

Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

Reject Single European Act

**VOTE NO
TO NATO**



Loud silence from the Provos

THE Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU once again showed a determination NOT to face up to the issue of sectarianism at its annual conference in Downpatrick in April.

The debate on NICTU's "Campaign for Peace, Jobs and Progress" took the usual form of speaker after speaker repeating the official line and patting each other on the back. Many rambled on for four or five minutes after the red light had indicated that their time was up.

When Bill Webster, a delegate from Derry Trades Council, tried to give the position of Derry TC on the campaign things were different. He pointed out that NICTU's campaign does not address the

reality of the oppression and repression of the nationalist working class nor does the campaign condemn the state violence of the RUC, UDR and British army.

RED LIGHT

The red light came on. Webster continued to speak - expecting the same leeway as those who had spoken before him. Less than thirty seconds after the red light had been shown, the microphone was cut off. Thus the platform ensured that the only voice to be raised against sectarianism at the conference was silenced.

Other voices could have been heard. Bill Webster is a supporter of "Militant". There

were at the Conference a number of Sinn Fein members and supporters. All of them would have had the same, in fact greater, criticisms of the campaign. Yet not a single Sinn Fein delegate contributed to the debate.

Workers who are serious about fighting sectarianism have every right to be cynical about NICTU's disgraceful record in combatting this cancer in the trade union movement. For too long they've been allowed to do nothing.

COPPING OUT

By copping out of the debate, the republican movement has allowed the

NICTU bureaucrats to continue the pretence that they are tackling sectarianism in the workplace and in the trade union movement.

Their silence on the issue at the conference speaks volumes though about their attitude to the trade union movement. However involved individual members of Sinn Fein might be in their unions, all the evidence is that Republicans simply do not think it worthwhile to argue their politics at such gatherings of the organised working class. They most probably would not win the arguments at the bureaucrat-dominated conferences but their claims of conversion to class politics cannot be taken seriously until they try.

- GORETTI HORGAN



Sinn Fein cops out on trade unionism

Yet more killer ferries

THE FULL horror of the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster became apparent as more than double the number of victims first estimated by Townsend Thoresen were recovered from the ship.

A week later P&O celebrated the launching of the *Pride of Calais*. It is built to the same design as the *Herald of Free Enterprise*, but is three times the size.

It was the design of the *Herald* that doomed it to sink so quickly. The only change in design has been to fit a warning system which tells the bridge if the bow doors are open.

This will do nothing to avert an identical disaster

if water gets into the ship for any other reason, for instance through collision with another ship. This cost six lives when the *European Gateway* sank in 1983.

P&O, aided by the press, is still trying to avoid blame by pointing the finger at the bosun.

It wants to stop any inquiry coming to conclusions that will mean far reaching changes in design or operation.

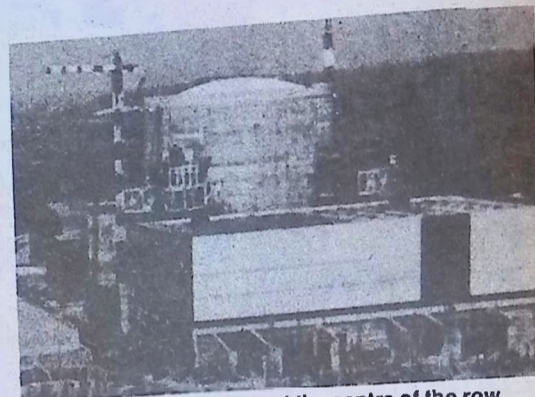
It has already been forced to increase the upper limit of compensation from £38,000 to £80,000, although only the "worst" cases will receive this figure. These sums will still only amount to a tiny fraction of the £125 million profit which P&O made last year alone.

French nuclear peril

THE CLOSURE of French nuclear power stations is being called for after two major leaks.

At the Pierrelatte station in the south of France toxic and radioactive uranium hexafluoride was leaked into the atmosphere. And 20 tonnes of liquid sodium, which spontaneously ignites on contact with air, were leaked from the Superphenix plant.

The government has rejected even a temporary shutdown.



THE Superphenix reactor at the centre of the row

Job Search-a con trick

ONE OF the more vicious aspects of the Fianna Fail budget, and one that has not had a lot of publicity, is the new Job Search programme.

The programme began almost immediately, on April 1st. The object of the programme, says McSharry, is to interview 150,000 unemployed people by the end of the year and offer them places on Manpower schemes. He said that if any of those interviewed had no reason for not accepting the offer of "employment", it would be assumed that they were not available for work and they would no longer be entitled to unemployment assistance.

He said it would "enhance those genuinely seeking employment". Sounds as if he is doing the unemployed a favour, eh? That should immediately make us suspicious.

McSharry and his cronies have never concerned themselves with the plight of the unemployed. Let's take a closer look at these schemes and read between the lines a bit.

Manpower schemes are not regular jobs. They generally last a year or less and pay well below the average weekly wage. The real reason behind McSharry's programme is to bring down the official figure of unemployed in the country. Such schemes bring down the total unemployed figure, even though the people on them will almost certainly return to the dole queues within a short time.

But they also, crucially, reduce the figure for people who are considered Long Term unemployed. If a person has been unemployed long term (over a year) and gets a vacancy with a Manpower scheme, after it is completed,



Jobsearch offers no real hope to young jobless

they will return to the dole as a "new" unemployed person. This completely distorts the figures and gives a false impression of the real crisis that workers are faced with.

EXPERIENCE

And, of course, Jobsearch gives people no real choice about what type of work they want to do. It does not take into account any previous experience or training people might have had.

But McSharry didn't get this idea from nowhere. Exactly the same thing is happening in the North under the Thatcher regime. Jobsearch is an almost exact replica of the Restart scheme which the Tories have used to bring the official UK unemployment figures down from four to three million - with the British general election in mind, of course. Last year, over 34,000 workers in the Six Counties were forced to accept the low pay, temporary work offered by schemes like

ACE and YTP. Unemployment among 21-year-olds in the North seems to have been eliminated - until you realise they're all on Youth Training Schemes earning 26.50 for a full working week.

The ruling class is always looking for a scapegoat for the crisis they are in - and the unemployed are one of the more popular scapegoats.

We are constantly told that the unemployed "don't want to work"; "There are jobs to be found if they just went out and looked for them"; "They're living off other people's well-earned money", etc. These are lies put about by our rulers. Because we are many and they are few, they have to divide us - in this case putting worker against unemployed. This, of course, makes it harder for the working class to fight back, so the ruling class maintain their hold. They use to the fullest the strategy of "divide and rule".

The Job Search Programme is yet another way to victimise the unemployed. It's also a way of covering up the fact that McSharry has failed to create any new "real" jobs and so, genuinely, bring down the unemployment figures.

With capitalism in crisis, unemployment is going to rise whoever is in government. It is vital, then, that workers reject these schemes, defend the rights of the unemployed and demand better benefits and real job creation. The LGPSU have shown a lead in refusing to collect the hospital charges. Department of Social Welfare workers should follow that lead and refuse to co-operate with the anti-working class Jobsearch scheme.

-CREA RYDER.

British sell off - a giant rip off

FIGURES recently released in Britain show the privatisation policy of the Thatcher government less what it is - a giant rip-off.

By selling off publicly owned companies to private interests, the government has lost the exchequer in excess of £10 billion.

In many cases, the companies concerned, Amersham and British Aerospace for example, were sold off, after some very expensive advice from financial and investment "experts", for anything from a third to a fifth of their real value, and often to the same "experts" who advised the government on the sale in the first place.

There is a clamour from similar circles in Ireland to sell off our public or semi-state companies, and this privatisation policy is viewed favourably by a government whose

interests coincide with the banking and investment bosses, and who see the sell-off of state property as a handy, though short-term, source of cash with which to make the next repayment on a massive national debt.

Seventeen of our top state owned companies had trading profits of nearly £500 million in the latest year for which figures are available. Only two are loss making. Moreover they employ 80,000 people or so. Again the British experience shows that privatisation always means job losses (usually called streamlining) and attacks on trade union organisation ("flexibility").

The facts are worth remembering when we hear about the "efficiency" of privatisation. It means unemployment, loss of national assets and a fast buck for the big-time gangsters in government and financial circles.

WE THINK

VOTE NO
TO NATO

THE PROGRESS made in the arms control talks between Russia and the US has led many to think that peace is now a real possibility.

The main threat to the talks is not warmongering Reagan — who is happy as long as he has got inter-continental missiles and his Star Wars initiative — but the European powers who want to maintain and strengthen the war machine of NATO.

For Irish workers, it is this desire of Thatcher, Kohl and Co to bind the EEC closer to NATO which is the most important issue in the forthcoming referendum.

Few people know and even fewer understand what the Single European Act (SEA) is all about. The ruling class, with the help of lawyers and the media, have done their best to keep the real issue — of Ireland being drawn into NATO — hidden beneath boring, legalistic arguments and talk of "national sovereignty" and neutrality.

It should be obvious to most working class people that any measure which is supported and encouraged by every business interest, large farmers and Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the PDs can

only be against our interests. The arguments of those who urge us to vote yes in the referendum are downright dishonest. Rejecting the Single European Act does not mean rejecting membership of the EEC. The Supreme Court ruling in the case taken by Raymond Crotty was quite clear that most of the SEA involves no fundamental change in the Republic's relationship with the EEC. Apart from bringing us closer to NATO, the other consequences will be only to formalise existing arrangements within the EEC, about the harmonisation of VAT levels and the like, and to remove any remaining barriers to the free flow of capital and trade between EEC member states.

Title III of the SEA, however, does involve a major change in the way EEC member states are to conduct their foreign affairs. Title III concerns the development of European Political Co-operation (EPC). EPC is a process which began in 1970 and involves "consultation and co-operation" in foreign policy matters. Despite ever-closer co-operation, though, the process remained somewhat informal and non-binding. That's why Charlie Haughey was able to refuse to go along with EEC sanctions against Argentina during the Malvinas/Falklands war.

Under Title III of the Single European Act, however, formal procedures are to be set up to regulate the foreign and security policies of EEC countries and a small secretariat is to be established to formulate and administer such policies and procedures. Title III specifically mentions NATO as a forum for closer co-operation

on security matters. It is this clause of the SEA — Article 30 paragraph 6 — which is of most concern to anyone opposed to Irish involvement with NATO increasing.

The Supreme Court judgement identified the problem with the SEA as being the effect it would have on Irish "neutrality". The SEA would, it said, "bind the state to surrender part of its sovereignty in the conduct of foreign relations". The Constitution does not allow the government to do this — hence the referendum.

The reality has always been, though, that the Southern state is NOT neutral. As Alan Dukes pointed out recently, Ireland is "not ideologically neutral but is firmly part of the Western block."

The sham nature of the state's "neutrality" has been seen time and again under both Fianna Fail and Coalition governments. Just as FitzGerald refused last year to condemn Reagan's terrorist bombing of Libya, so too did Haughey's government refuse to condemn the US invasion of the tiny island of Grenada. "We must," Brian Lenihan said, "stand by our allies."

Talk of "national sovereignty" — a myth in any country — is a joke in relation to Southern Ireland. In every country in the world, the real control lies not in the hands of a "sovereign" government but with big business. This should be more obvious in Ireland than in most countries. Over two years ago, for example, when the then minister for Finance Alan Dukes tried to stop a fraud in dealings of government bonds "bond washing", a massive outflow of capital from the 26 Counties caused him to climb down.

Similarly, every year we get an update on the amount of money which has disappeared from the Southern economy into the "black hole". When it was first discovered — about three years after the drain began — it amounted to £350 million a year. It is now £1000 million! And there's nothing the government can do to stop it: In fact, they can't even explain why it's happening.

