

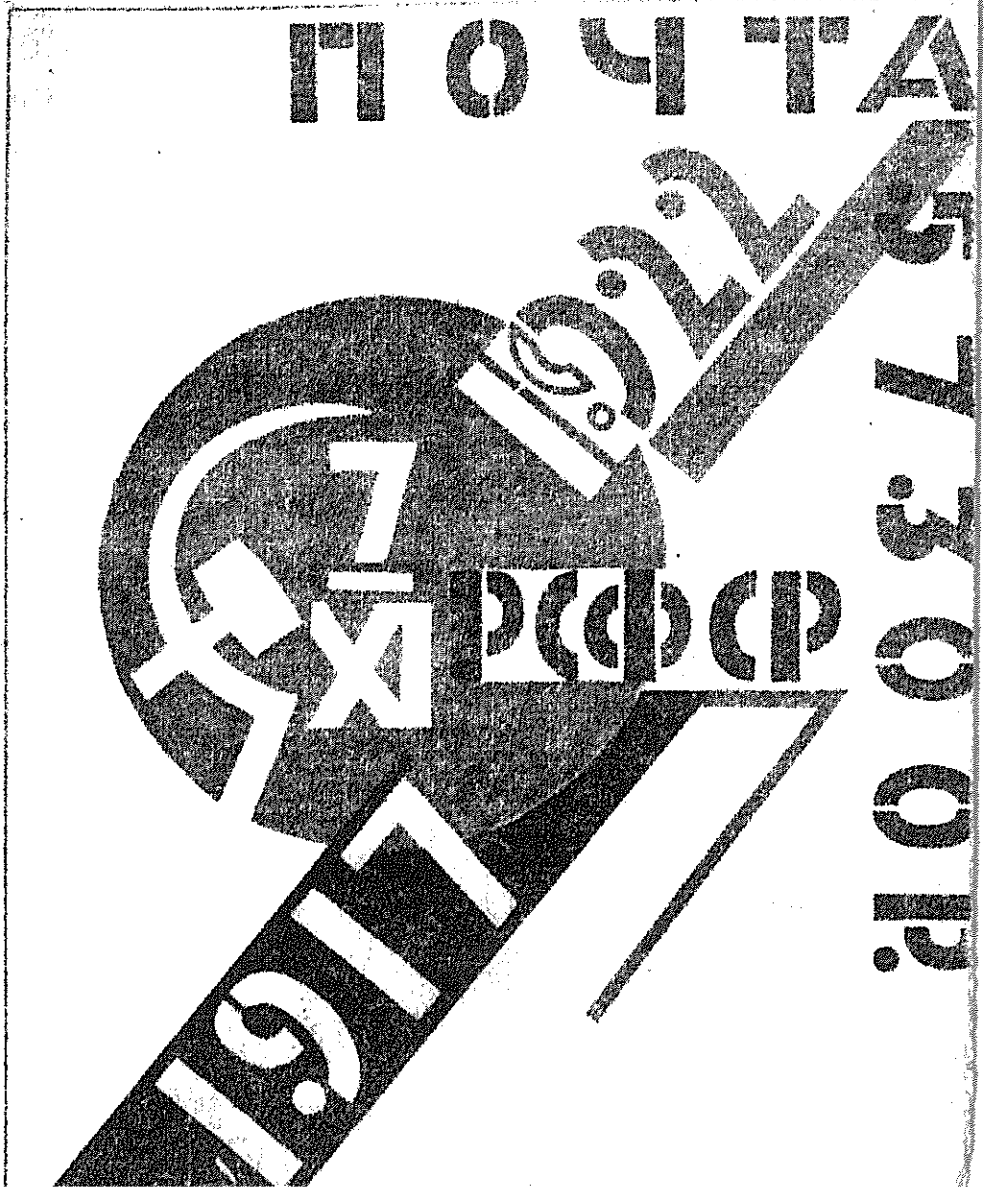
# THE WORKERS REPUBLIC

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# THE WORKERS REPUBLIC

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## EDITORIALS

### WHY WE PUBLISH THE WORKERS REPUBLIC

Engels pointed out that the class struggle takes place not only on the fronts of Trade Unionism and politics -- but also on the front of ideology. Revolutionaries cannot ignore this front on pain of being outflanked. The traditional ideology of a given society, organised through the schools and the church, is a 'material'

force in binding the masses to the ruling class, in cementing over the crevices of conflicting interest; the ruling class's intellectual monopoly, with its churches, information and education systems, is an irreplaceable weapon in its continual struggle to keep the masses in subjection, to deprive them of the consciousness necessary to take advantage of their numbers and put an end to capitalism.

#### IDEOLOGY AND CLASS SOCIETY

'Material conflicts clothe themselves in ideological garb'. Ideological armament is necessary before action for political ends - but its degree of clarity varies enormously: the English bourgeoisie under Cromwell made their revolution bending the texts of the Bible into weapons in their struggle to lay the basis for a bourgeois state. The French bourgeoisie expressed their interests in the idealised service of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity - though these interests demanded only formal equality, which is absolutely different. No matter if the bourgeois revolution did not clearly see what it was doing. The rising bourgeoisie had already a large measure of economic power, accumulated wealth, independent culture and powerful connections - they could afford to blunder and grope their way empirically to full control.

But the working class remains a slave class up to the point of taking power; the objective conditions for its assumption of power - the growth and concentration of the means of production, the contradictions in capitalism - ripen while the aspirant ruling class is still in slavery. The proletariat can only free itself economically by taking power first politically, in reverse order to the bourgeois development. Because of the intricacy of its tasks, and its lack of wealth, culture or leisure under capitalism, the initial struggle for workers' power is a struggle against all forms of bourgeois ideology, and for the scientific world outlook - Marxism.

#### MARXISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

The proletariat under capitalism, without its own independent culture, is not a blank page - inevitably it is influenced by the ideas of the ruling class. The British Labour Party demonstrates this: 60 and more years of 'successful' political activity, on the basis of bourgeois ideas and conceptions, of socialist aspirations without clarity on the nature of the state and capitalist society in general, of Clause IV mixed up with patriotism, gradualism and Christian socialism, have resulted in .... the present Labour Government; i.e. the main instrument of entrenched capitalism in controlling the working class and canalising its aspirations against its own interests. The British working class - and the Irish - through a peculiar combin-

ation of historical circumstances, was utterly defeated ideologically -- and this has conditioned everything else. By contrast, the real groundwork of Bolshevism was the merciless battle for Marxist theoretical clarity waged by Lenin from the first days, on this foundation building the actual party structure as a living organic unit combining the different aspect of the class struggle in a strategy of struggle for power.

The battle on this front, to break the hold of the ideas, methods of thinking and outlook which express and sanctify the interests of capitalism - this is the prerequisite of revolutionary politics. Where this foundation is lacking no sharp revolutionary weapon of the working class will be forged, no Bolshevik combat party will be built. In the whole history of the labour movement those who were indifferent to revolutionary theory almost invariably wound up not only indifferent, but hostile, to revolutionary practice. This is by no means accidental; no more than was the determined combativity of Lenin towards all bending under bourgeois ideology, even in apparently obscure points of philosophy. When he said that "No revolutionary theory means no revolutionary practice" he was defining the belief that had guided his political activities. Our task is to sharpen the consciousness of its class interests in the proletariat; to strive for that irreplaceable clarity of revolutionary thought, necessarily developed in war with the ideas of the enemy class, essential to effective political action by the proletariat for its own programme.

#### THE ROLE OF THE WORKERS' REPUBLIC

These considerations show us what the role of THE WORKERS' REPUBLIC must be. The specifications are high ones, and it would be preposterous to pretend that we as yet measure up to them. But for Marxists to formulate the demands placed upon us by the objective needs of our class is to announce our determination to live up to them. The fight to develop Workers' Republic is essentially the fight to develop and clarify our understanding of the tasks of the Irish Workers' Group in the struggle for Connolly's Workers' Republic.

THE WORKERS' REPUBLIC must forge that Marxist class consciousness necessary to our task of assembling forces to fight for workers' power. It will attempt to cover the world struggles of our class, and also the struggles of our direct allies, the British workers. We will try to build up its circulation in Britain as part of the work of co-ordinating the common struggle: there is a need in the British labour movement for a paper basing itself on the programme of Bolshevism and at the same time rejecting the one-sided caricatures of British 'Trotskyism' - the irrational super-activists on the one hand and the contemplative scholastics on the other.

WORKERS' REPUBLIC will provide a forum for analysis of events, other tendencies in the labour movement, history and ideas. Above all we want to encourage discussion and controversy. Only on the basis of

the most free and comprehensive discussion can we achieve real clarity of ideas - and unanimity in action. We repudiate all dogmatism and sectarianism: but we do not regard concern for precision and clarity of ideas as sectarianism. Our attitude to other Marxist groups and publications is one of seeking points of unity against the common enemy. But at the same time Bolshevik seriousness demands a clear and open discussion of issues and points of difference - that co-operation must be deliberate and conscious; that differences must be loyally put to the test of experience, not buried or hushed up. For this reason we will attempt, seriously, to conduct a dialogue with those Marxist groups with which we differ.

Today there are many people in Ireland and England coming to revolutionary politics: we appeal for your support. Develop WORKERS' REPUBLIC - sell it - contribute to it. For our part we will make a serious effort over the coming months to improve its coverage, range, level and standard of production. We have changed the name because WORKERS' REPUBLIC expresses clearly what we stand for. We also intend to try and bring it out bi-monthly from now on. This will depend on selling enough in the time to make it pay for itself. If we succeed in doing that - with the help of our readers - the next issue will appear at the beginning of April.

This is the discussion magazine of those who stand for the Workers' Socialist Republic. Help us to develop it.

## 2. MACAONGHUSA

The sudden, bureaucratic expulsion of Proinsias MacAonghusa by the AC of the Irish Labour Party, without charge, trial, right of appeal or defence, is a shocking comment on the state of the LP. If a top-brass bureaucrat, Chairman of the Standing Orders Ctee, and a recent Vice Chairman of the Party can be so unceremoniously dismissed, what a lot that tells us about the internal life of the Party as it affects the rank and file.

To clear up any confusion, the issue is not MacAonghusa. The issue is Party democracy. What one thinks of MacAonghusa - and to tell the truth we think very little of him - is irrelevant. What is very relevant is the state of affairs where the Parliamentary careerists have the right of summary execution on anyone who displeases them. MacAonghusa is not the first victim - but it is beginning to look as if he might be the spark that turns the heat of protest on the amateur totalitarians of the LP. The call has already gone out for an emergency Conference. Socialists in the

Party must strive to raise this fight from a bureaucrats' brawl (in which all sorts of 'deals' can be cooked up) to the level of a principled fight for a democratic constitution, with rights of members and leadership clearly defined, which guarantees full internal freedom of discussion - and above all strictly limits the power of the AC by subordinating that body to a full supervision by the party. The door of the LP must be prized open again for MacAonghusa - to stop it being closed on others. If he is to be tried let him be charged before the whole party - openly and with full right of defence and appeal.

MacAonghusa is a demagogue, who joined a badly fossilised party and decided it needed a revived *raison d'être* to attract support and inspire the faithful. In the petrified forest of Irish politics, dominated by secondary issues 50 years old, he too reached back and disinterred slogans from labour's socialist past - including the call for a Workers' Republic. Burnishing up the old phrases, he had some impact; knowing there was little prospect, for a long time to come, of being seriously faced with his own words, he felt free to be bold with the demagogy. For that was all it was - his conceptions remain 100% social-democratic, with not a hint of Marxist understanding of the revolutionary means of attaining the Workers' Republic (and there are no other means). If there was any doubt, his objectives are clearly revealed in his choice of methods.

Serious socialists in a party such as the Irish LP have no option but to fight for a reorganisation from the ground up, as part of a rank and file movement also organised against the bureaucrats in the Unions: anything else is unserious. MacAonghusa instead tried to hang his multicoloured bunting from the old LP tree trunk; he became advisor to the leader of the parliamentary clique, and by his company and his methods - and not by his phrases - shall he be judged.

But the dominant conservatives failed to see the advantages of his demagogy, and the resulting conflict generated personal antagonisms and abuse. That the stagnant waters in the Labour rooms in Leinster House resented being disturbed by the reverberations, and rose up to 'put him out', only proves that there is not much scope for fake-lefts like Barbara Castle, Greenwood and (the younger) Harold Wilson under the roof of Tully and Davidson.

**WORKERS' REPUBLIC** calls upon all its supporters to fight for the reinstatement of MacAonghusa ... without illusions in the man himself. We are aware that in defending his democratic rights we are advocating for him what he denied to others. Queens University Labour Group in defending him, yet felt the need to disassociate from his "totalitarian pronouncements on the Language Freedom Movement". And within the LP he has witch-hunted and expelled many on behalf of those who now expell him. When one of the editors of this magazine was threatened with expulsion from the British LP, MacAonghusa's reaction was: "if it was over here we'd expel you with one meeting of the A.C. - no appeals, no nothing". It is precisely those who detest this who must now organise the fight for democracy in the Labour Party.

# CHINA IN TURMOIL

by Jackie Cheary

Not so long ago, reports were circulating that Chairman Mao was possibly dead, or at least in very bad health - at any rate, he hadn't been seen in public for months. Then suddenly last August he went for a much publicised swim in the Yangtse and Lin Piao was announced as his successor. These curious events have been almost forgotten in the loud clamour of the 'Cultural Revolution' and, over here, the even louder clamour of hit-and-run speculation. And yet they were the surface showings of the key to all the recent events.

Although the cult of Mao is nothing new in China, the "Red sun in the hearts of the peoples of the world" has never exercised absolute control. Previously there seems to have been sufficient agreement among the top leadership of the CPC to allow for a sharing out of power; Chou En-lai, for example, controls the police and security services, with an organisation of between 300,000 and 2 million men. Differences in the past have led to two purges between 1955 and 1958. But in November 1965 the CC split into two well defined factions; the opposition to Mao, led by Liu Shao-chi with the Mayor of Peking, Peng Chen, was so strong that Mao left his base in Peking, and it was July 28th 1966 before he could return with impunity.

He had tried to return in May, two weeks after sending PLA troops to occupy Peng Chen's Municipality Party Headquarters. But he left the train before it reached Peking, hearing that Peng Chen was still in control there -- having set up temporary HQ at his home, guarded by municipal police. By July, matters were moving to a showdown. The Mao/Lin faction had dismissed Peng Chen (on June 3rd), taken over the PEOPLES DAILY, HSIHUA NEWS AGENCY and RADIO PEKING, and begun to hot up the propaganda campaign of the Cultural Revolution. Against this, the Liu faction in June won over Party Secretary Teng Hsiao-ping, and demanded an emergency CC meeting. By mid-July Peng Chen had collected up 51 members and 35 alternates (ranging from moderates like Liu Shao-chi to hard core anti-Maoists like Peng himself) from all over China, and the meeting, against Mao's orders, was scheduled for the 21st. On the 18th Lin moved to prevent the meeting, bringing troops into the suburbs of Peking and arresting Lo Jui-ching, Army Chief of Staff, whose Shansi troops were already moving towards Peking to confront Lin's troops. This confrontation was only narrowly averted, enabling Lin to regain control in Peking. Meanwhile, after this demonstration of who had the gun, out of which <sup>power</sup> still grows in China, Teng Hsiao-ping changed sides and called off the CC meeting until Mao arrived on the 28th, bringing his CC members to the capital in 4 jets. Thus Mao narrowly escaped being deposed by the CC, and was on the road to political recovery. At this time he went for his far-famed swim; and at the 11th Plenum of the CC, which began on August 8th, Lin was made Heir Apparent.

