shown negatively in the past year in Ireland. Learning from this we, insofar as we have any influence, must apply it positively. We must aid, in every way possible, the Irish revolutionary socialists, so that they will be in a position not to miss the next favourable opportunity.

Appendix 1: TROTSKYIST TENDENCY RESOLUTION ON IRELAND SUBMITTED TO THE SEPTEMBER 1969 INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS CONFERENCE

This Conference considers that the policy and slogans of the EC, on Ireland and on solidarity work in Britain, have been inadequate and incoherent, being neither seriously anti-Imperialist nor in any sense socialist.

The Group has not campaigned for socialist understanding amongst the Irish workers it has reached in Britain. It has confined itself first to pseudo-nationalist demands, and now to the liberal-populist line of PD and the broad front ICRSC and B. Devlin.

It has not, though formally making the demand for self-determination, campaigned for a united Ireland, or even against the present artificial partition, imposed by imperialist violence, which specifically denies self-determination - and, of course, 'civil rights' - to its Nationalist citizens (numbering one third of the total 6-Co. population) who never wanted to be part of the state in the first place.

On the contrary, taking its cue from its N.I. supporters, the leadership, by its line of declaring, in the manner of sectarian socialists, that the existing border is sacrosanct this side of workers' power, have specifically denied the right of self-determination.

To be more than an empty phrase, self-determination means " now, for the suppressed

one-third, even under capitalism.

The policy of IS has been a failure to fulfil the elementary duty of revolutionaries in the Imperialist state to expose and challenge - openly and seriously - the whole imperialist establishment in Ireland. On the grounds that they didn't want to dictate socialism to the struggle in Ireland, the leadership shirked advocating the Workers' Republic even amongst the million Irish workers in this country. And under pressure of their supporters in N.I. (whose 'Civil Rights' campaign necessarily confined them to Catholic workers, and who then attempted to compensate for their one-sidedness by bowing to the status quo of the 6 Co. Unionist state) they shirked seriously questioning the imperialist-imposed border. The IS leadership fell between two stools into a shallow liberalism - and this has been the main political level of our Irish work.

This policy has flowed from failure at the outset to make a comprehensive, all-sided Marxist analysis, and to elaborate a programme taking into account all the complexities of the whole Irish situation and the relationship of British socialists to it. Instead of this Marxist method, the leadership has gone in for a series of one-sided improvisations based on momentary and changing impressions, trimming between the various groups and tendencies.

In view of this, Conference declares that:

- 1) The NC must prepare an analysis of the Irish situation as a whole, taking into account all its facets including the remnants of the national question and its relationship to the fight for working-class unity and socialism both within the 6 Cos. and in Ireland as a whole.
- 2) We must campaign in Britain as IS (as distinct from any broad-front group we may be in or may initiate) among Irish workers for a socialist consciousness - i.e. for the workers' republic. Insofar as the liberal-populist 'programme' of PD is used by IS, it must be broken down into transitional-type demands. Thus "One Man, One Job" becomes "Trade Unionists take over closing factories; re-open closed

factories". "One Man, One House" becomes "Take over the building industry under workers' control; Committees of trade unionists to allocate houses." The two slogans link through the demand to create jobs by a crash programme of house building, etc. etc. etc. Within the broad front movement, IS must advocate this sort of interpretation of the PD programme.

3) IS must fulfil the elementary duty of British socialists and challenge the imperialist-enforced partition which underlies the current N.I situation. Any declaration that "bourgeois unity is undesirable" is capitulation to Orange pressure (or to pressure of such capitulators). In the guise of anti-bourgeois nationalist militant socialism it is actually an anti-Marxist refusal to fight for the democratic rights of the majority of the Irish people.

4) In the tragically possible event of a communal eruption in N.I., IS must raise the demand for the break-up of the 6 counties and the secession of the Nationalist areas to the Republic. Without this policy, IS and its supporters will be reduced to merely preaching peace (within an artificial sub-state specially designed to ensure there would be little chance of class unity either within its borders or in Ireland as a whole) while the split and headless working class makes war on itself. In principle, IS must declare for a united Ireland - instead of the present situation of, de facto, declaring for the given imperialist division. While repudiating the present partition, and even if we accept that a new partition into 'pure Green' and 'pure Orange' states would be preferable (because more likely to encourage working-class consciousness and unity than the alternative of a united Ireland with the Orange population as a coerced minority), we must be clear that an exclusively Orange state is probably impossible.

It would be as little viable now as in 1920. Therefore, if the Orange state minus the Catholic areas is not viable - then let it perish. We call for guaranteed rights, and if necessary autonomy, for the Protestant areas within a united 32-county Ireland. Instead of demanding withdrawal of "subsidies", IS should demand the payment of indemnities by British Imperialism to such a United Ireland.