There's a lot of talk about "them" and "us". OUR constitution, OUR government and THEY who want to impose laws on us. In reality, "our" constitution is a reactionary charter which enshrines the rights of private property, bans

divorce and equates the life of a pregnant woman with that of the fertilised egg, embryo or foetus she is carrying.

Nor would socialists react with anything but delight were "they" — the EEC to "impose" right to abortion, divorce or gay rights. It must be remembered that equal pay laws and equal opportunities for women were imposed on the Irish government by EEC directives.

Many of the arguments against the SEA, then, are based on the kind of nationalism which the ruling class encourages, the better to divide workers.

But there is a compelling reason why every worker should be opposed to the SEA and that is the way it threatens to bring us even closer to NATO. We already know that Charles Haughey offered Thatcher a defence pact in 1980. Since then, Garrett FitzGerald sat in on meetings of EEC Prime Ministers in which NATO business was being conducted. Now our rulers would involve us further in the war machine in order to show they are good protectors of the interests of capital.

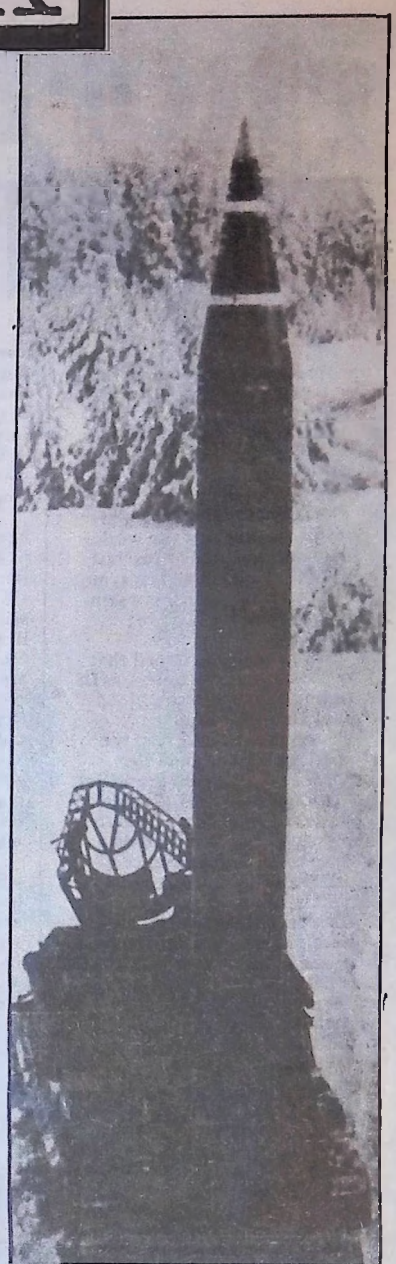
The politicians argue that they have nothing to do with any war agreements, their interest is solely with defence. This is the lie that the NATO chiefs have always peddled. But if we need any proof of war-like intentions behind their "defence" agreements, we got it last year when Reagan bombed Libya.

The Libyan bombings dealt a massive blow to the pretence that NATO is a defensive organisation — and indeed to the view that America's NATO allies have any control over the actions of the Superpower.

NATO exists to defend western capitalist interests, and predominantly the interests of the American ruling class.

And when NATO perceives it to be in its interests, it will use NATO bases, wherever they are located and the nuclear weapons stored in many of them, not to protect Europe against a "Russian threat" but to launch aggressive attacks to protect American interests.

As the Twenty-six County state is more and more integrated into the world economy, our ruling class will come under increasing pressure to do its bit for the protection of capital in the West. We can show them that we don't want to be part of the war machine. And we can start on May 26 by voting NO to NATO!



Crisis in Ireland's hospitals as budget cuts bite

The recent Fianna Fail budget cut the annual budget of the Eye and Ear Hospital in Dublin by one third.

This is despite the fact that the hospital had already lost 70 of its 168 beds in the last year.

The government instructed that no one who left employment was to be replaced; no locums were to be used and no one on maternity leave was to be replaced.

Although the government claims it made no specific recommendation about getting rid of temporary staff, it clearly demanded a savage cut. The Board of the Eye and Ear had anticipated such a cut and had kept a high number of staff in temporary status. They immediately gave a week's notice to their 27 temporary staff, some of whom were coming off night duty for their week off and were therefore walking off the ward out of a job. Because of the restrictions mentioned above, these workers have no prospect of employment in hospitals except by emigrating.

£1 million of the Eye and Ear's budget is to be raised by the £10 charge on patients attending casualty. Because the clerical workers are refusing to collect this fee, there is an effective cut by the government that is even larger than the officially announced third.

Staff who are on career breaks are doubtful whether they will get their jobs back despite the fact that many of the temporary staff were



AT A TIME WHEN £7 MILLION IS BEING CUT FROM THE S.H.B. BUDGET £4 MILLION IS BEING SPENT ON A NEW GARDA H.Q.

employed in their positions. When the Hospital Council was asked about this they said: "All we can do is to review the situation when they return."

All these cuts will increase the waiting lists so patients needing specialised care will not get it in time. The number

of those suffering from poor sight and blindness is certain to increase causing an increase in turn in disability and the death rate.

The unions which organise the Eye and Ear have called meetings and a successful protest picket, as well as organising a work-to-rule. This

is difficult, however, given the nature of nursing. Requests to meet the Health Minister have been stone-walled.

Said one staff nurse: "If the government are to be forced to change heart, it will take industrial action by all health workers."

—JOHN STITT

FIANNA FAIL's cuts are hitting hard in Cork.

The Regional Hospital built only a few years ago stands with some of its wards closed.

The Regional, South Infirmary, Eye, Ear and Throat and the North Infirmary stand to lose 200 long and short term temporary nurses, and this was a conservative estimate.

The North Infirmary's budget has been cut by £1 million—over 20 per cent of its estimated annual budget. The hospitals board of management have threatened closure by next September if the cuts stand.

St Mary's Home in Montenotte was closed recently due to lack of funding as a result of which 70 elderly people had to be dispersed to Dublin and Waterford for care.

Another closure on the agenda is Mount Carmel in Clonakilty. Already a 50-bed unit in the hospital is due to shut. The situation in the hospital is so bad that in one section a nurse and an orderly are responsible for 98 patients at night.

All these cuts are coming at a time when redundancy notices are already being handed out to part-time hospital workers and out-patients are being charged £10 per visit and £7 to visit a GP.

The cuts are far from affecting the gardai in Cork, however. A new Garda HQ is being built at an estimated cost of £4 million. This is in a state where there are more cops

per head of population than any other country in Europe.

The response by the union officials has been weak.

ITGWU official Pat Evans said: "There are 84 temporary nurses in the Regional and they along with temporaries in other hospitals have very little protection." There was a possibility that those who had been employed for more than a year could get redundancy payments, but this would be just pennies, he said.

Evans went on to say that the union realised that in practical terms there was nothing it could do to stop the Health Board laying off the staff.

He then claimed: "This is not an industrial relations issue, it is a political one, and it is on the political front that the battle must be fought."

By this Evans hopes to bring the resulting suffering caused by the cuts to the attention of the public, while at the same time ruling out any effective means whatsoever — such as even operating a work-to-rule — to form the basis for a more vigorous fight against cuts.

Evans's strategy is little short of a sell-out, in a period when union leaders should be calling on workers to fight every redundancy, to ignore extra work arising from the recruitment embargo, etc. and calling for at the very least national days of strike action against cuts in public funding and ward closures.

—EAMONN LEWSLEY

PROFITING FROM AIDS

AS THE monthly toll of people dying from AIDS rises, as the numbers infected with the virus grows, it is increasingly clear that AIDS is one of the greatest threats to public health that there has been for decades.

But even as thousands of people throughout the world die from the AIDS virus, last month's "Business" magazine revealed that "AIDS is a grim business but it is also big business."

The article explained that in pharmaceutical firms, AIDS testing clinics, private blood banks and condom manufacturers will reap the profits of AIDS. One firm - Kleinwort Greivson Securities - pointed out that it made sense for drug companies to pour millions into finding a drug to stop the advance of AIDS, but not into a vaccine that might eradicate the disease. "The problem with vaccines is poor profit margin - they are only needed once"

On the other hand, a drug like Retrovir (AZT) which retards the progess of AIDS sells for 188 dollars for a ten day supply. A year's treatment in Britain costs £5000 and patients must take Retrovir every four hours without fail. In spite of horrific side effects necessitating regular blood transfusions and even bone marrow transplants, Martin Sherwood, a spokesperson for Wellcome, the company making the drug, observed "In terms of emotive quality of the demand, there's never been a drug like it."

So while drug companies are pouring hundreds of millions into finding a limiting drug, only governments tend to fund research into vaccines - and pretty miserly that funding tends to be. Norman Fowler, the British Health Minister, announced a three year research programme in February. £14.5 million will be spent in the search for a vaccine in those three years. Just how little this is is illustrated by the fact that one chimpanzee - the only animal on whom tests of the human AIDS virus can be made - costs 150,000 dollars. This has led cynics to predict that humans in Africa will be used instead.

In Britain, five private AIDS testing clinics have been set up, including one in Crewe that offers housecalls in unmarked vans - perhaps the modern version of the plain brown wrapper? The main

reason for the growth of these companies which charge about £75 for a test seems to be that tests on the Health Service are usually conducted in VD clinics and the results take up to three weeks to come back.

Sales of condoms have been rising steadily over the past year. There has been a ten per cent rise in sales in the US, with a similar rise in sales in Britain. Companies like Dublin-man Patrick Moylett's Red Stripe condoms are suddenly making huge profits and will continue to as long as condoms provide the only protection against AIDS.

John Silverman, president of the Australian condom manufacturing firm Ansell, boasted: "AIDS is a condom marketer's dream."

It may be a dream for those who put profits before people but it is a nightmare for anyone who themselves, or whose relative, friend or lover has contracted the virus. AIDS victims have been turned away from hospitals in smaller cities in Britain. There have been reports of similar treatment for AIDS patients in the Twenty six counties while in the North, the twelve reported of full-blown AIDS chose to go to Britain to die rather than

deal with the moralism and hysteria facing them here.

It is a nightmare, too, for those who are openly gay and are meeting again the kind of anti-gay bigotry which had decreased somewhat over the last decade. It is even more of a nightmare for gays who have not come out and are now terrified to do so.

Meanwhile in London, the anti-gay backlash has led to Michael Buch losing his job. The industrial Tribunal to which he appealed upheld his sacking. In a sickening statement the tribunal said Michael was "the sort of homosexual who frequents Oxford Circus underground station lavatory."

Despite the fact that Michael Buck doesn't have AIDS, the tribunal said he had an "above average risk of contracting AIDS" and that he knows that other people would tend to avoid associating with him.

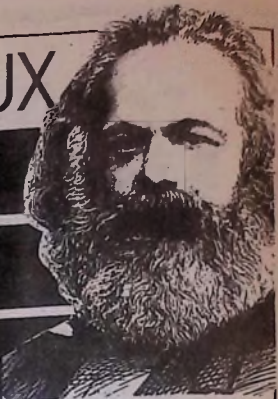
This is exactly the kind of victimisation that will increase so long as Catholic Church and government propaganda continues to stress that AIDS is only really a threat to those who are gay, "promiscuous" or drug abusers and that keeping sex within marriage is the only way to stop the spread of the disease.



AIDS: profits out of the misery

JOHN MOLYNEUX

★ Teach yourself Marxism



When soviets meant real workers' power

TO MOST people the words 'Soviet power' conjure up images of SS 20s pointed at Western Europe and Russian tanks parading in the streets of Moscow or, worse, rolling into Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan.

This Soviet power is something genuine marxists, people who believe that socialism must be created by the working class itself, are completely opposed to. It is a power that we strongly hope will be destroyed by a mass movement of the working people it oppresses.