But though he had avoided an outright defeat, Mao was not secure. Liu Shao-chi, though demoted to 7th place in the hierarchy, had the support of the majority of the Party at all levels who were resisting Mao's policy of a new economic adventure. There could be no return to the previous co-existence within the Party; Mao would either push forward to be the one and only "Great Leader, Great Helmsman, Great Teacher" etc or he would be under constant threat of dismissal or reduction to a powerless figure-head. Of the two levers of power, the Army and the Party, he had effective control of the former, and could just hold his own in the latter. In addition, he had control of the propaganda media. But in order to gain effective control of the Party

too, he could neither purge all his too numerous <sup>opponents</sup> nor take over the Party by force. Now the Red Guards came forward, 22 million youth -- 95% students, mostly high school -- as an intermediary between the Army and the Party; a whip against the lagging functionaries and a broom for deadwood. They were billeted and fed under the direction of the P.L.A. and served to give massive force to the propaganda machine, singling out members of the anti-Mao Faction for their attacks with the aim of dragooning the rest. They rampaged through China, their fervour mixed in with a nihilistic superstitious destructiveness towards remnants of past culture.\* By September they had taken over the YCL and dismissed its CC. The situation has been partly obscured by the fact that the real issues and differences have been discussed rationally only in secret and by the top bureaucrats, and nowhere stated openly; all statements in the open have been confined to veiled references in a peculiar irrational jargon. All has been ritual, blind man's buff, shadow-boxing. What does clearly emerge is the attempt to establish Mao as the supreme arbiter through a crude deification, where his "thought" is given the power of magic, whose brilliance "illuminates the whole world". Through study of it surgeons are said to treat 90% burns successfully, peasants learn of the contradictions between dry and wet soil; and table-tennis champions recommend it as an aid to sizing up opponents.

WHAT DOES THE MASS ACTIVITY SIGNIFY ?

To deny the mobilisation of the masses of youth would be useless - though organised by the PLA, with their swirling movement within "official" channels, there is still a semblance of discussion and initiative (even if far removed from proletarian democracy), different factions appeared at one stage, the 'wrong' leaders were attacked, etc. Does this mean that a section of the <sup>old</sup> bureaucracy has declared war on bureaucracy and is mobilising the masses to fight it? This is the view taken by the most unexpected people. For example, Mike Banda, Editor of the Newsletter, takes time off from writing denunciations of the 'capitalist' Castro to write eulogies of Mao and Lin Piao, because they have talked about opposing bureaucracy and spoken of the Paris Commune. But Stalin too attacked bureaucracy - this talk tells us nothing. The state of the mass activity, the degree of its control by the army, its consciousness, China's material level, and the prospects before the masses cannot be ignored so easily. Merely to tail after a section of the bureaucracy is not going to help the Chinese Revolution - but it is going to confuse workers in our own movement.

It would be a piece of arrogant sectarianism to equate without more ado people like Mao, Chou and Lin, who have led a great revolution whose benefits to the Chinese masses are great, with the degenerate butcher Stalin -- but it would be even more unforgivable to ignore material conditions: in relation to the Soviet Union Trotsky pointed out that in conditions of generalised want all the "old crap" -- ie privileged domination of the masses by a minority and everything that goes with it -- would reappear. In China 'generalised want' is at a level never reached by Russia - and the "old crap" never disappeared. But the Chinese Stalinists, occupying a social position similar to the bureaucracy in Russia, are less afraid of the masses. Whereas Stalin suppressed them, they genuinely led the peasants. The mass enthusiasm of the Red Guards armed with their little red magic Mao-books is genuine, and quite alien to Russian Stalinism. Their egalitarianism, in its inevitable disappointment, has more in common with the Jacobins than the cowed masses under Stalin.

Whereas Stalin rose on the grave of the most profound revolution of the workers and on the corpse of the most highly conscious and democratic revolutionary organisation

\* See article on Bolshevik attitude, p.15.



in history - the Bolshevik Party - Mao rose without the masses of the proletariat. After the suppression of the CPC as a proletarian organisation in 1927 there had been no working class democracy, no tradition of open discussion, no self-reliant working class, no Marxist clarity. There was, from the beginning, a declassed peasant army organised in the most backward areas of China, without any contact until 1948 with the main cities. When the peasant armies reached the towns, the workers did not participate - and the Stalinists took care they didn't. The ready-made bureaucracy slotted into the ready-made Kuomintang state machine and settled down to a bonapartist manipulation of the 'contradictions in the people' - in their own words, "taking into account both public and private interests and ... benefiting both labour and capital". It was a state which did not have to degenerate - for it was deformed at birth.

For the Maoists, as long as they can keep a tight hold of it, mass activity and enthusiasm serves a purpose. The bureaucracy finds it a good deal easier to control the masses, either by force (there are reputed to be 10 million in labour and concentration camps) or by manipulation, than to escape the grip of the material level of China. Despite the elements of advanced technology grafted on, the material level is still pre-capitalist, with labour as the main source of energy. In this situation, they need to generate enthusiasm and excitement in the masses to spur them on to exceptional economic efforts.

#### POLICY OF THE OPPOSITIONS

The conflict within the bureaucracy centres on economic policy. At its simplest the division is on whether to build up slowly or to try to fly. The anti-Maoists resist a new economic forced march like the Great Leap Forward of 1958/61. They want some balance in the economy, recognition of objective limitations, long term planning, a continuation of steady development, incentives for the masses as opposed to Mao's 'voluntarism' -- for which they have <sup>been</sup> denounced as "economists"; they want an end to disruptions like the GLF, which was partly responsible for the abandonment of the 2nd. Five year plan in 1961 after 3 years. Mao favours an economic crusade against backwardness, on the basis of strict regimentation and tighter belts for the masses, coupled with incessant utopian propaganda, juggling figures, exaggerating possibilities. The emphasis is on youth who are less likely to remember the disappointments of the GLF, and on mass activity as opposed to technology, expertise and specialisation (epitomised in the denounced "bourgeois intellectuals").

The antipode to Mao is a Chinese 'Professor Lieberman' Sun Yeh-fang, until recently director of the Institute of Economics. He would enthrone immediate profitability as the sole regulator of the internal movements of the economy - ie give free play to the law of value. Though not representing the mass of the anti-Maoists he has had powerful protection. He has called the GLF the "Great Demolition", the Communes "a mistake of rash and reckless advance, a mistake of subjective idealism and subjective will", and Mao "a lazybones in economics" -- and still retained his position.

The divisions reflect the tremendous pressures on China: of rising population, isolation, the constant threat from Imperialism and, conditioning everything, the sheer poverty of her economy and resources. Her attempts at development have seen three 5-year plans - 1953/58, '58/63 (abandoned in '61), and a third begun in 1966.

#### 'PLANNED' ECONOMY IN CHINA

On the eve of the First Plan, in 1952,  $\frac{1}{3}$  industry,  $\frac{2}{3}$  trade and nearly 100% agriculture were in private hands. This, and the exceptional poverty of the country, set

strict limits to planning. When her first Plan began Russia was the world's 7th industrial power; in 1952 China was in no comparable position, with a per capita income only a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Russia's in 1920. Russia had a rich agriculture to squeeze and later intensify, huge tracts of virgin lands without pressure of population; China had a small industrial base and a poor, already intensive agriculture. Russia's contact with the world market was never seriously cut (as opposed to being controlled) and she imported machinery throughout the period of mass industrialisation; China's contact was largely through the brokerage of the Soviet Union - and trade with the Soviet Bloc. Both were rigid, harsh, pay as you go: the Russian bureaucrats exploited their monopoly as both buyer and supplier to sell dearer and buy cheaper (sometimes for resale) than world prices. All Russian equipment and technicians had to be paid for out of current production, ie by exports to Russia.

As in Russia from the mid-1920s, planning was blinfolded by the bureaucracy's fear of reality. A State Planning and Statistical Bureau set up in 1952 did not function properly until 1955, and was more or less abolished by 1958. The need of the bureaucracies in Stalinist states to doll up and/or suppress facts has always been a serious break on planning, for which accurate data is irreplaceable. This problem is closely linked with the question of lack of mass democratic control of the planning.

Despite the backwardness, scarcity and bureaucracy, serious progress was made in the First Plan. Steel production rose fourfold, coal twofold, agriculture about 3% pa (barely keeping abreast of the population) and electricity expanded  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times. Centralised distribution now largely suppressed the mass starvation and famines of the past. Though the Plan was not, as claimed, overfulfilled, there were still great advances. Growth rate averaged about 8% pa (in '53-'59); about 20% of the small National Income was accumulated in this period.

By 1955 industrial growth had slowed down considerably; in 1954/55 adherence to fixed quotas in face of a less good harvest left the peasants in distress. These difficulties pushed Mao into the camp of those favouring a forced march - already in the early 1950s there was a division between "forced marchers" and "balanced developers". Abandoning the cautious policy of just encouraging mutual aid teams among the peasants, the CP went in for wholesale collectivisation. In a situation where any mechanisation which could have been applied to the already intensive agriculture was lacking, this form could only be aimed at squeezing more surplus out of the peasants, as a basis for industrialisation. Collectivisation was accomplished in 1955/56, from above; Resistance, though not spectacular, caused some disruption. This was followed by a poor harvest in 1956, and in some areas collectives had to be abandoned temporarily

1956 also saw the final transformation of the large amount of remaining - thriving - private industry into State-Private enterprises. Capital was redeemed at 5% interest and the capitalists became managers at very high salaries, both of which they still draw today. A current HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW article reports that there are still 300,000 of them, still running industry, living in luxury, pampered and protected by a regime which denounces oppositionists as "wanting to restore capitalism". The writer of the article was picked up by one of them in a new jaguar!

The first Plan had shown that agriculture could not yield the surpluses necessary for Russian style industrialisation. The 1957 harvest was a bare 1.3% up on 1956, while the population increase was 2%. Expansion of industry was not even sufficient

to take up the underemployment in the villages. At the end of the first Plan it had also become obvious that China would have to advance almost completely under her own steam; aid from Russia was negligible, less than for Eastern European countries, less than "neutral" capitalist countries received.... less by far than Chiang Kai-shek got from Stalin in the 1930s. Russian loans amounted to a mere 3% of state investment under the Plan. Russia's continued exploitation of her monopoly of trade with China was made worse by China's disadvantage as a country with a low productivity of labour, trading at world prices: far from aiding development this meant extortion of Chinese surplus value by Russia. The forced march philosophy now won another round, aided by the optimism engendered by the exceptional 1958 harvest. The Second Plan envisaged a 50% rise in output and a doubling of capital accumulation to about 40%.

Under the constant pressure to find the added surplus to accumulate and industrialise, with rising population eroding any advances in agriculture, in complete isolation, under pressure from Imperialism which dictated a one-sided development of certain sectors of the backward economy for military technology, the raised investment targets demanded a squeeze on mass consumption and an intensified use of existing resources. The Communes were now established, as ever larger units to achieve economies of scale, with communal feeding to economise by cutting individual rations. Efforts to achieve the maximum use of labour led to the abolition of private plots and the use of the communes (26,000 in all, averaging 4,637 households) as centres for handicrafts and small local industries. To try to escape the lack of fixed capital there arose the primitive backyard furnaces and small scale coal mines engaging tens of millions in utterly wasteful labour, whose end-product was found to be useless. Large labour armies from the communes engaged in genuinely fruitful irrigation work, though even here lack of effective planning often led to waste and disruption.

To escape the apathy and falling production caused by the military-bureaucratic methods of collectivisation, the communes were generated by violent and reckless propaganda, mobilising the masses on fantastic hopes; in addition, promotion of xenophobia, glorification of China's isolation, and 'emulation' were stepped up to supplant material incentives and the private plots. But the Communes had merely been a new and bigger administrative unit, a reorganisation of existing resources which, without appropriate mechanisation, could not in itself significantly raise productivity.

The widespread disruption, waste of resources and labour were followed by a succession of bad harvests and near famine. The communes were abandoned, communal feeding abolished as 'wasteful' (which speaks volumes on the average level) private plots were restored and so was free sale of produce. The excitement and emotional excesses generated for the Great Leap was inevitably disappointed; manipulated figures began to lose their credibility. Cadres were finally ordered by the CC not to work the peasants more than 12 hours a day except in busy seasons. The chaos and natural disasters were aggravated by a Soviet withdrawal so monstrously callous, so typical of all the past economic relations between the rich 'socialist' state and the poor 'socialist' state that it should be classed with the monstrosities of the Stalin era. At a time of near starvation, when 100,000 refugees flocked from China into Hong Kong, Russia withdrew all aid, equipment and technicians, refused to make deliveries, even tore up blueprints. Industrial plants which had barely started operating had to be closed, projects for the second 5-year Plan abandoned and the whole plan re-arranged to re-allocate resources. "Socialism in One Country" was for Russia imposed by circumstances and perpetuated by the Bureaucracy. For China it is consciously imposed by the Soviet Bureaucrats; though the Indonesian experience shows it to be just as blindly stalinist in sacrificing foreign revolutions to short term deals with the Sukarnos and Ayub Khans.

After the official announcement of "readjustment" in 1961 it took 5 years to return to the economic level of 1957. The GLF is summed up in the figures for national average per capita calorie consumption (per day): 1957= 2,200; 1959-'61= 1,800. At the 1962 Plenum of the CC the "moderates" dominated. The emphasis then was on a gearing of industry to the neglected agriculture (machinery and insecticides); intellectuals were courted and there was a new emphasis on science, specialisation and expertise; accumulation has since been in the 20% range. Since 1961 private plots have again accounted for up to a quarter of peasant incomes.

### A NEW GREAT LEAP FORWARD ?

All the evidence points to a resumption of the forced march approach by the Mao faction. Under the continuing pressures of Imperialism, of the threat of stagnation, they have launched the 'Cultural Revolution' with its attacks on all the conceptions which have dominated since 1962. A bumper harvest in 1965 seems to have sparked it off as in '58, and recent exaggerated claims for food production seem to herald a new raising of the blood pressure for a new effort. Austerity is again the watchword, and the Private Property attacked by Red Guards is the peasant plots.