A United Ireland would bring immense benefits - even under capitalism - and create the possibility of real working-class unity in struggle against the bosses, through which the workers' republic will be attained. The idea that because Britain probably now wants a united Ireland we must be indifferent or hostile to it, is extremely short-sighted, and ignores the role of partition in destroying the revolutionary potential of the Irish working class for the last 50 years. This demand, raised in the course of struggle would, anyway, have a totally different effect from a controlled unification brought about by bourgeois deals: its effect would be as shattering to the southern establishment as to the Unionist one. In a situation of deepening working-class division and conflict, this demand could be the only way for the movement to advance.

5) Conference declares that the policy of certain people in Northern Ireland of continuing militant civil rights - i.e. Catholic-orientated - demonstrations, with inevitable clashes and the serious possibility of pogroms, when combined with the declaration that the 6 Cos. is sacrosanct this side of socialism, is gross adventurism. In the event of communal violence, this combination would mean accepting the 6 counties as a religious-sectarian bear pit.

6) IS must not countenance or endorse or remain uncritical in face of such a policy by its supporters in N.I. SW must not remain silent in future in face of calls for British troops, waving of Union Jacks, and other ignorant blunderings by its N.I. supporters,

7) IS, recognising its own influence in Ireland, must bring all efforts to bear, including, if necessary, financial support and active help in Britain, to aid genuine revolutionary Irish socialists, and to encourage the establishment of an all-Ireland revolutionary organisation which fights for a Marxist programme north and south of the border, whether within PD, the Labour Parties or the Young Socialists. Specifically, such an organisation, to gain the fraternal support of IS, must have a Marxist approach to the national question - repudiating both Northern Unionism and southern chauvinism. As part of this policy, IS must establish fraternal relations with the Trotskyist LEAGUE FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC, and with the hundreds of youth in the revolutionary Young Socialists which has grown up around it during the last year.

Appendix 2

We have reproduced below Marks' article so that comrades may check whether or not we have misquoted.

N. IRELAND: FINE SLOGANS AND GRIM REALITY

By Stephen Marks

(Subhead: THE CONTRADICTIONARY ROLE OF BRITISH TROOPS GIVES CATHOLIC WORKERS TIME TO ARM AGAINST FURTHER ORANGE ATTACKS.)

Recent events in Northern Ireland have seen a strange reversal of traditional attitudes. Irish nationalists and republicans behind the barricades who have been brought up on the history of Britain's bloody record in Ireland, expressed relief when the arrival of British troops gave them a breathing space from the threatened pogroms of Paisleyite armed mobs. And fanatically loyalist and Union-Jack-waving Orange bigots massing last Sunday for new pogroms raised the slogan "British troops out! B-Specials in!" as the soldiers stood between them and their victims behind the barricades. How has this odd turn-about come to pass and what should the attitude to it be of those who oppose the whole presence of British imperialism in Ireland in any form? As Socialist Worker has always pointed out, it is British imperialism which lies at the root of the present crisis, by imposing the partition of 1921, by resting a semi-fascist Orange police state in the 6 counties which denied the oppressed Catholics the most basic rights, and by keeping whole areas of the 6 Cos. in misery. And British troops in the occupied area of Ireland, as anywhere else, are there in the interests of British imperialism and for no other reason. But what are those interests? It is precisely because there are conflicts among the supporters of those interests that the troops are there today between the barricades and the Orange gangs. And those conflicts are about whether to maintain British interests in the old way or in a new way. The old way was that established in 1921, when the 26 counties were allowed their 'independence' under a tame middle-class leadership, while Britain kept the North Eastern counties, with their industries geared to the British market. There Britain still ruled directly by