However, for marxists, 'soviet power' also means something quite different. There is a kind of soviet power which we not only support, but regard as absolutely essential, if workers are ever to create socialism, are ever to achieve workers' democracy, are ever to control their own lives.

Suppressed

Originally the word 'soviet' was simply the Russian for 'council'. And the world's first soviet was the spontaneous creation of workers in St Petersburg, then the capital of Russia, during the revolutionary upheaval of the year 1905.

It was, to start with, essentially an enlarged strike committee—a committee or council of action. This was made up of workers' representatives elected at factory mass meetings, whose purpose was to link and coordinate the numerous strikes and other struggles then being directed at the czarist regime.

Rapidly, however, the St Petersburg soviet became more than this. In con-

ditions of mass revolutionary struggle the Russian workers began to view the soviet, and the soviet started to function, as an alternative source of authority and government—their own government—to that of the czarist state.

This first soviet did not last long. After 50 days it was suppressed by the czarist police as part of the suppression of the 1905 revolution.

But the memory of it remained.

When in February 1917 the Russian revolution broke out again, this time on a much wider scale, and the czar was forced to abdicate, the insurgent workers of Petrograd re-established their soviet immediately. What is more, their example was followed in cities right across Russia.

For nearly nine months there existed in Russia dual power—two centres of state power vying with each other. On one side the old czarist state, now headed by a coalition government of capitalist politicians and moderate socialists.

On the other, the soviets, representing a vibrant workers' democracy. The situation was inherently unstable and could not survive indefinitely. For the rival power represented classes whose interests were diametrically opposed.

In August 1917 the old ruling class, acting through one General Kornilov, launched a military coup to smash the soviets. It was repelled, and in October the working class, led by Lenin's Bolshevik Party, hit back in an insurrection under the slogan 'All power to the soviets'. It was this

rising—the October revolution—that established soviets, ie workers' power in Russia.

Tragically this real soviet power did not manage to sustain itself. Conditions in Russia in the years that followed—years of civil war, famine, and utter economic collapse, were such that the working class was fatally weakened. The soviets remained empty shells as power passed to the rising Stalinist bureaucracy. Today the USSR is covered by innumerable bodies called 'soviets' but not one of them remotely resembles the original soviets from which they took their name.

One thing has survived from this debacle, and that is a political discovery—the discovery of the institutional form through which the working class can take control of society.

This discovery is confirmed by the fact that soviets or workers' councils have in no way proved to be a phenomenon limited to Russia.

Challenge

On the contrary, wherever the working class has mounted a mass revolutionary challenge to the capitalist state, the nature of its struggle has led it to create either workers' councils or bodies that easily could be developed into workers' councils.

This was the case in the German revolution of 1918-19 which overthrew the Kaiser, and in the Italian workers' occupation of the factories in 1919. It has also been true of the major struggles in the post-war period. In the anti-Stalinist revolution in Hungary in 1956 there was formed the Budapest central workers' council. In Poland 1980 the mass strikes which founded Solidarnosc were coordinated by a central strike committee representing more than 500 factories. In Chile in 1972 the workers formed 'cordones industriales' or 'industrial belts' linking the struggles of different workplaces.

Our rulers tell us we must defend parliamentary democracy against Soviet totalitarianism. We say that both parliament and 'Soviet socialism' are facades behind which the respective Western and Russian ruling classes maintain their power and privileges. We say that the alternative to both these kinds of capitalist rule is soviet power in its original form.

NATO lies about Pact arms

NATO keeps the world safe for democracy. That's what we were all taught at school. Now that we've grown up, it's getting more and more obvious that the military alliance has actually been keeping the world safe for western capitalism.

And in doing so, it's making the world a very dangerous place for human beings to live.

On the side effects of the Arms Control talks has been to give a considerable amount of information about the size of the NATO war machine and of current NATO arms spending.

The independent Stockholm Peace Research Institute has revealed that NATO spends 25 per cent more on arms than the Warsaw Pact.

That spending means that NATO

enjoys superiority or parity in nearly every arms category.

- * NATO has 3 million soldiers, the Warsaw Pact 2.8 million;
- * NATO has 453 major surface ships, the Warsaw Pact has 178;
- * Both blocs have 11,300 combat aircraft.

The only exception is the number of tanks. The Warsaw Pact has a two-to-one advantage.

But the gap is quickly being eroded. Over the past five years, NATO tank production has risen 20 per cent, while the Warsaw Pact has almost remained the same.

And the "quality" of NATO tanks and anti-tank weapons is much higher than those of the Warsaw Pact.

So all the talk of NATO simply matching the Russian "threat" is just plain lies.

The Military Forces of the Blocs

Warsaw Pact	NATO	
2,827,000	3,009,000	Total ground forces
998,000	1,049,000	Total ground forces (central Europe)
67,000	32,000	Main battle tanks
11,300	11,300	Combat aircraft
178	453	Major surface ships

Source: IISS

The 'National Debt': fact and fiction

"WE ARE up to our eyes in Debt. The country cannot afford it any more. It is time for tough action."

Fianna Fail ministers now repeat this tune regularly. But who owes this debt. Where did it come from? And who is getting paid back?

KIERAN ALLEN looks at some of these questions and discovers that there is good reason for us not to fall for the debt trap.

There are two major myths about the "National Debt". The first is that it is "national" in the sense that it is peculiar to Ireland. It is like 'the national game' or 'the national flag' or even the "national culture". We have got it and no one else has.

This is the line taken by economists who want to explain why the Irish economy is doing so badly.

Now this is pure rubbish. Ireland's level of debt is no higher than many newly industrialising countries like Brazil, Mexico and Poland.

Neither is the level of debt higher than that of the major industrial powers. Take America, for example. The US government has been borrowing around 200 billion dollars every year since Reagan came to power. His administration has run up trade deficits and encouraged borrowing by individuals and companies so that now it may have added one million, million dollars to America's external debt.

The truth is that debt has become an international feature of the world economy. It is no longer a national peculiarity. This in turn reflects the stagnation of a system where there are vast amounts of surplus capital available for loans.

The second myth is that the debt is "national" in the sense that we are all responsible. John Bruton used to like repeating that every man, woman and child in this country owes £5142. Even the kids are not blameless! The notion that we all lost control of ourselves some years ago and just lived beyond "our" means.

PUBLIC SERVICE

There is something odd about this argument. For there are no signs around of the majority of us "living beyond our means". We have one of the worst levels of public service in Europe. Our kids in primary schools have the highest pupil/teacher ratios. The government has the lowest record on public house building. So where have we all been living beyond our means?

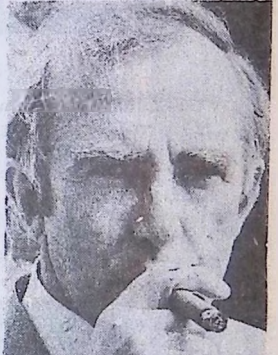
In fact, when our living standards have been cut, the national debt seems to rise. Between 1981 and 1986 living standards fell by the order of 15 per cent. But it was precisely in those years that the debt shot through the roof.

So if we have not been living it up what is the real explanation of the national debt?

The rise in the public debt began in the mid-seventies. Between 1974



Cutting the national cake, right (top to bottom) Louden Ryan, Governor Bank of Ireland, Tony O'reilly and Tony Ryan.



and 1976 the world banks were landed with an estimated 46 billion dollars in deposits from the OPEC oil producing countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc). They were anxious to lend it out again. It became very easy for governments to borrow.

One such government was the Irish. It faced a central problem. Its economy had suffered from decades of underdevelopment. It was not geared to the economic expansion that was just about to take off.

TERRIBLE

Throughout the seventies Southern Ireland was to experience the highest rates of growth in Europe with the arrival of the multi-nationals. But it still lacked a proper telephone service. Its road network was terrible. The mass of its population had only begun to receive a barely adequate free education since 1966. In the long run these deficiencies would hamper growth.

The multi-nationals or native rich had no intention of paying for the development of this "infrastructure". They had always fought a vicious battle against attempts to tax their profits. This is borne out by the figures.

In 1964 the real rate of tax on companies was 27 per cent. Today it is ten per cent — but the real rate is far lower.

Every other form of tax on the wealthy has been resisted. The Cosgrave Coalition government brought in a mild wealth tax. The rich ran a campaign denouncing the Finance Minister Ryan as "Reil

Ritchie". It was a success. In 1978, Fianna Fail abolished the tax.

The Capital Gains Tax was another source of irritation. Although only a mere 3,000 paid under this tax in 1978, they still managed to have it reduced from 35 per cent to 26 per cent.

The refusal of the wealthy, both multi-nationals and the native rich, to pay tax meant that the state had to turn to borrowing to serve the needs of capital itself.

Since then, borrowing has increased for other reasons. In 1978 the Fianna Fail government borrowed more in the hope of weathering the strong winds of recession. It might have worked had the world economy picked up. But it didn't. Now borrowing has increased again just to pay off interest on past debt.

But the root cause remains. The Irish state borrowed in order to assist a capitalist class that would not pay a penny towards its own survival. It was never a "national" debt — it was a debt run up on behalf of a tiny layer of Irish society and their class worldwide.

But who is actually being paid back?

Last year, for example, £2.25 billion was paid in interest payments alone. That is £1 in every seven from the national income—where is it going?

The government refuse to give detailed answers. It does not name the bankers that it is paying. It calls this "confidential information".

Therefore, we can only work it out roughly. In 1986, the government debt stood at +22 billion. 52 per cent of this was domestic debt

and therefore owed to Irish interests. The rest was owed to the big bankers around the world.

The government gets loans by selling government bonds or gilts. These are pieces of paper which the state promises to buy back with extra interest. At the moment the interest rate stands at 12 to 13%.

Now this opens the way to a small fortune. Irish gilts offer one of the highest rates of return in the world. In America or Japan for example, they stand at 4 to 5%.

Irish inflation stands at 3 per cent. So our "cool" entrepreneur can simply buy government bonds a get a clear ten per cent profit after tax.

ILLEGAL

One of the reasons why they get such a high return is that they move their money out if they don't.

Politicians and economists pretend to be puzzled by what they call the "black hole" — the illegal disappearance of huge sums of money, despite all exchange controls. There is no puzzle. It is just the rich going about their business, law or no law.

But who are they?

The simple answer is virtually everyone who deals on the Dublin Stock Exchange. The astounding fact is that 99 per cent of the total value of all transactions on the stock exchange is in government bonds. This is the result of the weakness of manufacturing in Ireland. It is far safer to stash away your cash on to easy and very profitable government bonds.

The big dealers include all the commercial banks. These must place 25 per cent of their securities in

government bonds by law. They also include pension and life funds. These are only allowed to invest ten per cent of their income abroad. It also includes your plain old speculator.

We have therefore a crazy situation.

The rich demand tougher measures from the government. They want more cuts, more pay freezes, more privatisation. When they don't get enough, there is a "fall in business confidence". Money is shifted out of the country in mysterious black holes.

The learned economists, who often work for the stockbrokers of the Dublin Stock Exchange, write learned articles saying that the greed of the rest of us is driving the money out. There is nothing to be done — but raise the interest rates on government bonds to "attract" it back.

So up goes the interest the state pays out to record levels. The big banks, the pension funds, the private companies all begin again to lend money. Meanwhile the politicians tell us we need even more sacrifices to pay off the debt... that we are all in it together to get Ireland afloat again!

On February 20 an unusual event took place. The Brazilian government defaulted. It said that it would not pay two-thirds of its interest. The Brazilian government is on the extreme right. It saw that the interest payments represented too great a drag on the functioning of capitalism as a whole in Brazil.

In Ireland we have a right wing government too. But it will not take similar measures. Too much of the debt is held in the hands of its own.

Inside Gorbachev

OVER THE past few months, the Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev has been getting a reputation as the "good guy" in the arms control talks. The seeming success of Gorbachev's initiatives on the limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons has enhanced that reputation.