Clearly the experience of the GLF and its aftermath has created a wider and fiercer resistance than any hitherto encountered (though in the 1957/8 period  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Provincial Party Secretaries were dismissed, as well as the head of the statistics Bureau and a number of Vice-Presidents.) All along the Red Guards' propaganda has had a double purpose: to galvanise and intimidate the Party and State functionaries, and to limber up the workers and peasants. Now, roused against the voluntarist policies of Mao - for which after all they will have to pay: the GLF saw a large scale substantial reduction in industrial wages - workers and commune peasants have been drawn into the struggle to do battle with the Red Guard students. The policy of Mao, despite its camouflage of 'socialism', can only mean an intensified regime of drumming of the workers. Resistance from the workers makes compulsion the order of the day, and this will compel the use of a repressive regime: which in turn can only lead to deeper corruption in conditions of uncontrolled state/army/party bureaucracy .... whatever final equilibrium in their mutual relations is reached by the sections.

The apparent lining up of the industrial workers with the anti-Mao faction has impelled people like Banda and other Maoists to call them backward. But their opposition to another disruption and squeeze is not necessarily the result of common cause with either the 'Liebermanites' or the staid, cautious officials and functionaries. Why should they renounce 'economism', faced with bureaucratic privilege and the protection of the 300,000 "5% capitalists" and the other managers?

Left to its own economic backwardness, with relative stagnation in the proportion of rural and urban population, the immediate future for China can only be one of continuing domination by the 17 to 20 million strong bureaucracy, now perhaps going through a final sifting out process to find the people best suited to China's need to industrialise. The Chinese working class, rigidly controlled, not yet recovered from the pulverisation of the Japanese period, still remains the only leader for the Chinese masses against the bureaucratic regime. It will be able to find again its magnificent tradition of free class conscious activity in alliance with the advance guard of the international proletariat; and only through this alliance can the problems of China be solved.

# in memory of a revolutionary

Thirty years ago this April, in a fascist prison hospital in Italy, there died a proletarian revolutionary who has been deservedly bracketed with Lenin, Luxembourg and Trotsky as a master of Marxism: Antonio Gramsci. He was the leader of the "Turin communists", and later, having led the struggle against the sectarian Bordiga, Secretary of the Italian CP. Arrested under the Fascist "Exceptional laws" in November 1926, he was tried in May 1928. At his trial the fascist Prosecutor demanded: "For twenty years we must stop that brain from working". But the conditions of his imprisonment, together with denial of medical treatment (until too late) to a man whose body was from birth exceptionally weak, rendered 20 years unnecessary. He died just a few days after his sentence, cut in half when it had obviously done its work, had expired. He was 46 years old.

But they did not "stop that brain from working". In prison Gramsci managed to keep notebooks - using all sorts of private codewords to fool his captors. - and these, eight volumes in all, have survived: a rich and vast variety of subjects... problems of Marxism, Italian history, the Catholic Church, philosophy, and the lessons of the mass activity of the Italian proletariat in the period after W.W.I. That these constitute a major contribution to Marxism can be seen from the small selection published in English by Lawrence and Wishart in 1957 - The Modern Prince and Other Writings.

In his autobiography Victor Serge, a Marxist opponent of Stalinism, drew this picture of Gramsci:

"Antonio Gramsci, ... an industrious and Bohemian exile, late to bed and late to rise, working with the illegal committee of the Italian C.P. His head was heavy, his brow was high and broad, his lips thin; the whole was carried on a puny, square-shouldered, weak-chested, hump-backed body. There was grace in the movement of his fine lanky hands. Gramsci fitted awkwardly into the humdrum of day to day existence, losing his way at night in familiar streets, taking the wrong train, indifferent to the comfort of his lodgings and the quality of his meals; but, intellectually, he was absolutely alive. Trained intuitively in the dialectic, quick to uncover falsehood and transfix it with the sting of irony, he viewed the world with an exceptional clarity. Once we consulted together about the quarter million workers who had been admitted at one stroke into the Russian C.P. on the day after Lenin's death. "How much were these proletarians worth, if they had to wait for the death of Vladimir Ilyich before coming to the Party?"

After the example of Matteotti (murdered by fascists in 1924 - Ed.), like him a deputy, like him living among menaces, a frail invalid held in both detestation and respect by Mussolini, Gramsci had returned to Rome to carry on the struggle. He was fond of telling stories about his wretched childhood, how he had failed his entry to the priesthood, for which his family had marked him out; with his short bursts of sardonic laughter he exposed certain leading figures of fascism with whom he was closely acquainted. When the crisis in Russia began to worsen, Gramsci did not want to be broken in the process, so he

had himself sent back to Italy by his Party: he, who was identifiable at the first glance because of his deformity and his great forehead. He was imprisoned together with Umberto Terracini and some others, and a fascist jail kept him outside the operation of those factional struggles whose consequence nearly everywhere was the elimination of the militants of his generation. Our years of darkness were his years of stubborn resistance."

OOOO

Of his "fundamental concept" of Marxism Gramsci had written: "Marxism, 'sufficient to itself', contains in itself all the fundamental elements not only for constructing a whole and integral conception of the world, a total philosophy and a theory of the natural sciences, but also for bringing to life an integral practical organisation of society; in other words, for becoming a total, integral civilisation". It is tempting to use up the space available with a variety of short quotations to demonstrate the power of Gramsci's Marxism. Instead we will quote in full a short editorial from ORDINO NUOVO; everything it says is as relevant to our task of preparing the proletarian revolution as it was to the work of Antonio Gramsci whose memory we honour.

OOOOOOOOOOOO

In this issue we begin the publication of a brief study of Leonardo Da Vinci by Comrade Aldo Oberdorfer of Trieste, written on the occasion of Da Vinci's fourth centenary to be celebrated this year. We feel sure our readers and friends will not be surprised, as this represents not a failure to live up to our purpose, but a partial fulfillment of the aims we made clear from the start.

On other occasions we have already set out what we believe a paper, a communist cultural review, should be. Such a paper must aim to become, in miniature, complete in itself, even though it may be unable to satisfy all the intellectual needs of the nucleus of men who read and support it, who live a part of their lives around it, and who impart to it some of their own life, it must strive to be the kind of journal in which everyone will find things that interest and move him, that will lighten the daily burden of work, economic struggle and political discussion. At the least the journal should encourage the complete development of one's mental capacities for a higher and fuller life, richer in harmony and in ideological aims, and should be a stimulus for the development of one's own personality. Why cannot we ourselves, with our modest forces, begin the work of the education system, the education system of the future, among the youth, who support us and look to us with such faith and expectation? Because the socialist education system when it emerges will of necessity emerge as a complete system whose goal it will be to embrace quickly all branches of human knowledge. This will be a practical necessity and an intellectual requirement. Are there not already workers to whom the class struggle has given a new sense of dignity and liberty who - when they hear the poet's songs and the names of artists and thinkers - ask bitterly: "Why haven't we, too, been taught these things?" But they console themselves: "Schools, as organised over the last ten years, as organised today by the ruling class, teach us little or nothing." The aim is to meet educational needs by different means: freely, through spontaneous relations between men moved by a common desire to improve themselves. Why couldn't a paper become the centre for one of these groups? In this field too the bourgeois regime is on the verge of bankruptcy. From its hands, calloused from their sole work of

Continued on p.40



# portrait of lenin

BY LEON TROTSKY

Lenin's internationalism needs no recommendation. It is best characterised by Lenin's irreconcilable break, in the first days of the world war, with that counterfeit internationalism which reigned in the Second International. The official leaders of "Socialism" used the parliamentary tribune to reconcile the interests of the fatherland with the interests of mankind by way of abstract arguments in the spirit of the old Cosmopolites. In practice this led, as we know, to the support of the predatory fatherland by the proletarian forces.

Lenin's internationalism is in no sense a formula for verbally reconciling nationalism with internationalism. It is a formula for international revolutionary action. The world's territory in the clutches of the so-called civilised section of mankind is regarded as a unified arena where a gigantic struggle occurs, whose component elements are constituted by the individual peoples and their respective classes. No single major issue can be kept restricted within a national framework. Visible and invisible threads connect such an issue with dozens of events in all corners of the world. In the evaluation of international factors and forces Lenin is freer than anyone else from national prejudices.

Marx concluded that the philosophers had sufficiently interpreted the world and that the real task was to change it. But he, the pioneering genius, did not live to see it done. The transformation of the old world is now in full swing and Lenin is the foremost worker on this job. His internationalism is a practical appraisal plus a practical intervention into the march of historical events on a world scale and with world-wide aims. Russia and her fate is only a single element in this titanic historical struggle upon whose outcome hinges the fate of mankind.

Lenin's internationalism needs no recommendation. But at the same time Lenin himself is profoundly national. His roots are deep in modern Russian history, he draws it up into himself, gives it its highest expression, and precisely in this way attains the highest levels of international action and world influence.

At first glance the characterization of Lenin as a "national" figure may seem surprising, but, in essence, this follows as a matter of course. To be able to lead such a revolution, without parallel in the history of peoples, as Russia is now living through, it is obviously necessary to have an indissoluble, organic bond with the main forces of the people's life, a bond which springs from the deepest roots.

Lenin personifies the Russian proletariat, a young class, which politically is scarcely older than Lenin himself, but a class which is profoundly national, for recapitulated in it is the entire past development of Russia, in it lies Russia's entire future, with it the Russian nation rises or falls. Freedom from routine and banality, freedom from imposture and convention, resoluteness of thought,

audacity in action - an audacity which never turns to foolhardiness - this is what characterises the Russian working class, and with it also Lenin.

The nature of the Russian proletariat, which has made it today the most important force of the world revolution, had been prepared beforehand by the entire course of Russian national history; the barbaric cruelty of the Czarist autocracy, the insignificance of the privileged classes, the feverish growth of capitalism fed by the leas of the world stock market, the escheated character of the Russian bourgeoisie, their decadent ideology, their shoddy politics. Our "Third Estate" knew neither a Reformation nor a great revolution of their own and could never have known them. Therefore the revolutionary tasks of the Russian proletariat assumed a more all-embracing character. Our past history knows no Luther, no Thomas Munzer, no Mirabeau, no Danton, no Robespierre. Exactly for that reason the Russian proletariat has its Lenin. What was lost in way of tradition has been won in the sweep of the revolution.

Lenin mirrors the working class, not only in its proletarian present but also in its peasant past, still so recent. This most indisputable leader of the proletariat, not only outwardly resembles a peasant, but there is something inwardly in him strongly smacking of a peasant. Facing the Smolny stands the statue of the other great figure of the world proletariat: Karl Marx, on a stone pedestal in a black frock coat. Assuredly, this is a trifle, but it is impossible even to imagine Lenin putting on a black frock coat. Some portraits of Marx show him wearing a dress shirt against whose broad expanse something resembling a monocle dangles.

That Marx was not inclined to foppery is quite clear to all who have an inkling of the spirit of Marx. But Marx was born and grew up on a different national-cultural soil, lived in a different atmosphere, as did also the leading personalities of the German working class, whose roots reach back not to a peasant village but to the corporation guilds and the complex city culture of the middle ages.

Marx's very style, rich and beautiful, in which strength and flexibility, wrath and irony, severity and refinement are combined, also contains the literary and aesthetic accumulations of the entire German socio-political literature since the days of the Reformation and even before. Lenin's literary and oratorical style is awesomely simple, utilitarian, ascetic, as is his whole make-up. But in this mighty asceticism there is not a trace of a moralistic attitude. There is no principle here, no elaborated system and, of course, no posturing; it is simply the outward expression of inward conservation of strength for action. It is a peasant's practical proficiency but on a colossal scale.



LENIN AT 23



The entire Marx is contained in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO in the foreword to his CRITIQUE, in CAPITAL. Even if he had not been the founder of the First International he would always remain what he is today. Lenin, on the other hand, is contained entirely in revolutionary action. His scientific works are only a preparation for action. If he never published a single book in the past, he would forever enter history just as he enters it now: the leader of the proletarian revolution, the founder of the Third International.

A clear, scientific system - the materialist dialectic - is necessary for action on such a historical scale as devolved upon Lenin - it is necessary but not sufficient. Needed here in addition is that irrevealable creative power we call intuition: The ability to judge events correctly on the swing, to separate the essential and important from the husks and incidentals, to fill in mentally the missing parts of the picture, to draw to conclusion the thoughts of others and above all those of the enemy, to connect all this into a unified whole and to deal a blow the moment that the "formula" for this blow comes to mind. This is the intuition for action. In one of its aspects it merges with what we call shrewdness.

When Lenin, screwing up his left eye, listens over the radio to a parliamentary speech of one of the imperialist makers of destiny or goes over the text of the latest diplomatic note, a mixture of bloodthirsty duplicity and polished hypocrisy, he resembles a very wise mouzjik whom words cannot cajole nor sugary phrases ensnare. This is the peasant shrewdness elevated to genius, armed with the last word of scientific thought.

The young Russian proletariat was able to accomplish what it has only by pulling behind itself, by its roots, the heavy mass of the peasantry. This was prepared for by our whole national past. But precisely because the proletariat has come to power through the course of events, our revolution has been able suddenly and drastically to overcome the national narrowness and provincial benightedness of Russia's past history. Soviet Russia has become not only the haven for the Communist International, but also the living embodiment of its programme and methods.

By paths, unknown and as yet unexplored by science, by which the human personality is molded, Lenin has assimilated from the national milieu everything he needed for the greatest revolutionary action in the history of humanity. Exactly because the socialist revolution, which has long had its international theoretical expression, found for the first time in Lenin its national embodiment, Lenin became, in the full and true sense of the word, the revolutionary leader of the world proletariat. And that is how his fiftieth birthday found him.

PRAVDA, April 23, 1920.

Reprinted from - Fourth International Jan./Feb. 1951

#### C O R R E C T I O N

JACKIE CLEARY WRITES: My polemic against Desmond Greaves' pamphlet on 1916 (AN SOLAS No.16) contained an error which calls for correction. The date of the Knocklong Soviet is given as May 1921, and in fact it was May 1920. Initially a typing error, the hasty addition of verbal underlining overstated the case, giving the appearance of an immediate relationship between the event and the Truce. But of course the general picture still stands -- the case remains that fear of a general social explosion under their own feet made it imperative for the bourgeoisie, caught between Imperialism and the masses, to break out of the Republican straitjacket and consolidate what they could, while they could.

# art in bolshevik russia: 1917 - 24

First of two articles by Rachel Lever.

For reasons which need no elaboration, bourgeois publicity has given us a pretty good idea of what Stalinist arts look like, of the plight of the artist and writer in Russia since the thirties (and China more recently), and the work which he has had to turn out. For the same reasons, it has been extraordinarily shy of Bolshevik art and culture, and very few people have the privilege to know what the cultural scene looked like in Russia until the thirties. In fact, these people have been as reluctant to publicise the genuine art of revolutionary Russia, as they have been to advertise its genuine politics. Naturally, the same must be said of official Soviet histories, in which I have seen the whole period 1917-1932 dismissed in a paragraph, or even less.