dividing the working class on religious lines and arming the Protestants against the Catholics under the leadership of the Orange bosses. The Ulster statelet is the Orange Order in arms, but over the years there were changes. Today Ulster's traditional industries of shipbuilding and textiles are declining, and Britain has more money invested in the South than in the North. The Ulster police state is an embarrassment and an obstacle to their ultimate goal a - united capitalist Ireland subject as a whole to the domination of British capital, possibly in the context of the common market. And a necessary prelude to this was to 'liberalise' the Ulster statelet to facilitate closer co-operation with the Dublin regime. These cosy prospects were interrupted by two factors. First, a new generation in Ulster, no longer prepared to remain on its knees, and with the example of the civil rights struggle in the U.S.A, the May events in France and the protracted heroism of the peasants of Vietnam before it, began to stand up for its rights. The 'reforming' unionists hoped to buy this struggle off by concession to its moderate leaders, but the pace was too slow and unconvincing to hold off the explosion. But the Union right-wing saw these developments as a threat. A Westminster-Dublin deal would leave the Orange Order with no reason for existence and the civil rights movement posed a threat that could not be met so easily in the old way, with cries of 'Fenians and I.R.A.' and a few quick blows with the RUC baton. Now the eyes of the world were on Ulster. The result was the Paisleyite backlash. That is why Irish workers demanding their rights fought back last year and last month against the threat of pogrom, and why the barricades went up in Derry and in Belfast. The situation had got out of hand and 'order' could only be restored by mass mobilisation of the B-specials and their use against the barricades. In other words civil war. Britain may have tolerated this in the 1920s when the Ulster colons were relied on by Britain but today the implications were too serious and the troops went in to freeze the situation and allow Callaghan and the Westminster cabinet a breathing space. Both Paisleyites and the army were opposed to the interests of the Catholic workers. But Paisleyites and the B-men stand for attacking them now when they are defenceless. At the time the British troops arrived, only a handful of weapons stood between the defenders of the barricades and certain death at the hands of the Paisleyites. The British troops, however, stand for the strategy of British capital as a whole, as opposed to the local one-time representatives. Their strategy is to defuse the situation by bringing together the 'moderates' from both sides while leaving the basic representative structure untouched. In the course of doing this they must freeze the situation and will act against anyone who wishes to change it. This means they may well move against the barricades if their defenders refuse the appeals of the moderate leaders to take them down, though they may also simply wait until the men behind the barricades disperse through disillusionment. But in the short term, their 'freezing' role means they stand between the barricades and the Orange lynch mobs. To identify the two is therefore quite false. To demand, 'disarm the B-specials! Withdraw British troops.' is to equate the two and to say that the presence or absence of British troops in the existing situation makes no difference to the struggle. Defenceless Catholics face armed mobs, with the certainty of new clashes ahead. In this situation, the presence of the troops, as a result of Paisleyite colons and Westminster has the effect of buying time, in which the defenders of the barricades can; arm to defend themselves, and also, by opposing attempts by 'Moderates' to weaken the defence, rearm politically and turn military defence into a political offensive. To fail to take advantage of this temporary contradiction is the extreme of stupidity. Of course, this very situation increases the need to expose,

on every occasion, through propaganda and discussion, the role the British troops are playing, and the side on which they must ultimately come down. But those who conclude that raising the demand for withdrawal in the present situation must therefore follow do not understand the difference between propaganda and agitation and between strategy and tactics. Marxism is not an alternative description of the world but a guide to action. And slogans are not just an expression of the fine feeling of those who utter them, nor even a stylistic device of the summing-up of a political argument. For those involved in a struggle they are calls to action. To say the immediate enemy in Ulster is the British troops is incorrect. At the present time it is the Paisleyites who threaten murder and, in particular, the physical elimination of those in whose hands lie the key to any future socialist strategy for Ireland. To prevent illusion in the role of the troops, and to prepare for a future turn in the situation when the demolition of the barricades may be needed in the interests of British capital itself, and not merely of its local retainers, socialists must constantly explain the role of the troops, as Socialist Worker has done. But those who would raise the demand for withdrawal now must explain how they would implement that demand if they were behind the barricades in Derry or Belfast. Would they fire on the troops now, and encourage others to do the same? If so, they would merely add their bullets to those of the Paisleyites and provoke an immediate clash in a situation which would lead to a massacre. But if they would not take this responsibility on themselves they would presumably be reduced to getting the troops out by persuasion - a difficult task! To combine a demand for withdrawal with a demand for the arming of Catholic workers is to solve the problem only at the level of the mounting of slogans. In real life, the two demands are in contradiction if both raised at the present time, for the arming of the Catholics is dependent on the precarious breathing space the presence of the troops provides. But if the demand for withdrawal in the present situation does not flow from a false evaluation of the relation of forces, it can only mean one of two things:

either the conscious advocacy of a massacre now, presumably as a means of raising the level of struggle (a demand we would invite the supporters to raise behind the barricades);

or else it could be justified with the excuse that raising the slogan will not lead to the departure of the troops and therefore we need not reckon with the consequences. On this we need only say those who do not take their own slogans seriously cannot expect others to do so.

In the present situation, then, time is of the essence. If a new pogrom does come, Catholic workers in the north must appeal to southern workers to help them by occupying British-owned factories and farms as hostages for the freedom of the north, and thus by transforming a national struggle in the north into a class struggle in the south, change the form in which the question of a united Ireland is posed to the Protestant workers of Belfast. For us the purpose of a slogan is as a guide to action and not to save the souls of those who utter them. We are concerned to save the lives of the oppressed and heroic defenders of the barricades so that, in the time given them by the contradictions between Paisleyism and British capital, they can rearm themselves physically and politically and at least place on the political map the demand for the only real solution: a united workers' republic.

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