The policy of "glasnost" or openness in the Soviet media and among the Kremlin leadership has improved Russia's image abroad. Similarly, the policy of "perestroika" — restructuring of industry and its control — has been welcomed by some as giving workers more control at work and by others as bringing western methods of market-place competition to the Russian economy.

Among some socialists — particularly those who thought that Russia was some sort of workers' state — the latest reforms can lead to a confusion about the nature of Russian society, about who controls the factories and who makes the decisions that affect everyday life. Such confusion can lead some to believe that socialism can be achieved in Russia without another working class revolution.

Here, JACKIE SPRAGUE looks behind the changing face of the USSR, at its economy and finds there the explanation for Russia's conversion to peace, tolerance and democracy. Despite the "socialist" rhetoric, Russia is very much part of the international capitalist economy. Like Ireland, and every other country in the world, its economy is in crisis. Gorbachev, like Reagan, Thatcher and Haughey, is trying to find a way out. He wants a solution which will encourage investment in industry but will not be so repressive on workers that they are forced to revolt and threaten the survival of the capitalist system in Russia.

Why the economy is in crisis

THE RUSSIAN economy is dependent for its foreign currency on oil and gas exports. About four-fifths of its exports to western countries consist of oil and gas. But last year saw a disastrous slump in oil, reducing Russian export prices by 35 per cent on 1985 prices.

To compensate for the fall in income, they upped their volume of energy exports by 20 per cent. But this increase is unlikely to be repeated this year since only a marginal increase in energy consumption is expected in western Europe.

In order to keep the same level of imports Russia was forced to sell off more of its gold reserves and to borrow more. The Russian debt rose from nineteen billion dollars in 1985 to twenty four billion at the end of 1986.

According to figures released by the Russian Central Statistical Administration, targets for output are being met. They claim that industrial output is up by 4.6 per cent, machine building by 7.8 per cent and productivity by 5.2 per cent, giving an overall growth rate of 4.1 per cent in 1986.

A Washington research group, PlanEcon and the Soviet economist Gergayev, produce evidence to show that these figures are exaggerated. Their figures show growth at more like 1.4 per cent for 1986.

This, they suggest, is due to an underestimation of the effects of inflation over the last two years and an eight and a half per cent drop in the alcohol trade's contribution to the overall retail trade in the last two years.

However, they do agree that in 1986 there was a better performance in agriculture, energy and industry.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) predict that for 1987 Russian difficulties in making enough foreign currency from exports to pay for imports will be increased if the price of oil drops below the current price of 18 dollars a barrel and/or the dollar continues to drop in value.

The development of the Russian economy is still way behind that of the West. Tackling the economic

crisis must mean speeding up that development. But commentators outside Russia point to three problems:

- * One is lack of enterprise freedom. Russia does not have enough market discipline.
- * Second is the lack of co-ordination between plants and sectors which leads to duplication.
- * Third is the rigidity of the whole system. Russia has been slow to develop high technology industries and the economy seems stuck in ruts developed in the thirties.

Most attention in the West is usually given to the first problem. But Gorbachev and his advisers are more concerned with the third. That is why he has introduced the idea of "perestroika" or restructuring.

ELECTIONS

In January, Gorbachev argued for a "second revolution" to carry out economic reform. But he insisted that the party should lead the way by reforming itself. He proposed secret ballots instead of a show of hands in elections for party secretaries as high up the bureaucracy as the heads of the fifteen republics, and put the cat among the pigeons by suggesting that more than one candidate should be proposed by the electing committees. He also argued that age limits should be introduced and limited job tenure instead of jobs for life, as well as cut backs on the special privileges of the bureaucrats.

These proposals were squashed by Brezhnev's men who still make up two thirds of the 307-strong Central Committee. At Gorbachev's suggestion, the disgraced Kazakhstan leader Dirmukhamed Kunaev was dropped but Vladimir Shcherbitsky, recognised to be guilty of corruption and inefficiency, kept his power in the Ukraine.

In February a draft law was published which is supposed to give workers a say in how factories are run and more responsibility for profit or loss in their workplaces. In fact, its proposals are mainly aimed at giving firms more freedom to

determine how many workers should be employed and how much they should be paid. The law hinted that if firms were inefficient they would be allowed to go bust, which would of course, result in the visible unemployment of Russian workers and a push was made to speed up the introduction of new technology.



WHAT will happen when the reforms do dry up?

Hand in hand with these proposals about industrial capital are plans to reform the banking system along the lines of Hungary and Bulgaria, to allow commercial banking in agriculture, light industry and foreign trade.

JOINT VENTURES

In January legislation was introduced allowing joint financial ventures with non-Comecon countries. Finland's airline Finnair, together with Intourist, is investing £6.3 million in refurbishing the Hotel Berlin in Moscow where rooms will be charged for in US dollars providing much-needed hard currency. Discussions have taken place between the French banks Credit Lyonnais and Banque de l'Union Européenne and the Russian central bank, Gosbank and a subsidiary foreign trade bank Vreshorgbank about providing mixed capital for joint ventures and the setting up of financing companies. To encourage this development no tax would have to be paid in the first two years and if profits are reinvested in the USSR they will be exempt from tax.

Gorbachev is expanding "brigade agriculture" which pays workers by results and is attempting to open the economy to trade with the West. There were better grain harvests in 1985 and 1986 which enabled Russia to shift towards importing equip-

ment and technology with which to modernise the factories, boost production and combat inefficiency and waste. Reagan has dropped restrictions of US export of gas technology to Russia and the year the Cocom list is likely to be revised allowing fewer restrictions on exports to Russia.

Arms spending still represents the biggest burden to the Soviet economy. It consumes a greater share of resources than in all other advanced countries. The Soviet Union has devoted some 12-14 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) to military compared with 3-6 per cent in the US, leaving Russia with the highest ratio of arms spending to investment in the advanced world.

DISMANTLE

This is a massive diversion of resources away from productive purposes. So, it is not surprising Gorbachev is making most of the running on the negotiations over arms limitation. At his meetings US Secretary of State Shultz, before Easter he went so far as to announce that Russia is prepared to dismantle the medium-range trip-war-headed SS20s and do to eliminate short-range weapons. Gorbachev is also ready to negotiate on tactical battlefield nuclear weapons, on the elimination of chemical weapons and on conventional forces.

This might not make him too popular with his generation who are complaining about the need for not getting manpower resources but it is improving relations with the West. And a reduction in spending on arms will go towards developing the economy, producing consumer goods, etc.

One of the major problems of the Soviet image in the West, a "chain" on its foreign policy and the holding of dissidents in labour camps, prisons and in exile, although there are a proportion as many political prisoners in Russia.

The release of Sakharov, including the scientist who dominated the nuclear industry (Nobel Prize), this year's Nobel Peace Prize recipient, and the religious dissident Bedniov and the Jewish refusenik Bedniov - 1501 promise of a further strengthening of Gorbachev's reformist image as he brought him the support of some former dissident elements.

Everyday life for the Russian worker is still dominated by queues for food and basic commodities. A survey based on retail prices in Moscow October 1986 shows that Moscow workers earning the average industrial wage have to work 50 hours to buy a weekly basket of necessities for a family of four or three times longer than in the West. More than half a family's disposable income is spent on food, drink and cigarettes. It takes 100 minutes to earn 20 cents compared to ten minutes in Washington, 851 minutes for a

Gorbachev's Russia

Hand in hand with these proposals about industrial capital are plans to reform the banking system along the lines of Hungary and Bulgaria, to allow commercial banking in agriculture, light industry and foreign trade.

JOINT VENTURES

In January legislation was introduced allowing joint financial ventures with non-Comecon countries. Finland's airline Finnair, together with Intourist, is investing £6.3 million in refurbishing the Hotel Berlin in Moscow where rooms will be charged for in US dollars providing much-needed hard currency. Discussions have taken place between the French banks Credit Lyonnais and Banque de l'Union Européenne and the Russian central bank, Gosbank and a subsidiary foreign trade bank Vreshorgbank about providing mixed capital for joint ventures and the setting up of financing companies. To encourage this development no tax would have to be paid in the first two years and if profits are reinvested in the USSR they will be exempt from tax.

Gorbachev is expanding "brigade agriculture" which pays workers by results and is attempting to open the economy to trade with the West. There were better grain harvests in 1985 and 1986 which enabled Russia to shift towards importing equip-

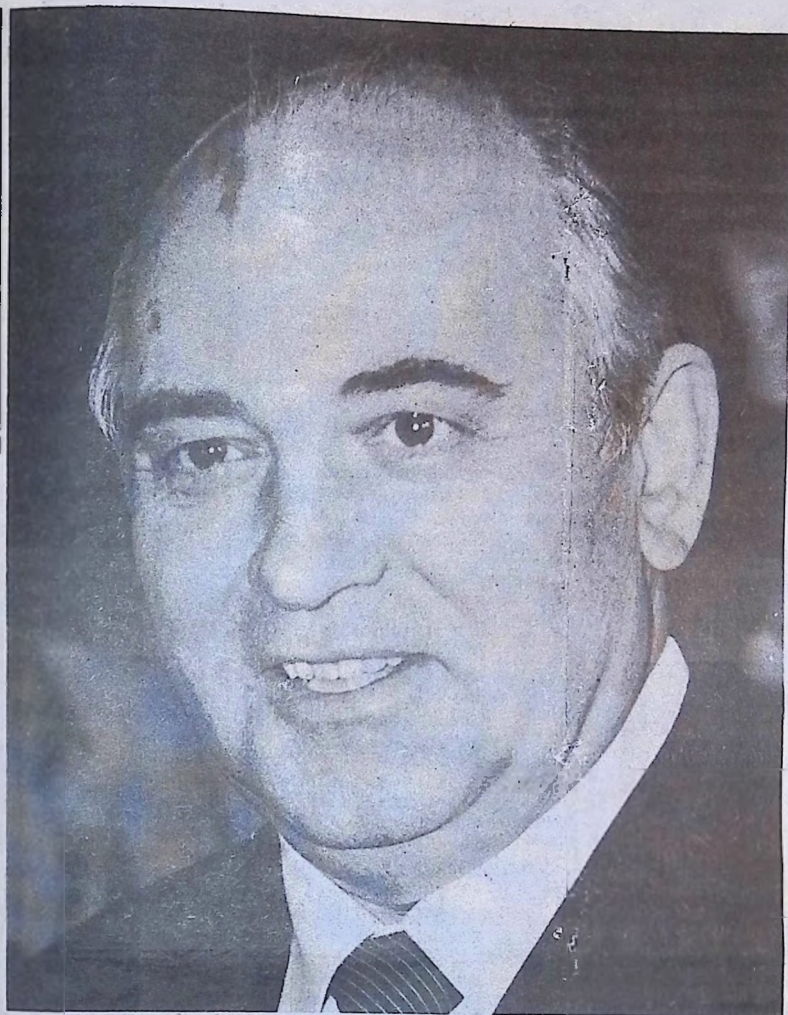
ment and technology with which to modernise the factories, boost production and combat inefficiency and waste. Reagan has dropped restrictions of US exports of oil and gas technology to Russia and next year the Cocom list is likely to be revised allowing fewer restrictions on exports to Russia.

Arms spending still represents the biggest burden to the Soviet economy. It consumes a greater share of resources than in all other advanced countries. The Soviet Union has to devote some 12 - 14 per cent of its Gross National Product (GNP) to the military compared with 5 - 6 per cent in the US, leaving Russia with the highest ratio of arms spending to investment in the advanced world.

DISMANTLE

This is a massive diversion of resources away from productive purposes. So, it is not surprising that Gorbachev is making most of the running on the negotiations over arms limitation. At his meetings with US Secretary of State, Schulz, just before Easter he went so far as to announce that Russia is prepared to dismantle the medium-range triple war-headed SS20s and also to eliminate short-range weapons. Gorbachev is also ready to negotiate on tactical battlefield nuclear weapons, on the elimination of chemical weapons and on conventional forces.