If Bolshevik Trotskyists have been active for many years attempting to break the tabu imposed by Stalinist bureaucrats and bourgeois communications monopolists on Bolshevik politics, it is also our task to do the same for Bolshevik art. Not an easy task, for the obliteration of the record of an era in art is easier than the suppression of printed matter. However, a little research uncovers a stimulating spectacle; how a whole group of artists, designers, theatrical producers, poets and architects banded together in the years of famine and civil War, took their place in the revolutionary ranks and attempted to forge links between themselves and the masses. Under Capitalism the proletarian masses receive a backwash of hackneyed bourgeois culture, or a specially manufactured sub-culture: but in these years the avant-garde artists, that is, the most alert and sensitive, served the masses directly, at first hand.

Awakening in the 1860s from the coma of the Tsarist Academy's unchallenged rule, Russian painters spent the next few decades alternately lapping up what their contemporaries in Europe were pioneering; and discovering that there had been a native Russian art before the Academy had made 18th century French court art (at second-hand, of course) the only style which could earn a painter a living. Earnest safaris up-country yielded evidence of rough decorative peasant woodcuts and embroidery; ancient icons were cleaned up and exhibited for the first time. Meanwhile, the Academy continued to patronise portrait painting in the manner of 18th century France; and the new movements found favour with the liberal bourgeoisie.

## ARTISTIC LEAP

Like Russian industry and the Russian labour movement, Russian painting found its whole development telescoped. Learning quickly from French Impressionism and its multifarious succeeding movements, but keeping their own identity by virtue of their passionate involvement with the national tradition, the most swiftly advancing groups and individuals soon found that they were ready for a revolutionary breakthrough, that they were no longer following their comrades in the west, but leading them. Now their patrons were not so keen; it was all

very well while the avant garde was progressive only in relation to feudalism. But certainly not when the war came, and a definite rebelliousness, suspiciously resembling the anti-capitalist Dada movement in Zurich, was seen in many avant garde activities. Now they found themselves out in the cold, their audience shrunk to a few intellectuals, and unable - as yet - to turn to another class for support.

Two main movements emerged in 1915, called Suprematism and Constructivism. The first of these flourished mainly before the revolution; it was a form of completely abstract art, relying chiefly on geometric shapes and the confused and somewhat mystical 'philosophy' of its leader Malevich. Some of his ideas resemble those of Kandinsky (his compatriot and some-time colleague, and one of the greatest founders of 20th century art) but lacking the latter's intellectual clarity he never achieved the same stature; nor was he able to develop his simple forms to any extent, and in the hands of less talented followers Suprematism became an easy and fashionable formula.

Constructivism was by nature far more extravert and active; its vigour enabled it to seize the opportunities of revolution, and in fact it was only after 1917 that it came to life as a movement. Basically it grew out of Vladimir Tatlin's attempts to break down the barriers between art and life, and before the revolution these attempts were necessarily modest. They took the form of 'constructions' which shed the safe harbour of frame and wall, and came out into space. They couldn't be called sculpture, because that is basically solid. Now space itself became an element at the very heart and centre of the design. They were made from wood, glass, wire and plaster - all potential builders' materials. The old duality of form and content was resolved in a synthesis where the actual materials - their texture, the juxtaposition of the planes and rhythms they formed, their shape and structure - became the main subject matter. Perhaps most important was the possibility it afforded of incorporating real movement: a very novel idea in 1915, though now it is an accepted element in both painting and construction.

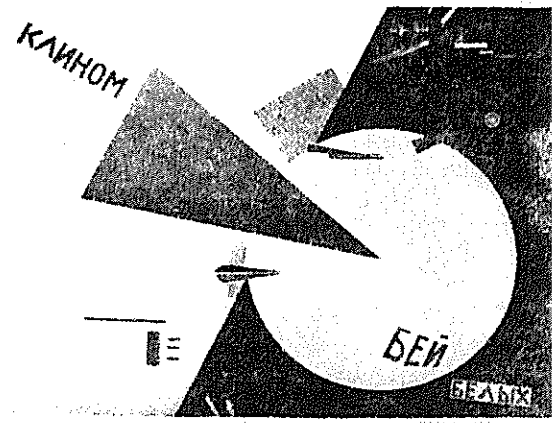
These experiments, which Tatlin regarded in a somewhat scientific light, were bound to suggest more ambitious projects than his Corner Reliefs. Moreover, there was a marked streak of functionalism in its make-up, and in Tatlin's outlook (during the Civil War he was to design a stove to burn the minimum quantity of fuel while giving the maximum heat). This, before October, was bound to come up against numerous barriers and frustrations; later, having elaborated his theories of the Culture of materials and the Artist Engineer, Tatlin was to look back on this period as a time of back-room research, of thinking isolated from action.

#### ART COMES OUT OF ITS CORNER

Most important of all, the revolution offered the possibility of integrating art with society and bringing an end to its use as a mere market commodity which was enjoyed by at most a small elite. The results appeared almost overnight; from being hungry experimenters, artists of the avant garde suddenly found themselves in positions of power and influence - as heads of art colleges, leading members of the Commissariat for People's Education (NARKOMPROS), the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKHUK) and IZO, which had the task of reorganising the country's museums.

This favourable situation came about mainly because of these artists' attitude to the Revolution. While their reactionary critics and all the old Academicians immediately left the country (several returned, however ... with the White Armies) the avant garde - now known as Leftists - leapt to action and gave all their energies to helping the spread of communist ideas throughout Russia, in Agitprop, the theatre, posters and many other spheres of activity. Unlike the present cultural hacks with their Black Sea villas, their only privilege in the first years was to be hardworking and self-sacrificing, to suffer the same cold, hunger and hardship as the rest of the Bolsheviks; later, they continued to share in the fate of the Bolsheviks, in suicide, prison and Siberia.

Propaganda was put up everywhere; it was sometimes gigantic and hideous, often inventive and witty, with emphasis on caricature. Walls of buildings were painted and covered with slogans, quotations from leading Bolsheviks and the 'Old masters', and even the latest news. All means of transportation, wagons, ships and trains were covered with brightly painted revolutionary pictures, so that the message might reach the most remote outposts. Even everyday objects like plates, cups and matchboxes carried pictures and slogans. Most of this work was based on the prevailing styles of the avant garde - at first Suprematism, like the poster on the right (the lettering says: "Beat the Whites with the Red wedge") and later Constructivism, like the plate below. It was naturally very rough and ready (these examples, particularly the poster by EL Lissitzky, are probably exceptional) but nevertheless the sudden proliferation of painted



images and vigorous, strong typography must have been very exciting - not

to say effective - while the lack of refinement was often compensated by freshness and spontaneity. Its effectiveness, in this period when propaganda played a leading role in the defense of the workers' state, gives the lie to the Stalinist bogey about the remoteness and incomprehensibility of abstract art; at a time when the invasion of Georgia and the suppression of Kronstadt were seen as essential for defense, it is unlikely that any medium of propaganda which failed to appeal to the widest masses would have been so encouraged.



ART TO REACH EVERYONE

The first response to the Revolution was seen in the abandonment of easel painting and all small scale work. For a time the 'Bolshevik monumental style' prevailed, with huge portraits set up of world heroes of revolution. Art had to be big and imposing enough to reach everyone. The failure of this 'style', depend-

ing as it did solely on size, was as rapid as it was inevitable. The most serious and lasting attempts were made in music.

After many discussions between gastev and Mayakovsky, and trials at Leningrad and Nizhni-Novgorod, the first real performance took place in Baku, on November 7th 1922, to mark the Fifth anniversary of the Revolution. Foghorns of the whole Caspian Fleet, all factory sirens, two batteries of artillery, several infantry regiments, a machine gun section and real hydroplanes took part -- as well as massive choirs in which all the spectators joined. The Festival was described as **very impressive**, but later attempts at such things as factory whistle symphonies encountered unsurmountable problems, failing to achieve even a recognisable Internationale.

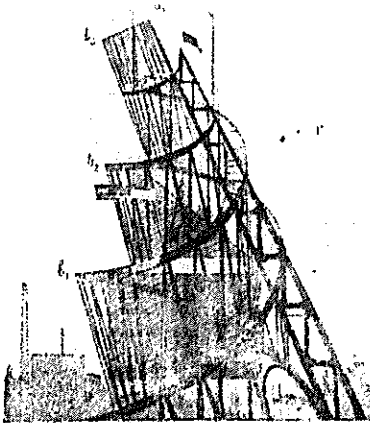
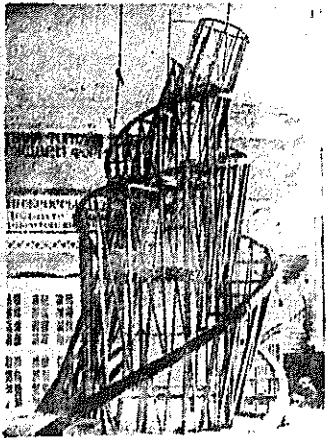
But the desire that art should reach out into the streets and factories was still foremost in the ambitions of most artists - expressed in Mayakovsky's aim to "make the streets his brushes and the squares his palette". The Constructivists' solution to this now brought them forward as the most important movement of the day. "The Art of the proletariat" they said "is not a holy shrine where things are lazily regarded, but work, a factory which produces new artists' things."

From this grew the desire to be active builders, not just back room designers. Tatlin saw his previous achievements as mere experiments to occupy his time until he could emerge as the **artist-engineer** of the new society. Indeed, he is generally best remembered now for the projected Monument to the Third International, rather than for his Corner Reliefs; and had the monument been realised in its final form it would in fact have been his greatest achievement:

"The monument was to be twice the height of the Empire State building. It was to be executed in glass and iron. An iron spiral framework was to support a body consisting of a glass cylinder, a glass cone and a glass cube. This body was to be suspended on a dynamic asymmetrical axis, like a leaning Eiffel Tower, which would thus continue its spiral rhythm into space beyond. Such 'movement' was not to be confined to the static design. The body of the monument itself was literally going to move. The cylinder was to revolve on its axis once a year: the activities allocated to this position of the building were lectures, conferences and Congress meetings. The cone was to complete a revolution once a month and to house executive activities. The topmost cube was to complete a full turn on its axis once a day and to be an information centre. It was constantly to issue news bulletins, proclamations and manifestoes - by means of telegraph, radio, telephone and loudspeaker". (Camilla Gray - *The Great Experiment; Russian Art 1863-1922*. Thames and Hudson, 1962.)

Left:- Model and plan.

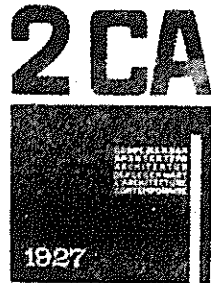
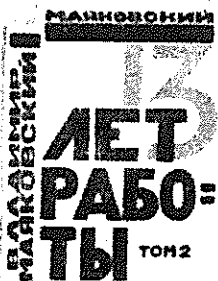
This was an ambitious project for 1919 under any circumstances; and considering Russia then as a country emerging from feudalism and fighting a civil war it is



hardly surprising that the plans were never realised beyond a small wooden model. Other plans, for a huge Labour Palace in Moscow, for new workers' dwellings and the rational rebuilding of whole towns, never even went beyond paper.

The Constructivists found themselves in the same predicament as that of the Bolsheviks. They were far ahead of the technical resources and know-how of a country with 150 million illiterate peasants. If the social aims of Lenin were in excess of the objective possibilities afforded by the objective situation, then all the more so were the aims of Tatlin, which far exceeded Lenin's hopes for the immediate future in the field of art and culture. Lenin believed that the masses deserved something better than pageants and circuses. "They have acquired the right to a genuinely great art". But since art should be understood by the masses without being lowered, there must first be "the broadest possible enlightenment and education. That will lay the foundation for a culture - on condition, of course, that the question of bread is solved. On that foundation there ought to grow up a genuinely great new communist art, which will create a form corresponding to its content". A concept which Stalin later saw fit to reverse, deliberately bringing art down to the lowest possible level in his use of it as bureaucratic propaganda.

Tatlin and his fellow artists saw the revolution as one event which would overnight bring them within reach of their highest ambitions, rather than as the first stage of a society in transition, a society which was even vulnerable to degeneration if faced with adverse conditions and isolation behind national boundaries. His plans could never be executed, and he resorted eventually to industrial design -- which later offered a fairly sheltered harbour from bureaucratic conformity. Many others, including Gabo and Pevsner, left the country to continue their work wherever they could find the technical resources. Most members of the Constructivist Group, however, stayed on and tried to find other outlets. This they did quite successfully for about ten years after the revolution, mostly in the Theatre, and with typography, poster design, photo-montage (which greatly influenced Eisenstein's film-making technique) and various projects which can be called "mass theatre" - pageants, mass poetry readings, and the re-enactments of October which were organised by Nathan Altman, Ivan Puni and his wife Bogoslavskaya: in 1918 to mark the occasion they covered the square in front of the Winter Palace in Petrograd with huge posters like the one below, right.



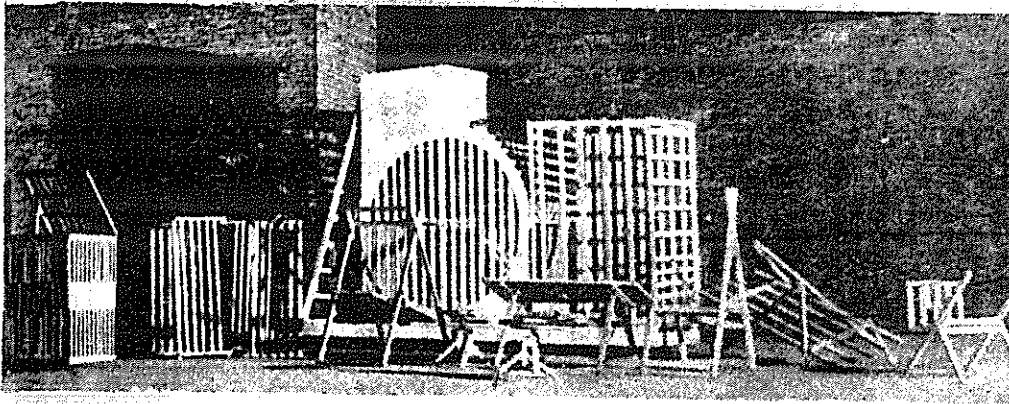
Above: 3 book jacket designs. The two on the left are volumes of Mayakovsky's poetry. On the right, Contemporary Architecture.

## IN THE THEATRE

In reaction against the static bourgeois realism of Stanislavsky, the 'synthetic theatre' had been pioneered by constructivists at the Moscow Kamerny Theatre. Their first attempts, before 1917, involved integrating the sets, costumes, actors and their gestures into a dynamic system; but the productions then were all put on for small circles of the intellectual avant garde and suffered from this unreal seclusion. The possibility of extending the scope of these productions, after 1917, led to a real flowering of the constructivist theatre and its many variants. Its exponents included men like Tairov and Meyerhold, who between them, using declamation, involving the audience and destroying the 'illusory' aspect of theatre, were the forerunners of Brecht's 'Theatre of Alienation'.