This might not make him too popular with his generals who are complaining about the armed forces not getting manpower and resources but it is improving his relationship with the West. And any reduction on spending on arms will go towards developing the economy, producing consumer goods, etc.



GORBACHEV: scared the reforms will dry up

Is it so

IN 1917 the Bolsheviks set out to make a revolution that would change the world. But as the revolution degenerated, the reality and vision of 1917 were lost

Under the blows of the civil war, social collapse destroyed the working class. The Bolshevik Party was left isolated, prey to corruption and political pressures.

After Lenin's death in 1924 the full extent of the change became apparent. Those, like Trotsky, who had wanted to rebuild links with the Russia of workers' control and factory committees and real Soviets were squeezed out.

It was Stalin who won the day with the slogan of "Socialism in one country". Russia could go it alone and international revolution became a luxury.

Going it alone meant that Russia had to compete with the West on capitalist terms. It needed military might and economic power to back it up. The result was the Five Year Plan and industrialisation.

Russian society and workers were regimented to catch up and overtake the West. Out of the ashes of the revolution Russian State capitalism was born.

Are the reforms genuine?

One of the major problems with the Soviet image in the West, a "ball and chain" on its foreign policy, has been the holding of dissidents in labour camps, prisons and in exile - although there are proportionately as many political prisoners in Ireland as in Russia.

The release of 140 dissidents including the scientist Sakharov, nominated for psychiatrist Korygin (nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize), this year's Nobel Peace Prize, and religious dissident Ogorodnikov and the Jewish refusenik Begun, and the promise of a further 140 - 150 being released soon has strengthened Gorbachev's reforming image and brought him the support of some former dissident elements.

Everyday life for Russian workers is still dominated by queues for food and basic commodities. A survey based on retail prices in Moscow in October 1986 shows that the average workers earning the average industrial wage have to work 51 hours to buy a weekly basket of necessities for a family of four - two or three times longer than a worker in the West. More than half a family's disposable income is spent on food, drink and cigarettes. It takes 100 minutes to earn 20 eggs compared to ten minutes in Washington, 851 minutes for a

bottle of vodka, compared with a Londoner's twenty minutes and seven years for a medium sized car compared with one year in Munich.

On the other hand rents have not risen since 1928, whereas they've increased five-fold in Washington. But then apartments are small and shoddy, about one third the living space of Americans. Some everyday goods are just not available in shops: there was a lack of vegetables in January, corned beef is substandard - corroded cans and black spots - however, the ice-cream is reputed to be unbeatable!

The opening up of press coverage of both internal and external events has allowed the coverage in Pravda of riots in Kazakhstan and demonstrations by young people against attacks on them for dressing alternatively. 622,000 letters, compared with 100,000 in 1985, have been published criticising corruption and calling for democracy. Reporters have been encouraged by Pravda editor Viktor Afanasyev to kick off their old habits of self-censorship!

"Glasnost" or openness is apparent everywhere. Films, books and plays are being unbanned. Social problems common everywhere

because of the crisis in capitalism - increased drug addiction, prostitution domestic violence - are being admitted.

For the first time crime figures have been made public. In Russia, like Western countries, 75 per cent of murders take place in the home. Corruption among the police is another common problem and is under investigation!

Obviously Russia is not the only Eastern bloc country having economic difficulties - Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Rumania are in the same boat. Gorbachev's success in winning the approval of Western leaders and their financial assistance - has had a mixed response from the leaders of those countries. Strict supporters of state capitalism in East Germany and Czechoslovakia have accused him of "anti-socialism" although his visit last month to Czechoslovakia has stifled some of that criticism.

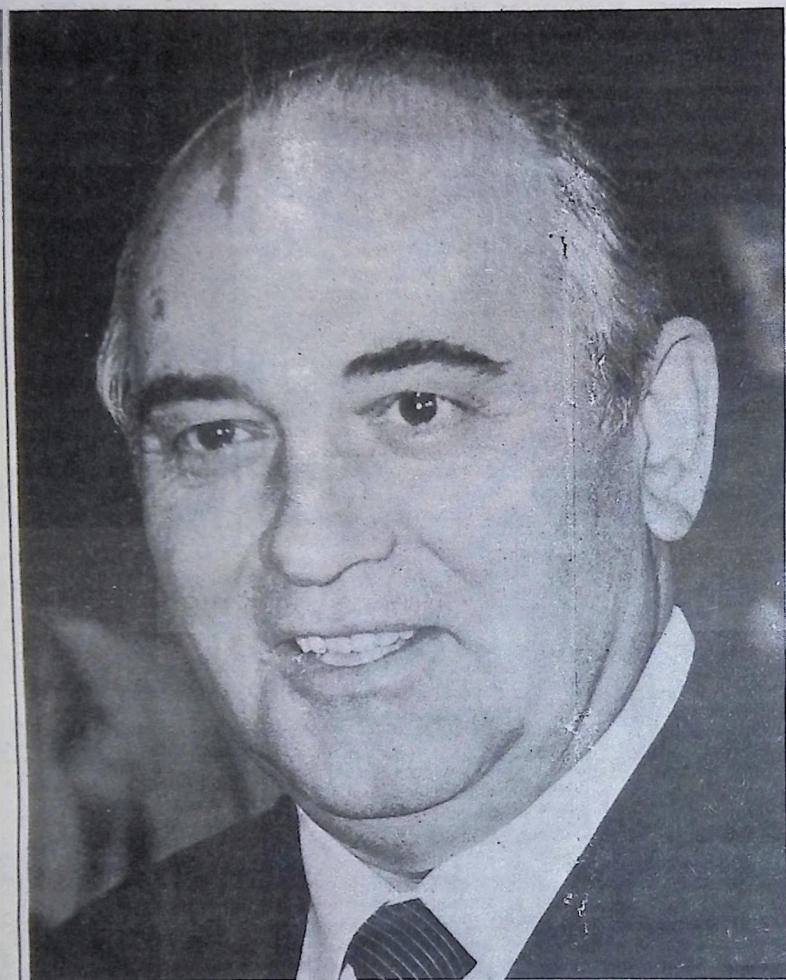
In fact, Gorbachev's reforms are no more than a recognition of the reality of Russian economic life. The USSR is part of the world economy. It cannot maintain its position of state capitalist isolation and survive. So it is making itself more amenable to full integration into the world economy.



RED ARMY guards in Moscow in 1917 be like with workers in control

do dry up?

Gorbachev's Russia



GORBACHEV: scared the reforms will dry up

Is it socialism?

IN 1917 the Bolsheviks set out to make a revolution that would change the world. But as the revolution degenerated, the reality and vision of 1917 were lost.

Under the blows of the civil war, social collapse destroyed the working class. The Bolshevik Party was left isolated, prey to corruption and political pressures.

After Lenin's death in 1924 the full extent of the change became apparent. Those, like Trotsky, who had wanted to rebuild links with the Russia of workers' control and factory committees and real Soviets were squeezed out.

It was Stalin who won the day with the slogan of "Socialism in one country". Russia could go it alone and international revolution became a luxury.

Going it alone meant that Russia had to compete with the West on capitalist terms. It needed military might and economic power to back it up. The result was the Five Year Plan and industrialisation.

Russian society and workers were regimented to catch up and overtake the West. Out of the ashes of the revolution Russian State capitalism was born.

Today Russia remains part of that same world capitalist system. Military, economic and technological competition lock Russian leaders into a world system. They cannot control it any more than Reagan, Thatcher or Haughey in the West.

The logic of this competition runs through Russian society from top to bottom.

Gorbachev cannot change this, neither does he want to. For him reform is about a more competitive Russia.

For socialists the problem is to break that competition. That means breaking with capitalism in all its many forms - East, West and South.

Socialism is not about different forms of state control. It is about workers' control from the bottom up, and that cannot be handed down from on high.

Gorbachev will not bring real socialism to Russia any more than Dick Spring will bring it in this country.

The system is too far gone for alternatives at the top or renovation of the party to change it.

Change will only come when Russian workers take the power into their own hands again, as they did in 1917.



RED ARMY guards in Moscow in 1917. Then there was a glimpse of what life could be like with workers in control

Are the reforms genuine?

bottle of vodka, compared with a Londoner's twenty minutes and seven years for a medium sized car compared with one year in Munich.

On the other hand rents have not risen since 1928, whereas they've increased five-fold in Washington. But then apartments are small and shoddy, about one third the living space of Americans. Some everyday goods are just not available in shops: there was a lack of vegetables in January, corned beef is substandard - corroded cans and black spots - however, the ice-cream is reputed to be unbeatable!

The opening up of press coverage of both internal and external events has allowed the coverage in Pravda of riots in Kazakhstan and demonstrations by young people against attacks on them for dressing alternatively. 622,000 letters, compared with 100,000 in 1985, have been published criticising corruption and calling for democracy. Reporters have been encouraged by Pravda editor Viktor Afanasyev to kick off their old habits of self-censorship!

"Glasnost" or openness is apparent everywhere. Films, books and plays are being unbanned. Social problems common everywhere

because of the crisis in capitalism - increased drug addiction, prostitution domestic violence - are being admitted.

For the first time crime figures have been made public. In Russia, like Western countries, 75 per cent of murders take place in the home. Corruption among the police is another common problem and is under investigation!

Obviously Russia is not the only Eastern bloc country having economic difficulties - Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Rumania are in the same boat. Gorbachev's success in winning the approval of Western leaders and their financial assistance - has had a mixed response from the leaders of those countries. Strict supporters of state capitalism in East Germany and Czechoslovakia have accused him of "anti-socialism" although his visit last month to Czechoslovakia has stifled some of that criticism.

In fact, Gorbachev's reforms are no more than a recognition of the reality of Russian economic life. The USSR is part of the world economy. It cannot maintain its position of state capitalist isolation and survive. So it is making itself more amenable to full integration into the world economy.

which to
boost
efficiency
speed
of oil and
and next
to be
functions
resents the
et econ-
share of
advanced
on has to
ent of its
(NF) to the
s per cent
with the
ing to
d world.

DISMAY
is a man
of
trees and
active
uses. So
prising that
ing on the
ns over
limitations
betings with
secretary
hulz, just
e Eastern
far as to
ance that
prepared to
ntle the
ange triple
eaded SS
to
late short
pons.
cher is also
negotiate
tical trans-
lear
ons, on the
sion of
cal reagan
national
is might
sism too
ar wish
to grow
who are
aiming
to med
forces
ring man-
resources
is improv-
relationship
to West. And
reduction
ng on arms
towards
ping the
economy
producing
near goods

e of the
problems
with
West, a
"ball
policy,
has
ain" on
idents
in
be hold-
and in
exile -
camps
and in-
proportion-
ately
gh there
are
y political
protest
usua.
release
of 100
idents
ng the
scom-
akharov
(trist
Kotlyan
Prize),
ir's No-
bel
Prize),
s dissi-
dent
Opod-
nikov
and
the
refusen-
ik, 150
being
' of a
father-
and
soon
has
streng-
thened
and
ev's re-
forming
image
and
him the
support
of some
dissent-
ing el-
ements
Russian
workers
day life
for
issues
for food
minated
by a
survey
c com-
modities.
A survey
retail
prices
in
Moscow
1986
shows
that
Moscow
1986
shows
the
average
earning
have
to
work
51
l wage
have
to
buy
a
weekly
basket
of
s for
a
family
of
four
-
two
times
longer
than
a
worker
times
longer
than
half
a
st. More
than
half
the
income
is
spent
on
dispos-
able
income
on
drink
and
cigaret-
tes. It
(10
minutes
to
earn
20
eggs
)
minutes
in
d to
ten
minutes
for
a
ion. 851
minutes
for
a

The German Revolution

IN NOVEMBER 1918, a workers' revolt overthrew the Kaiser and led to Germany's withdrawal from World War I. In the next few months, workers were on the verge of taking power in Germany. At the center of these events was Rosa Luxemburg, one of the most important revolutionaries in the Marxist tradition. Though the counterrevolution defeated the German revolution and cost Luxemburg her life, the debates and strategies of revolutionaries then are immensely important to socialists today. *Chris Harman* explains.