Vsevolod Meyerhold developed what he called the bio-mechanical technique, whose physical expressiveness and dynamic momentum became suitable for an extravert, social experience. He replaced decorative scenery with constructions expressing 'action and technology', declaring:

"The new theatre denies and repudiates everything which is merely ornamental and not directly practical... therefore its framework must include the technical creations of the present, machines of all kinds, motors and cannons, all the more because these objects also strengthen the dynamics of the production". (R. Fulop-Miller: *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p.122) Below: Stage set by Varvara Stepanova for 'The Death of Tarelkin' produced by Meyerhold in Moscow in 1922.



These productions were often "animated" by searchlights, steam sirens, peals of bells and air acrobatics.

Meyerhold's Constructive theatre soon became the idiom for plays put on in factories and workers' clubs. It became so popular that soon even the classical theatre companies were using his methods, and the State Opera House "revolutionarised" *Carmen* and Wagner's *Lohengrin* with dynamic light effects and geometric props. Meyerhold was given much encouragement from the Party and honoured as People's Artist - but, his mass popularity notwithstanding, he was denounced as a formalist by those who were sending the Bolsheviks to their graves, and arrested in 1939.

Experiments were also made with hanging planes and moving stairways, where the actors were to move vertically as well as horizontally. Eisenstein, working then for Forregger's Proletcult Company, moved the actors around on ropes, and would on occasion suddenly darken the stage, lower a screen and show a film. This company exaggerated the athletic aspect of Meyerhold's bio-mechanics into a predominating clowning and acrobatics. A similar emphasis emerged in another company, the "Projection Theatre" which had no stage at all. The performances took place in the middle of the hall, and consisted entirely of silent action, using geometric constructions and appliances.

It was not only the use of actual 'constructions' in the production which was derived from the ideas of Tatlin and the constructivists; the exploration of space and materials, the dynamics of movement and the actual physical properties of the body were as integral to the theatre of Meyerhold and Forregger as they were to the art of Tatlin. Where Tatlin abandoned the background to his reliefs and integrated them into the surrounding life and space, Forregger similarly staged his productions "in the round" and shed the constricting effects of stage and backcloth.

On the stage, Meyerhold often integrated the movement of great cylinders or wheels with the physical actions or emotional climaxes of the characters, thereby heightening the drama. Though Tatlin was technically unable to proceed at that period towards kinetic art, his plans for the Third International Monument reveal an increasing interest in movement. The experimental theatre was able to develop these ideas at a time when the artists outside the theatre were limited to plans on paper, and so became the only medium through which constructivism was actively realised in its full sense, in all its dimensions.

#### MUSEUMS FOR THE PRESENT

Though the Constructivists had neither the knowledge nor the material basis to be real artist-engineers, they did have an excellent opportunity in the field of education. This was a time of discussion, experimentation and decision on the future organisation of art education, and the institutions set up to direct the programme were either dominated or entirely staffed by "leftist" artists.

Under Narkompros, IZU was set up in 1918, with David Sternberg as director, Alexander Rodchenko (a leading Constructivist) as head of its Museum Bureau, and Altman, Tatlin, Kandinsky, Olga Rosanova and the critics Osip Briik and Punin on its staff. In the 36 museums they launched in the next three years, "leftist" art was predominant, though they usually included also an 'historical museum' section containing 'art of the past' for 'scientific study', the assumption being that it had no aesthetic contribution to make either to life in general or to the development of a new form of art. This rather dangerous view was not held by all the artists concerned; many felt otherwise, that art of the past must be seen as part of a process, an element in the creation of a new art (as it had been in theirs), to be used and understood without having to be copied or repeated; or, as Lenin had said "you must take the whole culture which capitalism left and create socialism out of it". Later, he elaborated this view - "Without a clear understanding that only with an accurate knowledge of the culture created by the



whole development of mankind, only by working it over, can we create a proletarian culture - without this understanding we will never fulfill this task". But while Lenin saw the past as the doorway to the future, Stalin was to use it as a strait-jacket, resurrecting it to stifle any future art.

#### SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

It is most likely that the basic motive in the rejection of past and academic art was the desire to rectify the pre-revolutionary situation, where artists of the avant garde were expelled from the academies and schools, removed from their posts (if they had them) derided, mocked and persecuted and prevented from exhibiting, by members of the Academy - which often made it impossible to earn a living. It must also be said that, other than icons, there was only a negligible quantity of paintings from Russia's past that were even worth keeping. Before the 1860s Russia's cultural tradition was almost entirely literary. This desire to rectify the balance was soon active in the schools themselves - hitherto a bastion of reaction - again under IZO's directorship. In 1918 the Petrograd Academy of Art was re-opened as Svomas (Free Studios) whose programme allowed the entrance of anyone over the age of 16 at any time of the year, with the right to elect professors of their choice. This soon led to chaos, and the Svomas were abolished in 1921, to be re-established a year later on a programme worked out by Kandinsky.

In Moscow the College of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture was closed and reformed, together with the Stroganov School of Applied Art, as Vkhutemas or Higher Technical-Artistic Studios, aiming to bring about a synthesis of art, crafts and industry as another part of the general campaign to bring the artist into closer contact with the people. It was also very liberal in its organisation and practically autonomous. Apart from the actual teaching much of the time was given up to discussions and seminars which were open to the public and to visiting artists.

This is by no means the whole picture, but a general survey of some of the major trends of the years (roughly) 1917-24, a survey which I have confined in this article to the surface events as they affected life in the immediate sense. Beneath the surface, and ultimately disrupting and changing it, the scene was complicated by a number of issues and forces - political, personal and social. Among the questions that were debated at length was 'proletarian art' and the relationship of the artist to the workers' state. These I hope to examine in another article, together with the rise of 'socialist' 'realism' which buried all the experiments and ideas of the first years in its mud of compulsory mediocrity.

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# A CARICATURE OF TROTSKYISM

by Sean Matganna

## I

Outside Caxton Hall, London, before a meeting organised by the Socialist Labour League to Commemorate the Tenth anniversary of the Hunagrian Commune, a number of people stood selling literature. Some Maoists, some sellers of the English Militant, and Ernie Tate, manager of Pioneer Book Services. Tate was selling the International Socialist Review and a pamphlet - HEALY "RECONSTRUCTS" THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL. This reported on the weird, nightmarish experiences of the delegates of the American SPARTACUS LEAGUE at the Third Conference of the International Committee of the Fourth International (another name for the SLL). In a NEWSLETTER review of the pamphlet, blusteringly evading a political reply to it, Gerry Healy, SLL General Secretary, had announced threateningly: "We shall not hesitate to deal appropriately with the handfull of United Secretariat agents who hawk it around the cynical fake left ..."

Healy himself arrived and entered Caxton Hall: a moment later he re-emerged. And suddenly about six people, whose membership of the SLL has not been denied, set upon Tate. Unaided, he was beaten, knocked down, and kicked in the head, kidneys and genitals; he was so badly hurt that he had to be hospitalised. Tate says that Healy nodded to his supporters to start the beating. Healy denies this. But even he has not denied watching while members of his organisation savaged a fellow revolutionary.

Tate, the marxist, naturally refused to go to the police for satisfaction against his assailants. So he appealed, not to the cops, but to the labour movement. He circulated a letter to a number of leftist papers outlining the events as he had experienced them, and bluntly stating his opinion that Healy had directed the assault.

But within a week two of the papers which had published the letter, PEACE NEWS and SOCIALIST LEADER appeared with humble retractions and apologies, similarly worded, prominently displayed. What had happened? Healy's lawyer had worked through Tate's letter and found material which was legally actionable: they then threatened Peace News and Socialist Leader with the lawcourts, and these immediately fell on their knees and offered Healy ten Guineas each to spare them! Healy's solicitors also wrote to Tate demanding that he stop "slandering" their client. Tate has defied them and, significantly, Healy has not gone to court. The NEWSLETTER republished both retractions - but made no attempt to explain politically what it was all about. Their excuse? It was - where they had put it - in the hands of the lawyers! Healy went to law -- Tate didn't. And it is clear who comes out best in this sad tale.

Anybody with experience of the SLL will not doubt that Tate's version is the true one. As far as we are concerned only two questions arise: how on earth can such antics have come to be a feature of a self-proclaimed Trotskyists organisation? And what to do about it?

## II

The SLL is the most hated organisation on the left, and that isn't altogether to their discredit, nor entirely due to incidents such as the above. But this sort of thing allows the fake left to avoid replying politically to many of the correct things the SLL says, in general, and about themselves in particular. No doubt the soft Labour left is sincerely grateful that its most strident critic usually sounds shrill with hysteria: if Healy didn't exist all these Centrist-opportunist groups might have to invent him as a bogey. Their debt to him is incalculable. We want to dissociate

ourselves entirely from this attitude to the SLL. But because we have a common ground with the SLL on so many things we feel even more strongly a need to denounce incidents such as the above.

To understand the SLL and the malaise that affects it we must understand the general movement out of which it has crystallised: it is an overcompensation for all the fears, frustrations and cowardliness of the traditional British Left. A revolutionary organisation in an environment phlegmatic with the notorious sluggishness of the British Labour movement, conditioned also by a quarter century of capitalist boom, which has seen the ever rightward drift of social democracy and the senile decay of the CPs. Between the two, a large variety of small groups, some of them 'marxist', vegetate with little hope, losing sight of the revolutionary Marxist perspectives for the future, and failing, above all, to prepare for them.

The SLL's current phase began as a response to the development of an opportunist wing in Trotskyism, which it saw as mainly the result of a growing gap between the basic theory of the movement and the actual existence of its members living in the sluggish and bureaucratic labour organisations. This had led to the abandonment of the struggle against the labour bureaucracies and in some cases, illusions in a revolutionary potential from all sorts of labour, stalinist and even petit bourgeois groups. It is said that at one stage of the Bevan movement the SLL leaders were themselves among those who developed illusions in the centrists. Be that as it may. Once they shook out of it they correctly insisted that the solution to the problem was only to be found in practice, in a rejuvenated approach to the day to day work, keeping the task of organising an alternative leadership, a revolutionary party, as the guideline for all practical work. After Hungary they absorbed a number of potentially healthy streams from the CP.

But for tiny organisations it is easy to fall prey to delusions, to substitute auto-suggested wish enactment for reality; the revolutionary subjectivism of the SLL leadership led them to caricature their own initially healthy rejection of pseudo-marxist fatalism in favour of Bolshevik activism. Soon they wound up, in practice, insisting that it was all a matter of will. The real world began to be faded out of the picture -- their miscalculations, the false pride engendered by modest successes, internal clique rule arising from an essential conception of "the doctrine" as holy writ, which must be protected from rough hands, all combined to hustle the SLL into a sectarian corner. A nationally isolated organisation (its FI is largely one more projection of its own wishes) it ignores the world situation of capitalism entirely and convinces itself that the present period in Britain is a "directly pre-revolutionary" period. To underline the absurdity of this position, the fact remains that there can never be a mechanically revolutionary situation apart from the preparedness of the working class.

They are forced to explain the lack of mass interest in their slogans, and their own virtual isolation in this "pre-revolutionary situation" by evolving absurd theories, sanctified even in their conference statements (see NEWSLETTER report of 1965 conference) about some super-revolutionary qualities in youth under 20! They concentrate almost completely on youth, - where they have some influence initially gained in saner days - and are entirely cut off from the labour movement.

Even when what they say is correct their practice renders them impotent in their abstract correctness. In the Seamen's strike, for instance, their analysis was correct, but their sectarian frustration at their own lack of influence led to their stupid attempts to artificially parachute their "super-revolutionary" youth into the struggle,

and thus they alienated the very seamen that their 'correct' analysis should have drawn to them, to the benefit of both.

A revolutionary organisation is either revolutionary and capable of integrating with the working class as it actually exists, without sacrificing its own identity - or it is impotent. The sharpness of the SLL is achieved at the price of divorcement from the class: it is impotent because its day to day practice is not an attempt to build up organically with the class. It has turned full circle and its activities are as irrelevant to genuinely revolutionary politics as those of the right opportunists it began by denouncing. It is reduced to a single catch-cry for all occasions - "the crisis of leadership" - but its antics cut it off from any possibility of solving that crisis. Its Marxism is Holy Writ, worshipped rather than used as a tool.

But at the same time its militancy and evocation of the heroic period of Bolshevism attracts enough people to turn the organisational seriousness and ability of the leadership into the nucleus of a sizeable sect. But its strength as a sect - recipees to impose on history, narrowness, leader-cult, vicious hostility towards divergencies - cuts it off from the masses, and sets a sharp limit on its potential development.

This is the background to the SLL's stifling internal regime, its continual state of siege and crisis, devil hunting and witch burning, (internally and in the Newsletter) and the mentality and 'incidents' which arise from these.

### III

There is usually a big demand for sticks with which to beat the SLL: that is why it important to approach the present case carefully. The problem of how to react to the SLL is permanently with the other left groups: thuggery and threats of it are not confined to Ernie Tate - but his is a more serious case, of a man isolated from his comrades and defenceless against half a dozen thugs.

The right of free speech is a prerequisite of a civilised working class democracy. Its suppression by violence is always the expression of a deep malaise. With the Social-Democrat butchers of Communists after WWI in Eastern and Central Europe, it signified their open enlistment as bourgeois mercenaries, and with stalinists it signified their growing antagonism to the working class and all honest Marxists. That was Lenin's view. In 1923 he broke off relations with a personal friend, Ordjonikidze and demanded that he be tried and expelled by the Party, because he had resorted to personal violence in a political dispute with a Georgian Bolshevik. Lenin appreciated that it was a symptom of a deep disorder - this time of bureaucratic handling of the national question. With the SLL it signals the gap between their activities and reality, and the sectarianism which drives the leadership to acts which they know are indefensible before the labour movement.

How to deal with the SLL? The IWG is far from disagreeing with many of the comments of the SLL on the Left groups - but we are even further from accepting their right to terrorise working class political opponents. The SLL yet remains a tendency within the left, and it is our job to control it. Two years ago certain LP 'Marxists' allowed themselves to unite with the LP bureaucrats and the police and expel from the LP SLL members who were allegedly threatening a disturbance in a YS branch. This, we feel, is an example of how not to fight the SLL. It means crossing the line and committing a crime far bigger than the SLL's. Self reliance is the only approach. There are sufficient forces on the left in the broader sense to ensure its own democratic freedom of discussion, without lining up with the direct agents of the class enemy. In the thirties, Trotskyist rights to distribute anti-stalinist literature were defended from stalinist thugs by WORKERS' DEFENCE SQUADS FOR DEMOCRACY. There

Continued on p. 40

# WHERE THE HILLSIDE MEN HAVE SOWN —

## 40 YEARS OF THE i.r.a.

by Gery Lawless

"Ireland occupies a position among the nations of the earth unique ... in the possession of what is known as a physical force party - a party, that is to say, whose members are united upon no one point, and agreed upon no single principle, except the use of physical force as the sole means of settling the dispute between the people of this country and the governing power of Great Britain .... The latterday high-falutin hillside man exalts into a principle that which the revolutionaists of other countries have looked upon as a weapon, and in his gatherings prohibits all discussion of those principles which formed the main strength of his prototypes elsewhere and made the successful use of that weapon possible. Our people have glided at different periods of the past century from moral force agitation, so called, into physical force rebellion, from constitutionalism into insurrectionism, meeting in each the same failure and the same disaster, and yet seem as far as ever from learning the great truth that neither method is ever likely to be successful until they first insist that a perfect agreement upon the end to be attained should be arrived at as a starting-point of all our efforts. .... Every revolutionary movement in Ireland has drawn the bulk of its adherents from the ranks of disappointed followers of defeated constitutional movements. After having exhausted their constitutional efforts in striving to secure such a modicum of political power as would justify them to their own consciences in taking a place as loyal subjects of the British Empire, they, in despair, turn to thoughts of physical force as a means of attaining their ends. Their conception of what constitutes freedom was in no sense changed or revolutionised; they still believed in the political form of freedom which had been their ideal in their constitutional days; but no longer hoping for it from the Acts of the British Parliament, they swung over into the ranks of the 'physical force' men as the only means of attaining it". (Second emphasis mine - G.L.)

James Connolly: Socialism and Nationalism. pp53/54. From Workers' Republic  
July 1899.

Partition, coupled with bourgeois stagnation for 40 years, has kept the 'physical force' men in business and Sinn Fein has substituted for a "revolutionary left" for half a century now, during the National upsurge and afterwards. If the bourgeois domination of Republicanism in the 1916/21 period, and the absence within it of a conscious working class force armed with a clear programme of struggle for a republic of the working people, led to its collapse in 1922, the situation resulting from that collapse gave an unprecedented boost to the modern version of the old Physical force movement.

Any revolutionary socialist organisation in Ireland must make clear its position on traditional Republicanism. This is of course the anniversary of the last guerrilla campaign, and a good opportunity to examine not only the details of that

campaign, but also the background to recent developments in Sinn Fein, including its adoption of a slight "socialist" tinge.

Since the Civil War the pattern traced by Connolly has been moving in reverse, in the form of waves of physical force men towards constitutional normality. It is a pattern of zig-zags between attempts at constitutional activity, and weak guerilla sorties, these organically linked together by periods of sterile inactivity in both spheres. It oscillates from boycotting and isolated, unsupported, guerilla tactics, to 'opportunism'. The logic of boycotting/terror tactics by a small minority induces feelings of impotence that generate new upsurges of bourgeois opportunism -- which, being but the other side of the one coin, leads in its frustration back to a new round of pseudo-revolutionary sterility and posturing, futile despite the very real sacrifices of IRA activists. Usually the legalist swing takes the form of a split-off -- Fianna Fail, Clann na Poblachta .... and now once more a section of Sinn Fein seems ready to follow the tracks of its elder brothers along the high road of normal bourgeois politics! A new abortion is about to be delivered, and few will be surprised - since the end of the last guerilla campaign this has been very much on the cards, in accordance with the familiar swing of the pendulum.

## I

### ROUND ONE -- FIANNA FAIL

After the Civil War, ending as it did with only the embryonic C.P. attempting to develop a revolutionary workers movement, and the exploratory steps of Mellows and his comrades towards proletarian socialism obliterated by the Free State executioners, the Sinn Fein rump remained as the main opposition to the Free State establishment. The pathological self-effacement of its official leaders made Labour a negligible quantity; and the mass demoralisation of that time of disappointment and defeat bred inertia, entrenching them in their positions and making a quick development of influence for the tiny I.C.P. impossible.

The anti-Treatyites, boycotting the Free State Parliament, retained the support of large areas of Ireland, particularly in the South and West, which the Free State government had had to conquer from the sea like a foreign territory. Politically Sinn Fein remained fixed in the attitude of official National Unity against Imperialism, resting its claims on the elections to the Second Dail. Cutting itself off from the road of Mellows, it was impotent.

Then, in the mid-twenties, the first of the characteristic breakaways occurred, that of Fianna Fail. At the end of 1925 the Convention of the IRA withdrew recognition from De Valera's rump Second Dail (the 'Republican Government'), constituting itself as the supreme authority for the allegedly extant Irish Republic: the IRA became an exclusively military organisation. Fianna Fail was founded in May 1926, De Valera having finally split from Sinn Fein on the issue of utilising Free State legality. He took most of the old anti-Treaty forces with him: the rump of Sinn Fein did not even contest the September 1927 elections. On August 10th 1927 De Valera entered the Dail, and hard line Sinn Fein had lost its major forces.

The evolution of Fianna Fail is not unknown: adroitly using the question of the Annuities it was by 1932 the main parliamentary party, soon emerging as the major conservative force in Ireland. For 35 years now, the former uncompromising Republicans, the physical force men of 1922, have provided a military garrison for one side of the partition which the split Irish bourgeoisie and British Imperialism have erected in Ireland. Never slow to preach love of Ireland and demand loyalty "to the nation", and thus subordinate the workers to themselves, they actively assist in maintaining the present division of the country.

Was it not a remarkable evolution? From the most violent "revolutionism" to equally determined quietism, both socially and in relation to Imperialism. There was no great purge to which one can point as the change-over. How explain it? Current Sinn Fein supporters will say: "They betrayed". But did they not merely act according to the nature of their political species? We will find the evidence on which to judge the issue in the subsequent history of the rump IRA which did not join Fianna Fail in its evolution.

Recognising neither of the two statelets, the IRA continued through the later twenties as an army recruited on one issue to the exclusion of all others, and seeing the national question as the ONE BIG SOLUTION to all ills. The rump Sinn Fein leadership let Fianna Fail take the lead in the land annuities campaign - no mean achievement considering that one of the leaders of the IRA, Peadar O'Donnell, was the unofficial originator of that movement. This was a period of the most pure physical forcism; as now they absorbed energy from real social tensions and struggles, but directed it into the ground in the manner of a lightning conductor. In this period the IRA had between 15,000 and 20,000 members left.

Looking back 40 years we see the zig-zag pattern: but there was of course the alternative possibility, the emergence of a revolutionary workers movement which could have pushed Sinn Fein aside, absorbing the rank and file working-farmer and proletarian members. These are the real victims, befuddled by the bourgeois ideology of the sterile, exclusively nationalist movement, prevented from arriving at a genuine revolutionism. Why did a revolutionary workers' party fail to emerge?

#### FAILURE OF THE ALTERNATIVE

Naturally the big pole of attraction for leftward moving elements at this period was the Irish section of the Third International, the Irish Workers League. But already this organisation was in decline as a revolutionary force. At the end of the twenties it took the absurdly 'left' positions of Stalin's "Third Period", which declared Social Democrats etc to be fascists and led to the complete isolation of the Communist Parties, and the liquidation of their influence in the broader labour movement. In Germany this led to blindness towards the Nazis, who were allowed to come to power without a fight, despite the great, but unused, strength of the CP; in Britain a position of influence with the Trade Unions and the Labour Party was wiped out in the wave of blind sectarian mania.

All this, weakening the revolutionary working class in Europe, also weakened it in Ireland. As elsewhere, it led to a strengthening of the right wing labour opportunists, and above all weakened the power of the Party to grow and attract poten-

tial revolutionaries. When this attack of Madness was over, the Comintern passed through a brief watershed period before emerging at the Seventh, and last, Congress in 1935 as an explicitly opportunist, anti-revolutionary organisation, concerned not with consolidating the proletariat as a revolutionary force to fight world imperialism, but more with using oppositionist forces as pawns in the game of alliances being played by the Russian bureaucrats with some capitalist powers. By the mid-thirties when this trend had clearly emerged the Stalinists had a growing influence on leftward moving elements of the IRA - but now it took its place as another blind alley, side by side with the Fianna Fail trend and the pure and simple physical force men. But though it was incapable of being a serious revolutionary alternative, it was still all too capable of disruption.

In this period of the Great Depression and general political ferment, when Fianna Fail was showing itself up, there was an intense striving by the rank and file towards a more consistently social revolutionary stand. That could still only be a communist stand. Despite everything the Stalinist party had a growing influence, and not only in the 1934 Republican Congress. 200 Irish Volunteers, mostly IRA, formed the "James Connolly" Section and went to fight for the Spanish Republic, recognising a common struggle. The Spanish events would have transformed the outlook for the workers of Europe and the world, had the Spanish working class been allowed to consolidate the power they had won. But it was here that the CPs delivered the goods to the capitalists - hoping in Stalin's name to persuade them that they didn't need fascists to control the workers. The Popular Front disarmed the Spanish workers and turned victory into defeat. This had a depressing effect on the workers of all Europe, including Ireland. A proletarian victory in Spain would have shown the way forward to the many Irish sympathisers attracted by that struggle. Clearly it had an attractive power for the best activists remaining in the IRA, who would have made an incomparable revolutionary core for a proletarian party.

Meanwhile in Ireland the C.P.I. moved decisively to the right, towards illusions in Fianna Fail, and began to lose the ability to appeal to genuine revolutionaries. As early as the 1935 Comintern Congress Sean Murray admitted a tendency to tail after Fianna Fail. But this was the Congress which institutionalised that sort of abandonment of a revolutionary perspective throughout the world -- and Murray's "self-criticism" was in fact not signal for a return to Bolshevism but the prelude to open illusions in Fianna Fail. By the late thirties it had lost both the desire and the ability to lead IRA sympathisers forward from Sinn Fein conceptions to proletarian internationalism. Adopting the line of least resistance, it cynically donned the garb of the most narrow nationalism, accomodating to the existing conceptions of the IRA, when the task was so clearly to change and deepen that consciousness of society initially expressed in nationalism. The CPI was to continue long enough as a force to play the recruiting sergeant's drums in 1941 in the interests of the British Empire.

Thus the thirties, which could have seen the emergence of a genuinely revolutionary alternative, on an independent base, to physical forcists and bourgeois 'opportunists' alike, passed with nothing gained, despite the rank and file's constant sponateous striving towards a new orientation. The decade had opened ominously with the Stalinist "Third Period" mania, passed through a betrayal of the German,



Spanish and French workers, and ended with the Hitler/Stalin Pact and the Imperialist World War.

The modern physical force movement had continued, impotent and frozen in the grip of sterile bourgeois nationalism, yet alive and sometimes capable of growing, not so much by its own dynamism as by the weakness of its substitutes. Sections of the IRA, starting out from abstract republicanism, had been drawn towards the left, to seek a base in the working class - and they had been disappointed and betrayed by the stalinist corruption. Not only were the IRA groups which turned left disorientated, but a flow of recruits from the new generations was assured the IRA by the utter failure of an independent revolutionary workers party to develop on its own axis: the labour movement in all these decades has been left to the worst reformists, as has the whole Irish working class been left to stew in the peculiarities of its own conditions, unaided by the success of the European workers in countries where victory was more than possible.

## II

### THE 1939 CAMPAIGN AND AFTER

With the consolidation of Fianna Fail and the failure of the revolutionary socialist alternative to establish itself, the pendulum swung back again towards an unsupported and unprepared guerilla campaign, from 1939 onwards. The pattern had firmly established itself.

A foredoomed ultimatum to the British Government in January 1939 led to the bombing campaign in England. Opposition to this policy within the IRA seems to have centred on those who had a perspective of using the British difficulties not to strike at British Imperialism - but simply to declare a 26 Co. Republic as a face-saving prelude to lining up loyally in the "anti-Fascist" camp. This was, of course, the stalinist line; it is a measure of how low they had sunk and how far they had travelled from even the remote possibility of providing a genuinely revolutionary alternative to the aloof and mystical petit-bourgeois leadership headed now by Russell. In their propaganda for the "democracies" the stalinists ignored the fact that the monstrous and "fascist" side of France and Britain was exported overseas to places like India and Indo-China. The IRA was naturally not so forgetful, and indeed few Irishmen could easily achieve the mental association of the "democratic anti-fascists" with the British Empire. This policy was bound to be a non-starter.

### HOW NOT TO FIGHT IMPERIALISM

And so the IRA's hand of retribution fell on England .... but it was a light hand by any standards. The plan was to strike at power centres etc. But the congenital inefficiency of the organisation, aggravated by the harrying of the Fianna Fail government, reduced any effectiveness it might have had. In modern wars resources and productivity are decisive. The only way to beat a superior military technique is to disrupt it from within. For proletarian revolutionaries this means extending the class call into the enemy's camp: with this weapon the Bolsheviks succeeded in defeating vastly superior military forces. But the IRA's outlook excluded this, and, reduced to a confrontation of military technique, the campaign was :

ludicrously ineffective. By its 'nation against nation' approach it helped to alienate the only potentially decisive ally which could have been called in to tip the balance against the British ruling class; and the Imperialist propagandists were provided with ample material to feed British nationalism.

We are not preaching a naive propaganda appeal to the British working class, which has still to clearly separate its own identity from that of its rulers (a confusion sanctified by nationalism). What was needed was to prepare links with the advanced elements in the British labour movement, but this could only have been done by a workers' party in Ireland. The IRA instead aided the Imperialists to present the case to the British workers in the worst light (though a number of unfortunate accidents in the campaign also contributed). The British workers actively sabotaged the intervention by British troops in Bolshevik Russia. It could - were its class interests involved - have thrown aside nationalism and come to the aid of the Irish workers too.

The issue of bombing in England is not one of principle. All sections of all oppressed nations have a right to wage war on their oppressors. Here it is a question of appraising for their effectiveness the methods which its outlook led the IRA to adopt. The results of the 'invasion' bear out our contention that it was the least efficient way to achieve the desired end. On the issue of principle suffice it point out that the British Trotskyists at that time, when British chauvinism was at its height both before and during the war, openly defended the right of the IRA to fight the Empire. They also defended the IRA victims of Imperialism at a time when "His Majesty's Communist Party" supported the hanging of Republicans. But at the same time they pointed to what was wrong with the tactics and conceptions of the IRA and advocated the Bolshevik programme as an alternative. (As did the Irish Trotskyists who had some following in the Dublin Fianna Eireann in the 1939/41 period).

Likewise the question of working with the Germans was in principle no better and no worse than working with any other Imperialism. But the "Foreign policy" of the IRA was blind because they could see only British Imperialism. The victory of either Imperialist camp held a grim future in store for Ireland's workers, who stood to gain from neither the modern King nor the modern Kaiser - only the victory of the working class could offer a real way out: but the IRA was entirely unable to prepare for this. Hence the history of the I.R. in that period is also one of blunders and tragic waste. Any Irish Republic set up under the tutelage of the German Empire would have been, at the very best, no better than a 'Republic' under the British and the bourgeoisie - and other possibilities also existed.