"THE INTERNATIONAL revolution has come so close in one week that it has to be reckoned with as an event of the next few days... We must have by the spring an army of three million to help the international workers' revolution."

So wrote Lenin to the Bolshevik commissar for war, Leon Trotsky, and the secretary of the Bolshevik Party, Sverdlov, at the beginning of October 1918. He had just heard the first news of the massive political crisis in Germany brought on by the prospect of military defeat.

Lenin's optimism was only partly justified. By November, the German emperor was forced to flee after workers and soldiers revolted in every major town. For a brief period, political power was in the hands of workers' and soldiers' councils.

But the revolution did not culminate in the formation of a workers' state. On the second day of the revolution, the Berlin councils were easily persuaded to hand power over to a government of Social Democrats who had no intention of smashing capitalism.

Five weeks later, a national congress of council delegates voted to call elections for a new parliament and to abdicate power to it. The elections gave a majority to the bourgeois parties, with whom the right-wing Social Democrats formed a series of coalition governments.

Meanwhile, the Social Democrats worked hand-in-glove with the old generals to destroy the soldiers' councils, to form a mercenary

'At the moment of the transition to open revolutionary struggle for power, the German working class proved to be defenseless organizationally.'

army, the Freikorps, and to smash the revolutionary opposition.

Yet Lenin's hopes of socialist revolution were not completely misplaced. There were 17 months of sporadic civil war between the overthrow of the Kaiser and the return to anything like bourgeois normality. It was the closest we have yet come to working-class revolution in an advanced industrial country.

IN THE context of the mass struggles, three major political trends emerged in the working-class movement.

There were the revolutionaries, like Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who desired to overthrow the state and to establish workers' power based on the workers' and soldiers' councils.

On the right stood the Social Democrats and their accomplices, who wanted to rein in the revolution, to establish a parliamentary government. Between them were the "centrists," who attempted to find a middle ground between reform and revolution.

Luxemburg's speeches and agitation showed her to be a granite-hard revolutionary, pouring derision on those who failed to understand the need for the workers' councils to take all power, to carry the revolution through to its end.

The program she wrote for the new Communist Party (KPD), founded in 1918, argued: "The proletarian revolution needs no terror to achieve its goals. It hates and abhors killing..." But she went on to insist that the capitalists would not voluntarily give up their power to the workers' councils.

THE DEBATE at the founding party congress showed the real problem that faced Luxemburg and her comrades. The party was very small and had very few members in major workplaces.

The speed at which the revolution had developed meant that the great majority of workers still had illusions in the right-wing Social Democrats, and that those who were disillusioned with the Social Democrats put their faith in the vacillators of the "center" organized in the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD).

What was worse, however, was that the small minority that had already been won over to revolution had little understanding of strategy and tactics, and no tradition of working together in a disciplined way. These weaknesses were displayed in the discussion over participation in the elections, which took place as the founding KPD conference met in December 1918.

Luxemburg argued very strongly that the new party could not take power without the support of the majority of the working class. She contended, rightly, that the majority of workers still supported national assembly elections, and that therefore, revolutionaries had to use the election campaign as an opportunity to agitate for revolutionary socialism.

One of Luxemburg's leading supporters, Paul Levi, explained the position at the congress. "The national assembly is the banner of the counterrevolution. We know exactly the way the proletariat must travel to victory. It will be over the dead body of the national assembly... Comrades, we propose to you nevertheless that we do not stand aloof from the national assembly elections.

"The national assembly is going to meet. It will dominate the political scene in Germany for months to come, and there is no way you can prevent that. Our duty is to break into that building."

But most of the convention dele-



On the verge of power



gates did not understand the need for tactics that related to the consciousness of the mass of workers. They heckled Levi with cries of "Never!" and "A waste of energy!" The attitude of the majority, according to Karl Radek, the Bolshevik leader who attended the KPD conference, was "We will break up the assembly with machine guns."

This approach played right into the hands of the right-wing Social Democrats. They were able to give the impression that the revolutionaries wanted to impose a dictatorship of "oppressive terrorism" on the working class. The headline of their paper was "Spartakus aims to break up the national assembly," and their writer claimed, "Bolsheviks agitate for world war."

THE MOST experienced revolutionaries at the congress were horrified by the political immaturity of the delegates. Rosa Luxemburg wrote, in a letter to Clara Zetkin, another experienced revolutionary leader, that this was "a somewhat childish, half-baked radicalism." It was understandable however, in "a new generation, free from the mind-numbing traditions of the 'old party.'"

Radek agreed. Commenting on the KPD congress, he wrote: "I did not feel I had a real party here before me."

This inexperience had tragic results in the second week of January 1919. The right-wing Social Demo-

crats fired the popular left-wing Social Democrat who had run the Berlin police since the revolution. Many workers who had been prepared to support the government only weeks before now turned bitterly against it. There took place what was described as the biggest demonstration Berlin had ever seen, with nearly a million workers taking to the streets.

Very influential in the Berlin workers' movement was a group of shop floor activists known as the "revolutionary shop stewards." Under the pressure of events, they called for the overthrow of the government.

Rosa Luxemburg and the KPD leadership opposed an insurrection at that time. As a KPD leaflet explained: "If the Berlin workers were today to disperse the national assembly and throw the Ebert-Schleidermann people (right-wing Social Democrats who led the government) into prison, while the workers of the Ruhr and Upper Silesia and the rural workers of Germany east of the Elbe remained inactive, the capitalists would be able tomorrow to subdue Berlin through hunger." KPD leaders agreed that an isolated insurrection in Berlin would be strangled easily.

Yet, within days of the party's decision to oppose an adventurist uprising, two party leaders, Liebknecht and Wilhelm Pieck, took it upon themselves to support the shop stewards' call to overthrow the government.

Luxemburg was disgusted when she learned of Liebknecht's and

Pieck's actions. But there seemed little she and the rest of the leadership could do about it. Radek urged her to oppose the insurrection publicly lest a premature uprising hand the government an opportunity to smash the working-class movement.

"The only restraining force that can prevent this misfortune is the Communist Party," Radek contended. "I know this will lead to a decline in morale. But such depression is nothing compared to what the masses will say to themselves after a bloodletting."

THERE IS little doubt that Radek was right. Revolutionaries do, on occasion, have to restrain workers from crazy adventures, however much temporary unpopularity it gains us.

But Rosa Luxemburg felt she could not follow such advice. She urged workers into action. The resulting bloodletting dealt a severe blow to the Berlin workers' movement. The Freikorps murdered some of the best German revolutionaries, including Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

Trotsky, in an article written three months after Luxemburg's and Liebknecht's deaths, pointed out why the German revolutionaries had been unable to offer real leadership to the mass struggle:

"At the moment of the transition to open revolutionary struggle for power, the German working class proved to be extremely defenseless organizationally.

"The Russian working class which accomplished its October revolution received a priceless legacy from the previous epoch: a centralized revolutionary party..."

"History bequeathed nothing like this to the German working class. It was compelled not only to fight for power but to create its organization and train future leaders in the very course of this struggle."

The tragedy was that among the victims of the premature insurrections were leaders like Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches who had a grasp of revolutionary politics required to prevent future terrible mistakes.

Building the SWM in Limerick

LIKE ANY other town in Ireland over the last few years, Limerick has been ravaged by recession.

The old workplaces like Ranks, Matternsons and Cleeves are gone.

The image fostered by the IDA of a prosperous Shannon side is an illusion. The industrial estates of Raheen and Shannon have eased but not solved the problem. Cutbacks and redundancies are threatening there too.

Out of a workforce of 30,000, up to 12,000 are on the dole. Emigration is soaring. A huge 80 per cent of Sixth Years in my school expressed a wish to leave - clearly the system has failed.

Limerick has a reputation of being a fiercely right-wing city. We had the awful confraternity and the 1905 anti-semitic pogrom. Of Labour TDs whose views would not have been out of place at a Knights of Columbanus Convention and where, as recently as 1982, the Church and the local press intervened to prevent the election of a politician who voiced views in favour of abortion.

Limerick has also the distinction of being the

SWM Day School Marxism and the Russian Revolution

with JOHN MOLYNEUX

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

SESSIONS ON:

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

DUBLIN: May 9th, 11.00 am to 5.00 pm

BELFAST: May 10th, 11.00 am to 5.00 pm

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

birthplace of such notables as Michael Noonan, Vincent Browne and his lordship Des O'Malley. A heavy burden for any place to have to bear!

But there is another tradition too, usually left out of the history books - of the Limerick workers who sent greetings to their Russian comrades in 1917 and two

years later showed what can be done, with the famous Limerick Soviet.

Even today, with a "left" vote of 9000 there is something to build on. What's needed in Limerick and everywhere else in Ireland is a party that will attack the root cause of today's crisis. The SWM exists to do just that. - BRIAN HANLEY.

Vote against NATO threat

Dear comrades, There will be a lot of confusion about the referendum on May 26.

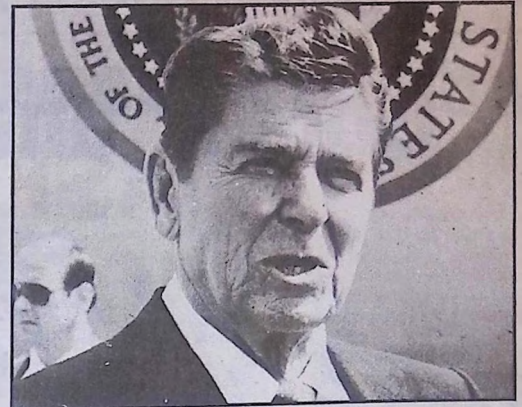
The biggest distortion being put about by both government and opposition is that by voting "no" we will be voting to be thrown out of the EEC.

The EEC is a trade alliance and Ireland has already signed up as a partner and cannot be thrown out, regardless of how the vote goes.

The Single European Act is a double act, one part of it is an amendment of the EEC Treaty and the second part is a separate treaty on foreign policy, security and defence. It is this part which, because of Irish neutrality, has been declared unconstitutional.

To vote "no" is to vote against the NATO military alliance. It is not a vote against EEC membership.

In or out of the EEC the real issue for Irish workers is the fight against our own boss class and the system of capitalism.



NATO boss Ronald Reagan

Capitalism is now synonymous with rising unemployment and falling living standards. A fight for socialism here can lead to a real United States of Europe. JIM BLAKE, CORK

SF gets it wrong on strike

Dear S.W.

The statement issued by Sinn Fein representatives during the recent civil servants' strike in the Six Counties showed the confusion and lack of principles of republican politics and politicians.

Ivan Barr, SF Councillor in Strabane - an area where thousands faced a hungry Easter - got it absolutely right when he blamed the government for the

situation and gave the strikers his full support.

Guru of left-republicanism Gerry Adams, however, got himself tangled up in an attempt to please all sides. He supported the strikers, he said. But they shouldn't have taken action which might leave some claimants without money over Easter.

Actually, it was DHSS management and its Tory bosses who were leaving people without

money over Easter, not the strikers. They had had plenty of notice of the strike. Alternative arrangements could have been made to get people their dole.

Gerry Adams' confused and confusing statement was disappointing but his obvious lack of class politics is no longer a surprise.