While denouncing both Imperialist camps we need not ignore the more degenerate form of capitalist barbarism represented by the Nazis. For the working class - or small nations - it is not necessarily true that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. In this case it certainly was not true. But the Russells' world outlook was too narrow for issues more complicated than 'for or against Britain'. In principle, the IRA had every right to gain any advantages from England's enemies. But only the most blinkered bourgeois republicans, playing with abstractions, could have expected gains from the German Empire. A victorious Germany would have played England's role in Ireland. The only road for revolutionaries was that of the

workers revolution against world Imperialism - and the IRA was unaware of that road's existence.

ROUND TWO : CLANN NA POBLACHTA.

The inevitable pattern reasserted itself:- we now reach the tale of the open emergence of the physical force men of 1939 as a Fianna Fail-type ordinary bourgeois party. They follow the physical force men of 1922 who had travelled the same road in the late twenties, the second big wave to go over the top, shedding the benefit of physical force camouflage, into the fire of open bourgeois politics.

Thwarted in its drive against Britain; suppressed by Fianna Fail with totalitarian thoroughness; feeling its own impotence like a great stone on its back, the movement splintered internally, producing savage fights, bitter recriminations and virtually an internal civil war. The new Fianna Fail which emerged from the chaos was Clann Na Poblachta, formed from a combination of disillusioned IRA members and partially repentant Fianna Fail, and led by Sean MacBride. With a programme of formal Republicanism and verbal radicalism, it grew after 1945, rising on a wave of disillusionment with Fianna Fail. (In its decline it was to throw that support back to Fianna Fail). It benefited also from the vacuum in effective revolutionary politics,, and a split in the Labour Party.

MacBride's group had earlier been connected with Saor Eire, banned at the beginning of the thirties as "communistic". We must remember this fact if we are to learn the lesson that vagueness and a platonic calling out of Connolly's name is not enough: this is becoming particularly important now, with the growing popularity of left phrases in Ireland.

In the post war crisis period Clann Na Poblachta won ten seats, and the balance in the Dail. How did this junior edition of Fianna Fail behave? It joined the strangest coalition of history, comprising the then two Labour parties, and the Free State ex-blueshirts of Fine Gael! The erstwhile pseudo revolutionaries emerged as a normal bourgeois party; their mask vanished overnight. Impotently confined within bourgeois society, they could not change either the economic relations with Imperialism or the political relationships - so they organised a change of name, declaring the Free State a Republic! Then, having created a brave new paper Republic, they proved just how nominal the change was, when they balked at a social reform as mild as the Mother and Child scheme.

Dr. Noel Browne, the Clann Na Poblachta Minister of Health, presented a free-health plan to cover mothers, and children up to the age of 16. The medical profession objected; and the red-robed reverend neanderthallers insisted on a means test. The Cabinet split. And Clann Na Poblachta? MacBride in panic asked Browne to resign! Thus, with amazing speed, the new contender was exposed as a pale shadow of Fianna Fail. The coalition fell and Clann Na Poblachta declined very rapidly indeed.

Was this another Fianna Fail-type "betrayal"? Or had they both acted according to their very nature? Increasingly, the whole series of developments, including the current constitutionalisation move, is best explained by the picture Connolly drew 70 years ago. When they descend from the hills, the bourgeois character of the abstract republicanism is quickly made visible.

### III

With the decline of Clann Na Poblachta the circular spin continued: back to physical force. By now the revolutionary socialist alternative didn't get a look in. At the beginning of the 1950s the IRA began to take on flesh again. A groundswell of recruits soon passed the 1,000 mark. The United Irishman was founded. A split on tactics and degrees of militancy led to the growth of a minority, more militant group side by side with the IR./Sinn Fein - Saor Uladh, led by Liam Kelly. Allied to Saor Uladh was the Chrystal section of the IRA. The resulting campaign, the last, continued officially until 1962. 300 men engaged actively in the fighting; 7 RUC died, 36 were wounded; 93 - 4m. damage was done.

#### THE UNITED IRISHMAN ON THE 1956 CAMPAIGN: WHO NEED NOT BE ASHAMED?

This last effort is discussed in the Dec. 1966 United Irishman. The ditorial must be the most smug piece of self-accounting possible for even the most irresponsible leaders of any movement. It is not even honest. They demonstrate that theirs is the tradition of bluff and distortion of lessons that are vital for the future. They present a front of contentment, with everything in the best light for themselves; but in reality the picture was far from being so nice. It was a picture of blunders (as usual) mixed with viciousness towards those who struggled vainly against the incompetent leaders.

The articles in United Irishman are a compilation of lies, half truths and evasion. Saor Uladh is nowhere mentioned and the impression deliberately given that the IRA was alone in the field: but it was Saor Uladh which began the campaign independently with the burning of the 6 customs posts along the border on Armistice Day 1956 - more than a month before the 'official' campaign began. In the Role of Honour Aloysius Hand is listed, and the inference is that he was of the IRA ... but he was a member of Saor Uladh. During his political life he was slandered and ostracised by the IRA and Sinn Fein in Monaghan in the most viciously sectarian manner, by institutionalised leaders who feared for their own control. For years they ignored his death. And now they silently slot his name into their Role of Honour! But still no mention is made of his comrade Connie Green, killed in 1955. Why? Because they must preserve the fiction that there was no activity before their official campaign began in Dec. 1956. Even in tearful eulogies to their dead they tamper with the records, behaving like sordid bureaucrats!

They boast about the preparatory arms raid on Armagh barracks in June 1954, but do not mention that over half the participants had been expelled by 1956, and slandered as police spies and British agents (see United Irishman, Oct. and Nov. 1956). The Omagh raid of Oct. 1954 is mentioned, but not to draw lessons from the blind stupidity and disorganisation which marked it. A number of incidents will demonstrate the chaos and indifferent attitude of some of the leaders. When it was realised that the raid had failed, the order to retreat was given. A lorry waiting to remove the men was ordered to leave, the driver on questioning this being told that alternative transport was in use. This was not the case, and the result was the abandonment of part of the Dublin Unit, many of whom were captured. Some ran the 20 miles to the border, and made their way to a rendezvous in Monaghan Town; and there they found the then Chief of Staff .... standing before a blazing fire with

his overcoat pulled up at the rear, warming his backside! Two Dublin Volunteers had to be restrained from shooting him down. It was to reassert the authority of dedicated revolutionaries such as this man, in face of a mutiny by Co. Tyrone Republicans, that Omagh was picked for the raid in the first place. There were far better targets. When the remnants of the Dublin Unit demanded an enquiry into the raid it was refused - on the grounds that the officer in charge (who was in no way to blame for the fiasco) was in jail!

Again, United Irishman boasts about the raid at Arbourfield barracks, Berkshire in 1955. And again the subsequent expulsion of the bulk of those who took part is ignored. The Arbourfield raid shows the fantastic bureaucracy at work and explains the incompetence of the organisation in general: after the raid volunteers were faced with the greatest hue and cry there had been in England for a decade. Reaching many "safe" houses they had the doors slammed in their faces. The person given the job of arranging safe houses had been dismissed for reporting that not enough were available! The truth of the Arbourfield raid is that the bourgeois leadership needed it as a vote-getter in the second round of the 1955 Six-County elections.

Another item highlights the work of the Republican Publicity Bureau which, says United Irishman "built up a reputation for integrity and truthfulness". In fact the R.P.B., the voice of the narrow sectarians who led the IRA, more than once aided the state against Saor Uladh. R.P.B. disclaimers of Saor Uladh activities, in the name of "The Republican movement", played into the hands of the Special Branch. Once the R.P.B. issued a statement disclaiming a 'job', Special Branch and the RUC knew who to look for. In 1957 when members of Dublin Saor Uladh were arrested and charged with armed robbery at an explosives dump, workers refused to identify them. Some days later the R.P.B. denounced the raid, and the denunciation was used by the police to persuade the witnesses to identify those whom the police said were "Dublin gangsters" -- Sean Geraghty and Joe Chrystal. Saor Uladh conveyed the truth to these workers just in time for them to retract their evidence.

The main article says that in 1958 the Cypriot EOKA made contact with the IRA and joint plans to release Irish and Cypriot prisoners were laid, these being broken off when the Cypriot struggle ended and the EOKA prisoners were released. This is not quite the truth. In 1958 the more militant members of EOKA contacted the more militant Republicans - i.e. Nicky Samson contacted Joe Chrystal. The 'dialogue' did not end: the EOKA militants played their part in releasing Joseph Murphy from Wakefield jail in 1959. The only member of the 'official' movement involved was the prisoner -- and he too has now (1966) been expelled!

An Cumann Cabhrach is credited with the "Herculean labour" of caring for the prisoners' dependents. This is a lie. It is also a slander, because if An Cumann Cabhrach successfully cared for all prisoners' dependents, then those who formed the Irish Political Prisoners Fund must have been guilty of false pretences. Sinn Fein refused aid to the dependents of those who would not accept its discipline in jail. One man treated thus had lost a leg in the ambush in which Aloysius Hand died. Still, at meeting after meeting in New York in 1958 Sinn Fein spokesmen gave assurances that no discrimination was being practiced in the distribution of money .... False pretences?

No, it is not as pleasant a picture as they paint it in the United Irishman. And the

putrefaction emerges more clearly still in view of the situation inside the Curragh Camp.

In the first year in the camp twelve men who between them had taken part in the Arbourfield raid, the first Roslea raid, the return to Armagh and the return to Omagh; two of whom had been continuously on the run from '55 to their internment in '57; five of whom had been members of the first Column to move North; all but two of whom had been involved in the opening shots of the Campaign (11.XI.56, not 12.XII.56) -- these twelve were deliberately and systematically ostracised by the other prisoners on the orders of the Camp OC, Thomas MacCurtain. Any prisoner who associated with them was himself victimised. Clothing and foodstuffs sent in by sympathisers and intended for all were denied them. Why? Because the twelve refused the discipline of MacCurtain - who had been elected OC at a meeting to which they were refused admission! Only the official leaders' ability and willingness to cut off aid from the dependents of those who refused this discipline within the camp allowed them to impose this shamelessly sectarian regime on the other prisoners.

### SINN FEIN'S CONTRADICTIONS

The reason for this regime is clearly the contradictions within Sinn Fein and the IRA. Itself bourgeois, it regards the Free State Republic and its Establishment as its own kith and kin, and therefore cracked down viciously on members who saw the habitually peaceful submission of cornered volunteers to the Free State police as illogical. These second rate bourgeois took on the job of waging a national war without either the Northern or Southern bourgeois rulers backing them; they at the same time undertook to keep the movement of small farmers' sons and workers, which they attracted to their banner, firmly within bourgeois conceptions. Thus arose the conflict and the internal bureaucracy. The leaders came into conflict with rank and filers who took seriously their propaganda about all out national war against internal as well as external enemies of Republicanism, for on no account would they fight the internal enemies of Republicanism - the bourgeoisie. Above all, discussion of social questions was forbidden -- and many of the current Sinn Fein "socialists" were the most active in expelling volunteers they found discussing social questions.

Saor Uladh were more serious in approach, rejecting much of the traditional outlook of the 'hillside men'. They felt under no obligation to keep faith with an enemy whose strength was superior force; tactically they recognised the courts; they rejected the official line that RUC and Dublin Special Branch should not be shot at. Most important, they tended to face the fact, religiously denied by Sinn Fein and IRA, that it is not merely a question of 'British occupied Ireland' but of the tie-up of both sections of Irish capitalism, as the local garrison of Imperialism; and that it was a question of civil war against this garrison, on both sides of the Border. Largely made up of workers, Saor Uladh became involved in Dublin unemployed struggles, helping to form unemployed defence groups in 1958. It also became involved in land agitation in Kerry. It tried to link up with the world movement against Colonialism, thus departing from the traditional myopia of seeing only British Imperialism, and had contact with EOKA and the FLN. The tendency of Saor Uladh, striving to escape the contradictions of traditional Republicanism, is clear. But as a body it did not succeed in adopting a clear revolutionary working class

perspective. However, its conflicts with the IRA had the effect of starting a number of its worker members on the road to a Marxist class consciousness.

There is a further contradiction within Sinn Fein, and that is the discrepancy between its basically petit bourgeois ideal and present day reality. Despite its recent adoption of a slight 'socialist' coloration, its ideal is an image of small capitalism as it was 150 years ago, of small-island self-sufficiency. But when they find themselves in power, reality dominates, and they quickly fall in with the prevailing forces of modern society; demonstrating that the petit bourgeoisie, stratified and non-homogenous, cannot play an independent role today, they very soon emerge without their ideal as common or garden bourgeois social conservatives, merging with the top layers of society and dominating, in their interests, the lower levels of the petit bourgeoisie.

The absence of a serious social policy in Sinn Fein really amounts to acceptance of the status quo; by forbidding discussion of the question of class domination, it aids the powers that do dominate in Irish society. In denying class conflict, it tends to disguise its own class character: its inability, through a lack of any proletarian policy, to heal the bourgeois/imperialist-fostered split in the working class. Too often, in fact, the implication of such gross IRA simplifications as "British occupied Ireland" could lead to attempting to conquer by force the northern workers; a conception which is best calculated to perpetuate the division of the country. But what unity could there ever be on the basis of their mystical, utopian dreams of a return to small capitalism? The only unifying principle is the class one, following Larkin's example of 1907: but to take this road would mean, for these petit bourgeois, committing suicide as a class. So they resort to their "wrap-the-green-flag-around-me" Republicanism, which alienates the northern workers.

The unity of the workers of all Ireland will never be achieved by people with even a vestige left in their heads of the traditional Sinn Fein conceptions, the one threadbare idea of a mythical nationalism -- nor on the basis of a spurious 'national unity', i.e. class collaboration, tying the workers to the bourgeoisie. It will be accomplished by those who destroy the beloved "national unity" of the bourgeoisie and of Sinn Fein - in favour of a worker/small farmer alliance within Ireland, and above all of the international unity of all workers (against both Sinn Fein's 'little Ireland' and the bourgeoisie's economic and political alliances with other bourgeois nations which at the present time threaten to drive many more thousands off the land and into exile); it will take the form of a merciless, continuous campaign to split off and temper in all the fronts of the class struggle the truly revolutionary core of the proletarian class party, fusing it together and freeing it from all vacillators, all opportunists, all who would stop short of proletarian power. Working class unity will be won, not in 'unity' with the bourgeoisie - but against that 'unity'.