Best wishes to S.W. EILEEN DOHERTY, DERRY

EACH week branches of the SWM meet in many towns in Ireland. At the moment there are members in Belfast, Derry, Dublin, Dundalk, Dungarvan, Cork, Limerick, Kilkenny, Portlaoise, Galway and Waterford. If you would like details of SWM meetings and activities in your area write to SWM, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

SWM at USI fringe meeting

MORE THAN thirty delegates to the Union of Students in Ireland conference in Portrush last month attended an SWM fringe meeting and joined in an animated discussion of the relevance of revolutionary socialism to the problems of students today.

The conference itself, however, was marked by a general apathy, the set-piece debates on women, the national question, union organisation and the fight to defend education from two right-wing governments rarely catching fire.

Most energy was expended on internal campaigning for particular union offices, with sharp political differences between candidates seldom merging as relevant.

However, the conference showed that there is a minority of students at least interested in the class realities of their situation and the SWM hopes that they will continue discussion with us about what type of political organisation needs to be built if students and other young people are to have any future in Ireland.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

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

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

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

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

AGAINST PARTITION

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

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

We stand for:

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

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

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

AGAINST ALL OPPRESSION

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

We are for an end to discrimination against homosexuals. We stand for full separation of the church and state. We stand for secular control of the hospitals and the schools.

THE UNIONS

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

We stand for:

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

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

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

THE PARTY

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



In 1912, six Bolsheviks were elected to the Tsarist parliament, the Duma, on a rising wave of class struggle which, though interrupted by the First World War, was to lead on to the 1917 revolution. This book, written by one of them, is unique. Not only does it chronicle a vital period of class struggle, but it shows how socialists can use the sham democracy of parliament to organise the working class. 256 pages.

BOLSHEVIKS IN THE TSARIST DUMA

£5.95 from SWM bookstalls or by post (add £1 postage) from SW Books, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

A Y Badayev



JOIN US!

I would like more details about the Socialist Workers Movement

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to SWM, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

REVIEWS

Socialist Worker reviews the film 'Platoon'

Of 'Gooks' and 'Grunts'

IT IS encouraging to note the success of the film "Platoon" in the United States. After Stallone's "Rambo" it looked as if what had happened in Vietnam had been forgotten.

And "Platoon" brilliantly shows the hardships and misery of the normal soldier (the "grunt") fighting in the jungles of Vietnam.

It also makes clear who it was who was sent to Vietnam: the poor and unemployed of America.

When the main character, Chris Taylor, tells a group of others that he volunteered for Vietnam as he was fed up with college, wanted to prove himself, etc, one replies: "you have to be rich in the first place to think like that". The rest were all conscripts and they spent their time counting the days till they got out, if they did.

The film depicts graphically the horrors and terrors of war. The various battle scenes depict the horror of injury. We are not spared the screams and shrieks of wounded soldiers. In the opening sequence of the film the new arrivals pass by the "bagged" dead, waiting to be flown out.

For most of the soldiers the war is senseless. They were fighting a war they knew next to nothing about and they were fighting for a country they didn't care about. They live in constant fear, never knowing when the next attack or ambush will occur: guerrilla fighting in the jungle reduces war from the high technology affairs of the 20th century to the fierce nerve-wracking experience of close person to person fighting.

The sequence where the Platoon overruns a village, reminiscent of My Lai, is unbearably real. The barbarity of the soldiers as they root out the hiding men and attempt to extract information is shattering.

PSYCHOPATHS

That such things occurred we can be sure of. That there were real "killers" in the army as opposed to just "killers" may also be true (the film shows there were some real psychopaths in the army).

But this is where the film falls down terribly. The basic plot of the film is about the "civil war" (as Taylor calls it) which developed in the Platoon between the ruthless killers personified in Barnes and the more romantic, caring type, Elias (who at one stage goes out in a solo effort and kills at least six of the enemy).

The main character, Taylor, at the end of the film sees both types as father figures and



Tom Berenger (left) and Willem Dafoe (right) confront each other in "Platoon".

develops traits from both of them. And the development of Taylor's character is the main plot of the film. The course of the war and its reasons become background.

Taylor's final voiceover sums up the ridiculous attitude of the film to war:

NONSENSE

"We were really fighting against ourselves in Vietnam" and the job of the returning soldier was to teach those back home so that they might search for the "goodness" within themselves. This is ridiculous nonsense.

The war was fought by the Americans with all their high

tech weapons against a completely impoverished country. They murdered millions, devastated vast areas of the country and caused untold millions to live in misery. No American film about Vietnam has succeeded in looking at that aspect of the war. All the films about Vietnam (Coming Home, The Deer Hunter, Apocalypse Now) concentrated on the effects of the war on the American soldier. In

Platoon itself the enemy, the "Gooks" as they are called, as usual are the shadowy figures who move in the jungle. The village overrun by the Platoon claim not to be supporters of the NLF.

The overrunning of the village

within the film is seen as justified. The unnecessary violence, killing and rape as unjustified (by some members of the Platoon).

And hence the film is a moral tirade against unnecessary violence in a situation of violence and gets lost in useless distinctions.

No war is justified. This should be the point of a film which deals with war. War is inhuman. This film evades the whole issue. It is nonetheless worth seeing as it successfully focuses on the inhumanity of aspects of the Vietnam war. The "Gooks", the Vietnamese are still like the targets at a shooting range to be scored. —JOE O'BYRNE

Long way from home

IN AMERICA, the Harlem Renaissance began in 1921 when a mostly white intelligentsia showed interest in Black-American culture.

While Blacks could not enjoy the artistic achievements of the Harlem Renaissance because of colour barriers in theatres, whites in mid-town Manhattan relished Black theatre, dance, music, art and writing until the Great Depression ended this era of Black history in 1929.

One of the most profound writers of the Harlem Renaissance was Claude McKay, a twenty-one year old Jamaican who came to America in 1912. McKay briefly tried formal education when he first came to the States, attending Tuskegee Institute (an all-Black college founded by Booker T Washington), but he left school to pursue a writing career. To support himself McKay took on typical Black service jobs like waiter, porter and bartender, but he was still determined to express himself in his work.

"A Long Way from Home" (Pluto Press) is McKay's autobiography which goes from his early years in America working on the staff of the "Liberator" to his travels in Europe and Africa.

In one example of McKay's

experiences of the colour line, McKay calls Frank Harris, an editor who gave McKay advice as a young writer, a "Great Editor", while Harris calls him "the Negro poet". This contrasts with Max and Crystal Eastman of the communist magazine the "Liberator" who printed his great sonnet "If We Must Die" and made him associate editor, not the token Black on the "Liberator"'s staff.

McKay's interest in communism was a reflection of his consciousness as a Black person. There were two major political theories during the Harlem Renaissance: Black nationalism, which was behind the charismatic force of Marcus Garvey, and the New Negro Movement which was mainly in scholarly circles, and was started by Professor Alain Locke. McKay saw too much prejudice, poverty and discrimination against working class Blacks to believe in Locke's theory, and he had too many white friends to be a Black nationalist. Communism was a sort of middle ground for McKay and in his autobiography he describes his 1921 visit to Russia when the Revolution was beginning to fall. McKay was the first Black in Russia after the Revolution and his descriptions of Trotsky, the



Claude McKay
The New York Public Library
Schomburg Collection

"non-Bolshevik population", and the workers who made McKay write "Never in my life did I feel prouder of being an African, a Black . . ." are brilliant.

McKay claimed he was primarily a writer and never made any political commitments, but that is hardly borne out by his writings. The discerning reader of "A Long Way from Home" can feel McKay's demoralisation as he describes the fall of the Russian Revolution and of the Left elsewhere in the world.

N.D. TAGGART

Taking seats to smash the system

CAN REVOLUTIONARIES take seats in parliament without compromising their principles? Or does it mean accepting the legitimacy of the state?

This was the question which caused the split in the Republican Movement at Sinn Fein's last Ard Fheis.

And the answer is: it depends on your politics.

Revolutionary socialists argue that capitalist democracy is a fraud. It disguises the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, who control the factories, banks, courts, police and army. The only force that can transform society is the working class which can come to power only by smashing the bourgeois state and founding a new, workers' state based on workers' councils or soviets.

We oppose, therefore, reformists—like the Labour and Workers' Parties—who claim that a majority of their deputies in the Dail would legislate socialism into existence. But we insist that it is necessary—given the appropriate circumstances—to utilise parliament as an arena from which to promote the real class struggle among the working class.

Badayev, the author of this recently republished memoir, was a Bolshevik and former railway worker who was one of the revolutionary deputies in the Tsarist State Parliament—the Duma.

As parliaments go, the Duma was even more of a fraud than most. The Tsar appointed ministers and the Duma had only an advisory role. The electoral system was heavily weighted in favour of the landowners and capitalists. Workers' organisations were either illegal—like the Bolsheviks, or subject to constant police interference and repression—like the trade unions. Nonetheless, Lenin argued that Bolsheviks should stand on any dung-heap in order to have their voices heard.

This book is a fascinating account of the work of the Bolshevik deputies in the period from 1912, when the working class movement was recovering its self-confidence and militancy after the years of reaction following the defeat of the 1905 revolution, until the outbreak of the first world war and the trial and exile of the six Bolsheviks deputies for their anti-war activities.

Badayev describes the revolutionary approach to parliamentary work:

* The deputies worked under the direction of the party. Unlike reformist parties the deputies were not powerful in their own right. But, like the parliamentary tactics, they were subordinated to the overriding goal of the party: strengthening the self-confidence and revolutionary organisation of the working class;

* They took no responsibility for the activities of the Duma. They refused to collaborate with the drafting of legislation

or even voting for a chairman. On the contrary, their questions and speeches in the chamber were designed to expose the fraud of parliamentarism and the need for workers themselves to take action. This is in stark contrast to the regular wringing of hands and grappling with conscience from reformists which attends every vote for Taoiseach in these parts:

* They scorned the ridiculous formalities and procedures with which parliaments around the world adorn themselves. There was none of this "my honourable friend" bullshit. On the contrary, they staged demonstrations in support of strikers, shouting down exalted cabinet ministers, and getting themselves suspended from the chamber in the process;

* But above all, their centre of activity was not in the parliamentary chamber but among the workers. They used the information that sitting in the Duma provided to write agitational leaflets and make speeches to workers to encourage them to action. They organised collections for strikers, constantly visited picket lines and received delegations of workers to work out how best they could use opportunities provided by the reporting of their speeches in the Duma to assist workers to organise better. To see a Labour politician in these islands contributing to a strike collection, let alone organising one, would turn a few heads.

REPUDIATED

It was not all plain sailing. One of the deputies turned out to be a police spy. At their trial, some of their number repudiated Lenin's clear anti-war position. In spite of this, only the support they had won among masses of workers saved them from the gallows.

The book too has its weaknesses. It was written in 1929 as the cold winds of stalinism were gathering force. Badayev distorts the historical record by crediting to Stalin achievements which were not his and disguising the disagreements among the Bolsheviks precipitated by the war. This edition has an authoritative introduction by Tony Cliff, of the SWP—our sister organisation in Britain, which sets the record straight on this and other matters and provides an invaluable overview.

Until the revolutionary socialist movement is larger in Ireland, and the level of workers' struggles higher, it would be tactically inappropriate for the SWM to devote the huge resources necessary to fighting parliamentary elections, but this book shows that given the right circumstances it is quite possible for revolutionaries to exploit the parliamentary arena without selling out.

—KEVIN WINGFIELD.

* Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma by A Y Badayev, Bookmarks, £5.95 sterling.

AIDS
THE SOCIALIST VIEW

£1.25 from SWM
PO Box 1648,
Dublin 8

Preparing the fightback

FIANNA FAIL's vicious anti-worker budget has brought a pathetic response from trade union leaders in the South.

Donal Nevin of ICTU appeared on television and said he was not disappointed by the prospect of a public sector pay freeze.

Instead he looked to the government's pledge to "honour" the two per cent already due as proof of their "integrity." Even the TV interviewer was taken aback by Nevin's crawling performance.