#### LIV

#### THE CLASS, THE PARTY .... AND ITS TACTICS.

Trotskyists, the present-day Leninists, habitually argue from the experience of modern history that the most heroic and magnificent spontaneous action by

the masses, if not stiffened and organised with full class consciousness by a Bolshevik-type party, will be defeated. But a 'party' on its own, in virtual isolation from the class, conducting the struggle as a form of single combat with reaction, is an anti-Bolshevik caricature. In a sense this is at the root of many of the IRA's troubles in the last 40 years, in contrast to its more effective past. Cut off from the masses individual incompetence and accidents, though unavoidable in this kind of struggle, became cumulative and weighed the movement down. Whereas in a real mass movement the upward thrust from below, though not removing the need for competent military leadership, compensates for the losses, inefficiencies, accidents, as it did in the 1916-21 period. Since then, with the proletariat as the key explosive element -- the only force which by its leadership is capable of transforming the many struggles of the working farmers from the hopeless death agony of a class that is being wiped out into a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist state and Imperialism -- divorcement from this class has really meant that the IRA is just not revolutionary in relation to the objective needs of the only possible Irish Revolution.

The same is no less true if 'left' slogans are grafted onto the old base, and a nominal 'For Connolly's Workers' Republic' pinned to the masthead. Such talk, of a socialist programme, a Bolshevik party, a workers' republic, demands a proper appreciation of the relationship between the party and the working class, and the building up of this relationship, developing a Bolshevik skeletal structure in the broad labour movement, attempting to lead and co-ordinate struggles, making constant efforts to unite the Northern and Southern workers in their concrete class struggle. It demands a sharply critical approach to the traditional republican conceptions of revolutionary activity. Otherwise these slogans, combined with a largely military idea of the struggle against Imperialism and the Irish bourgeoisie, will produce not a revolutionary Marxist party, but an abortion similar to the Socialist Revolutionary Party in Russia, against which the Bolsheviks fought bitterly.

#### PHYSICAL FORCE -- A PRINCIPLE ?

There are those who fetishise 'physical force'; others who make of it a principle to oppose: those fabians, social democrats and stalinists who, in the words of the Fourth International's Transitional Programme "systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed".

Revolutionary Marxists, however, recognise that it is a practical question, a front of the class struggle which becomes more, or less, important according to the character and events of a given period. Moreover, that direct action of this sort is necessarily a function of the mass struggle, or it is impotent. The Transitional Programme continues: "Only armed workers detachments who feel the solidarity of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands. The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory - and ends in the street. Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In Connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers groups for self defence. It is necessary to write this



slogan into the programme of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organise groups for self defence, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms....."

If that passage treats the question of workers' militias as a defensive weapon, it is because it was written at the end of the thirties when workers' movements were being destroyed all over Europe, largely because of the pacifist cretinism of Stalinists and social democrats alike. But there are also times of the sharpest and most mature struggles (which are usually arrived at after long periods of limited struggles) when the military side comes to the fore decisively. However, whether defensive or otherwise, a militia is a means to an end, and a means which can avail nothing without a revolutionary conception and will, organised in a guiding Party centre, determined on workers' power. Even the best of militias, such as the Irish Citizen Army, can never be a substitute for a Bolshevik party, which is a fusion of the different fronts of the class struggle including the militia. The Early Communist Parties, and other organisations serious about organising the workers against capitalism, always utilised any opportunities, any upsets and struggle to create and strengthen armed workers' militias as auxiliaries of the general party; in fact the absence of attempts to create militias now in places where they have mass support - like France and Italy - is one mark of the decline of the CPs. (They did, in fact, disarm the workers in Europe after World War II).

Finally, in this discussion, it must be remembered that the IRA is not even a workers' militia. And though, as in most armies, workers and small farmers form the majority of its members, what is decisive is - who dominates? Which ideology? Which tactics? Its dominating ideology, as we have seen, is a mystical, narrow, petit bourgeois nationalism, which is entirely contrary to the workers' necessarily International interests.

## V

### THE CURRENT SINN FEIN SITUATION -- ROUND THREE ?

Cheap leftism is common in Ireland now: Connolly's name is bandied about loosely by all sorts of people. Sinn Fein mutters about the betrayal (in '56!) by 'Gombeen capitalism'. Even a chauvinistic Social Democrat like MacAonghusa declares for a workers' Republic! (which should remind us that Ramsay MacDonald once declared for Soviets). This loose phrazemongering is highly dangerous, and demands clarity from us: those who speak of socialism must be faced with a concrete programme of Bolshevism which will either expose them or clarify them.

After another period of stagnation following a bout of nominal activity a section of Sinn Fein has now turned towards legalisation. Sean Caughy took this road in 1965. What must the attitude of the class conscious workers be to this? We stand to gain from a breakaway towards legality by the Sinn Fein 'Right'. Leinster House will quickly show in their true colours those who now pretend to be revolutionary. But our gain is not inevitable: if we succeed in explaining to the honest IRA militants the basic lawfulness of the present movement, its real conservatism, its connection with the past and the nature of Sinn Fein, we can raise the consciousness of some of those who resist the Right swing; but if the opposition to Johnson & Co confines itself to a sterile defence of the old ways (which of course bred present swing) then that will be a defeat for us and a chance missed.

One old bogey drafted in for the current discussion is the question of Parliamentary action. This, as such, is not an issue for revolutionaries. Reformists make a fetish of legality; but fetishising illegality is no less stupid. People who play with Marxist phrases without reference to reality contend that the existence of the IRA has meant a state of dual power in Ireland, preventing 'stabilisation'. Actually the only thing which has been prevented from reaching 'stability' is a genuine revolutionary movement; the 'hills' have merely functioned as a twin safety valve to emigration, to prevent Bourgeois Ireland from bursting at the seams.

Without a doubt a parliamentary break-off from Sinn Fein will be absorbed easily by the system. But that is because they are flesh of the Establishment's flesh: many Sinn Feiners must fear parliament as a temptation. But for those who turn to the working class this does not necessarily apply; they can use parliament as a tactic, knowing that a genuine revolutionary remains so whether working within the bourgeois constitution or outside it. And in reverse, Sinn Fein itself demonstrates that a party which is socially non-revolutionary is no more so, no different, for being unconstitutional. The Bolsheviks managed to utilise the most reactionary of parliaments without becoming less revolutionary - it gave them a platform which, because properly utilised, made them more, not less, effective. The only principle involved is the general one of being able to change one's forms of struggle as the struggle unfolds. In general revolutionaries should only refuse the attempt to utilise reactionary institutions when there is a chance of overthrowing them: only then does rigid non-participation become a matter of principle. In the current Sinn Fein situation it is not entry into the Dail that should be the issue --- but their politics in parliament.

Naturally there are dangers for the best of organisations in each and every tactic: the danger of routinism, timeserving, accomodation etc. There is no guarantee, except the level of consciousness of the revolutionary instrument: the degree of democracy within it, the contact with the masses of the working class - and above all the degree of seriousness with which it continuously clarifies for itself all the steps, possibilities and forces in each situation and at each sharp turn, in the fashion of the Bolsheviks.

#### GRADUALISM AND REVOLUTION

Another false issue is the counterposing of gradualism to guerilla war against the Border. This is the old vulgar counterposing of Evolution and Revolution, which is nonsensical. Revolution is the eruption in the change from quantity to quality; quantitative changes accumulating gradually up to the point of the revolution, and the change-over organically connected with, and presupposing, the previous evolution. There then takes place the unfolding of the accumulation of "20 years in a day". The proletarian revolution presupposes a revolutionary party: this must be built up gradually in limited struggles of the working class, in forging links with the class and between the different fronts of the struggle, educating and tempering its members as the objective situation ripens. In Ireland, it is necessary to rechannel the energy prematurely expended and wasted on the isolated guerilla struggles towards the labour movement. In this situation we must oppose both the idealist "revolution now" idea, and the vulgar modern Stalinist-Fabians with their new faith in the "inevitability of gradualness": and fight both these illusions in the name of a realistic Bolshevik policy of building and preparation for the future ripening and revolution.

On the Border question, ideally we would favour a revolutionary war against Imperialism. But for 40 years now there have been few takers for this. And failing a revolutionary reorganisation in the 1920 period, the present evolution and rapprochement of the bourgeoisie is the result. The story of the IRA efforts to organise a war on the North and England is at best a tale of sound and fury told by a mystic and serving to illustrate the truth of Connolly's perception of the nature of the pure physical force movement: the only possible revolutionary ending of the Border is as an incidental in a proletarian revolution.

The position we are in dictates a period of slow uphill work; this is the prerequisite for any action against either the Imperialists or the bourgeoisie. It means for IRA activists not abandonment of militancy in favour of contemplative 'marxism' — but an effort to understand the Bolshevik type of activism in the class struggle on the basis of a scientific analysis, learning to feel history's pulse as opposed to raging helplessly at it and dissipating vital energy. Our job is not to speculate on developments but to prepare a serious revolutionary organisation firmly based on the working class struggles. THIS IS THE IMMEDIATE TASK AND ANYTHING THAT DETRACTS FROM IT MUST BE FIRMLY PUT ASIDE.

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GRAMSCI, Contd. from p.11.

From its hands, calloused from their sole work of accumulating private wealth, the torch of science and the sacred lamp of life have fallen. Ours is the task of taking them up, ours the task of making them glow with new light.

In the accumulation of ideas transmitted to us by the millenium of work and thought there are elements which have eternal value, which cannot and must not perish. The loss of consciousness of these values is one of the most serious signs of the degradation brought about by the bourgeois regime; to them everything becomes an object of trade and a weapon of war.

The proletariat, having conquered social power, will have to take on the work of reconquest, to restore in full for itself and all humanity the devastated realm of the spirit. This is what the Russian workers, guided by Maxim Gorky, are doing today; this must begin to be done wherever the proletariat is approaching the maturity necessary for social change. The decay at the top must be replaced by new, stronger life from below.

August 23, 1919.

A GARICATURE OF TROTSKYISM. Contd. from p.25.

There is no other way to deal with the SLL. They must not be suppressed, but neither can they be allowed to suppress their critics and opponents. The Left must take steps to ensure its own democracy; if it doesn't it deserves a situation where the bully boys have things all their own way.

# new 'treaty' of brest litovsk



Mistress to Kafka.

Margareta Buber-Neumann, Secker & Warburg. 45s.

It's a smallish world. Milena Jezenska, a Czech journalist of some talent, forms the link here between two people better known, who in every respect would seem literally worlds apart. Greta Neumann was for 16 years a member of the German CP, and was married to one of its most prominent members, Hans Neumann. Franz Kafka is known for his stories, novels and 'parables' which all, with humour as well as horror, show him as a delicate, hypersensitive being buffeted about in a world which he can perceive very well, but can never hope to inhabit safely, let alone master; he cannot even find in it a single refuge, a single enveloping, protective solution, (true or false) which would provide either a course of action or the shelter of illusion.

Perhaps, after all, they did have something in common other than the mutual, passionate friendship of Milena. Frau Neumann got her share of buffeting (as she revealed at the Kravchenko 'trial' in Paris in 1945) though from rather more specific agents than Kafka's generalised, allegorical 'officials'. For Hans Neumann happened to believe, in 1932, that the German fascists should be fought with more than mere verbal propaganda. A very unwise position, considering that in the Autumn of 1931 it had been officially decided in Moscow that the anti-Nazi struggle should be confined to the ideological front; considering, moreover, that Comrade Stalin had said to him in December 1931 "Don't you think, Comrade Neumann, that if the National Socialists seize power

in Germany they will be kept sufficiently busy in the west and we shall be able to build up Socialism quietly in Russia?"

But when it came to seeking refuge from the Nazis, who were indeed busy exterminating the German labour movement, the Neumanns found a Russia not so quiet and certainly not so socialist. In Dec. 1936 Hans Neumann was approached by Dimitrov ... "I speak in the name of Comrade Stalin. I have been instructed to make a new type of Bolshevik of you. You are to write a book on the 7th Congress of the Comintern in which you will retract all the errors of 1931 and 1932". He refused, and was arrested 4 months later and never seen again. The following year his wife was arrested, and condemned to 5 years hard labour at Karaganda camp in Siberia - but soon transferred to a special punitive camp for having dared to request the revision of her case. This was her comment on the Stalinist way of building 'socialism': "Before I was sent to the camp I had read in Pravda an article on the plans for making this particular steppe fertile. According to this article the result would be a victory for socialism.... it did not say that the work was being carried out by slave labour".

But if by any chance she was feeling homesick, hope was in sight - in the shining guise of the Hitler/Stalin Pact. In 1940 she and a number of others were sent back to Moscow; "we were given a wonderful meal, white bread etc... we received new clothes and were taken to

the hairdresser". Then, suitably fattened and spruced up, they were taken away in ones and twos, and told their sentence was commuted to immediate expulsion from Soviet territory. Together with other German and Austrian communists, many of whom had been sentenced to death by the Nazis in their absence, she was taken by train to Brest Litovsk, and formally handed over to the SS. No doubt compared with many of her companions she was lucky - she survived to tell the tale.

In Ravensbrück concentration camp, she found herself completely isolated from the other political prisoners. On her arrival she underwent an intensive interrogation by the CPers, who found her story too unpalatable and proceeded to ostracise her. This can be easily understood, for they were in no position to allow doubts to assail their sanctuary of illusions, or be told the truth about the 'Socialist Fatherland' in which they believed. Indeed, when a group of Russian prisoners was later brought to the camp the leader of the Czech CPers was so disappointed that, stripped of her protective illusions, she went mad and died in a few weeks.

But Milena was specifically after the truth, and deliberately sought out Greta in the camp. After this, their great friendship continued until Milena's death in 1944. In effect, this book is a tribute to it, starting from it rather than from Kafka, which makes it a very personal view rather than a scholarly examination. But for anyone who has read the volume of letters Kafka wrote to her in the 1920s ("... you who live your life so intensely, down into all its depths..") and wondered about the other side of the correspondence, now lost, this vivid picture of Milena in her forties, stubbornly refusing to become a prisoner, to fall in with camp discipline, to lose her human individuality, admirably fills in the missing

dimension.

Included is an account of Milena's earlier life, her friends, lovers (including, of course, Kafka) her two husbands, her circle and her career as a journalist, which culminated with her editing an anti-Nazi paper under the noses of the occupying Gestapo. There are some examples of her writing, redolent with strength and wholesomeness.

The story of her 5 years in the Czech CP is unfortunately clouded by Frau Neumann's own lack of clarity, so that it is difficult to see if her differences, and her break in 1936, were a matter of temperament or politics, though I get the impression that Milena's political understanding was a good deal clearer than her friend's. Finally we get a picture of her work in the underground movement, helping to organise an escape route - for which she was sent to Ravensbrück. It is a mark of Frau Neumann's feeling for her that by the end of the whole account, one comes away with an idea of a woman of very great stature, which seems to dominate the more celebrated figures of both Kafka and Greta Neumann. Certainly, she was more than mere 'mistress to Kafka'.

R.M.

#### LOST LEADER

The Parnell Tragedy.

Jules Abel. Bodley Head. 42s.

The legend of the "Lost Leader", as Gratten Freyer has said, haunts the pages of the early Joyce and the later Yeats. American writer, Jules Abel, enters the field with a competent, pedestrian account; it adds little to the material unearthed by Cruise O'Brien and F.S.L. Lyons, except errors of fact. The author is concerned to examine the personal motivations of the main characters but ignores the underlying social