On April 15th Nevin went with John Carroll, ICTU president, to meet the Taoiseach. Haughey agreed to discuss the "formulation of a programme for growth and economic recovery". Even the Federated Union of Employers appeared pleased with this and said that they would like to get involved in the discussion.

So instead of mobilising workers to fight the cuts, ICTU leaders are once more waltzing into the arms of the enemy.

Whatever happened to the uncompromising trade unionism of Larkin and Connolly? Their praises may be sung on May Day by today's leaders but their militancy has given way to the class collaboration of Nevin and Carroll who see the unions as "social partners" of the ruling class.

In Socialist Worker we have often argued about the nature of trade unions and about the way in which the bureaucracy tries to make compromises rather than lead a fight. But how can this be overcome today? How should militants be preparing to resist the government?

First, it is not enough to say leave it to the rank-and-file. Workers are indeed sick of the

by DAVE McDONAGH

bureaucrats' performance but this does not mean that they will automatically use their own collective strength and bypass the official limits. In fact there are other possibilities.

In Dublin Corporation, many militants are putting forward the idea of a "new union" which would give the workers a better service. This idea makes changing the personnel of the bureaucracy the central question and not the development of the fighting confidence and strength of the rank-and-file. It gives in to the idea that workers can never stand up and challenge the bureaucrats.

A worse possibility is that workers will become demoralised and disillusioned with the trade union movement itself and will sink further into apathy. This would be disastrous.

OFFENSIVE

Socialists should be fighting to defend the unions against the employers' offensive and against the apathy which is eating away from within. We should therefore be taking every opportunity to rebuild workplace confidence.

But what opportunities present themselves?

Opportunities arise today when the bureaucrats themselves appear ready to lead token action. Although they will not lead a real fight they may call brief stoppages in order to save face and to defend their own interests as negotiators.

In 1985 the Coalition government refused to

re-appoint the arbitrator to the Public Service. This was too much even for the union leaders to bear and they called a one-day strike.

In the face of the recent attacks we are likely to see similar tokenism in the near future.

Socialists must build for such actions because despite their very limited nature they do offer two possibilities.

Firstly, as in October 1985, they may draw into activity many workers who have not been on strike before. The brief feeling of strength and solidarity which they experience should be built on in order to bring about more useful action.

Secondly, there is always the likelihood that mass token action can go beyond the control of the bureaucrats.

This happened in Denmark in 1985 when a three-day stoppage became a huge general strike which shook Schlütters Right Wing government. More recent upsurges in France and Spain also went beyond the limits the bureaucracy had set. If workers notice a sign of weakness on the part of the bosses, token action can turn into a real battle.

FORWARD

For this reason we should build for any one-day stoppages that may be called.

Furthermore, militants should be going forward as delegates to union conferences. When the bureaucrats make rhetoric about fighting the pay freeze, we should take the opportunity to argue for all out action. The key is to put the officials on the spot, make them put their money where their mouths are.



Donal Nevin of the ICTU (left) and John Carroll of the ITGWU (right). They may be forced to launch token action.



At the recent Psychiatric Nurses Conference Thomas O'Sullivan, the union secretary urged the members to reject the pay freeze. As the conferences continue, such rhetoric must be used to win people to a fighting campaign.

Whether we like it or not, these bureaucrats are part of our movement. To ignore them means ignoring the movement itself. But to challenge them to keep their word means that we keep alive the possibility that soon the working class will say to the bosses: "We have had enough".

ESB STRIKE

WORKERS IN the ESB are about to go on strike over pay. As we go to press, the ATGWU has called an indefinite strike from May 5th while the Group of Unions, representing 8,300 workers, will stage two 48-hour strikes leading to a possible all-out action.

Politicians and the media are already attacking the strike. They talk of the "disastrous effect of the strike" as if they were concerned about people suffering without electricity.

But do we hear them complaining every winter when old people die of hypothermia because they can't afford enough power to heat their homes?

Nobody should buy Dessie O'Malley's line that the ESB

workers are "overpaid".

They deserve to get paid a decent wage and its a tribute to their militancy in the past if they have managed to win better than average rates of pay.

What O'Malley is afraid of is the return of such militancy. He knows that if ESB workers win then other workers will have the confidence to fight.

There is of course a question mark over the effectiveness of the 48-hour stoppages. Limited action, although a start, can, on its own, be demoralising. Union activists should be pushing for all-out action throughout the ESB from day one of the strike.

By getting off on the right foot the ESB workers can win and provide a tremendous example to the rest of the workers' movement.

NIPSA NEED ALL-OUT

MONDAY APRIL 13 saw the beginning of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance Week of Action in support of their fight for a decent living wage. The week of action is part of a six-week "rolling" strike being carried out by an alliance of civil servants unions in Britain and the Six Counties.

The week began with selective strike action from 15 local DHSS offices. The response to the strike call surprised many, especially NIPSA officials. In fact, several offices including the Falls Road, Andersonstown and Shankill Road had voted unanimously for strike action.

Monday morning saw an excellent turn-out on picket lines all over the Six Counties and the mood of the picketers was confident. All through the week the pickets were well supported by other groups of workers. The majority of Post Office workers refused to cross picket lines. In Derry refuse collectors would not take DHSS rubbish. Stormont bus drivers showed their solidarity by refusing to enter the estate leaving any scabs about a mile to walk to their offices.

Reaction from the public too was mostly favourable

with most claimants supporting the demands of the strikers and blaming the government for any inconvenience or hardship.

A march was organised for Wednesday from Belfast City Centre to Queens University. Unfortunately many civil servants not chosen for selective strikes were unable to attend as the march was held during normal working hours and there was no union directive to treat the rally as part of the industrial action.

In spite of this, the march was well attended, with buses arriving from all over the Six Counties. A rally was held at Queens and it got off to a lively start with a jazz band and dancing in the aisles. The speakers unfortunately were not so lively. Speakers from NICTU, NIPSA and the British Civil and Public Service Alliance (CPSA) had a lot to say about the poor wages of civil servants but little to say which might give a lead on how to fight for real improvements. Although NIPSA plan a vote for All-Out strike in May, none of the speakers suggested, still less argued for, this line of action.

Thursday 16th began a two

day strike involving the whole Northern Ireland Civil Service. Although the votes in favour of strike action in the Six Counties had only amounted to 58 per cent, the government had to admit that seventy per cent of civil servants joined in the strike. Among DHSS workers where support for the strike was the strongest, only a tiny percentage of workers scabbed and nine out of ten were out.

EXCEPTION

Every local DHSS office in Northern Ireland was forced to close. Strabane, the one exception, put the lie to Tory claims that the strikers were "uncaring". The majority of claimants got their payments automatically - sent out by the computer. Isolated areas here and there - Shankill Road in Belfast for example - are not computerised yet.

The numbers involved in these offices were small enough to be dealt with by the Social Services Dept. None of the Strabane area is computerised. The scale of unemployment in the area - officially over fifty per cent out of work

- meant that people would have had no money over Easter and no family network to fall back on (since the entire family would be likely to depend on the dole).

Since the government refused to make alternative arrangements for paying benefits, the strikers showed who was uncaring by lifting pickets on Strabane.

Among the lower grades on strike there was a willingness to stay out until the full claim was granted. Unfortunately, there was no way for strikers in one office to link up with others except through the union officials, so this willingness to fight was dissipated.

There is an understandable fear of All-Out action, but there is also an awareness that three-day strikes didn't win in 1981 and that only All-Out action can achieve the full claim. This potential militancy is being ignored by the NIPSA executive although the lower grades are solid. Rank and file NIPSA activists should be building support now in their workplaces and in their branches for All-Out action.

-MARK McIVOR,
Vice-Chairperson Nipsa 110,
(personal capacity).



Members of NIPSA picketing in Derry

Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

FF right behind Brits

"WE DIDN'T exactly speak the same language, but I think I'm learning to translate", said Tory Northern Ireland Secretary Tom King last month after the first meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference since the election of Fianna Fail.

What he meant was that he knows now there'll be no real change, that it's only the style of rhetoric coming from Dublin which is different.

Fianna Fail now say they will "work" the Agreement. But they are no more capable than the Coalition of making the Agreement work. So far it's failed totally in its central objective - the incorporation of the bulk of the nationalist working class into the political system in the North and thus the isolation of Sinn Fein and the IRA.

The basic thinking was that if the Republicans could be reduced to a small, ineffectual minority-within-a-minority a moderate Unionist bloc would emerge in response, willing to share power with the SDLP in these new circumstances.

But there's no sign of it happening. The British have been unable to reform out of existence the conditions which sustain the Republican's support.

HARASSMENT

The level of harassment of young working class Catholics is as high as ever and the bias in the courts is obvious. More fundamentally, the British have been incapable of lowering the level of discrimination which underlies what has become known as "Catholic alienation".

It is for this reason that they hype up relatively trivial issues like the Flags and Emblems Act and recognition of the Irish language - rather like a football manager whose team hasn't scored a goal all season boasting that he's making serious efforts to improve the half-time entertainment.

At the Stormont meeting, Fianna Fail called for more action on "fair employment" Brian Lenihan made much of this on his return to Dublin.

But all he got from King was the promise of a White Paper (after the next

Westminster election) containing a "charter of fair employment practices".

Any such document won't be worth the paper it's written on. After all, in theory discrimination is already illegal in the North.

Fianna Fail does have a better "suss" on Northern Nationalist attitudes, which is why Lenihan makes more noise than Peter Barry used to about discrimination. But that's all it is - noise.

POSITIVE

Similarly, Fianna Fail is slightly more positive about the "McBride Principles" which Hume denounced last month when the Brits called in one of the many favours he owes them.

Meanwhile, as Lenihan's announcement of a new cross border "task-force" makes clear, Fianna Fail will, as ever, be even more ruthless and collaborationist in direct repression. An accurate indication of FF's line on the North's security forces came when Lenihan rejected any suggestion "that the conference had accepted that recent (Republican) funerals had been handled insensitively by the RUC".

Unfortunately, the failure of the Agreement and the obvious disarray of the Unionists' "Ulster Says No" campaign has not been countered by any coherent, broad-based campaign on the nationalist side. The Republican strategy is not to mobilise the mass of nationalist workers but to persist in roof-slates-and-drains agitation which might bring in votes at the next poll, accompanied by an intensified military campaign.

POLITICS

As for the politics of opposing the Agreement, the Republican position was expressed in Derry by Martin McGuinness at the Bloody Sunday commemoration when he said that the Loyalists should be thanked for "doing our work for us".

It is just possible that the Loyalist campaign (involving, we should remember, open terror against Catholics in vulnerable areas) could be stepped up and could break the will of the British by undermining the RUC's loyalty.

But the downfall of the

Agreement in these circumstances would mean an unprecedented hardening of sectarian attitudes. Welcoming the Loyalists "doing our work for us" makes sense only if you don't care at all what sort of society would emerge from the Agreement being beaten, if you don't care about the class nature of the "New Ireland" being aimed at.

What's lacking is a strategy based on an understanding of the class forces behind the Agreement itself.

It's an Agreement between two right-wing capitalist governments. King represents the government which has savaged the health and educational systems, sought to destroy the trade union movement and put the boot into the poor at every opportunity while being tenderly protecting of the rotten rich.

Lenihan represents a government which has just passed the most vicious anti-worker budget in memory and which is squaring up for a Thatcher-style showdown with the unions.

JOINED

The two governments have joined together in the Agreement for the same reason as they attack workers on the economic front. British and Free State capitalism have a common interest in devising arrangements, if they can, for political stability in all Ireland, the better that they might continue the exploitation of the mass of people with as little disruption or opposition as possible.

The SWM argues therefore that we should look specifically to the working class as the base on which opposition to the Agreement must be built.

Workers' action on the economic front can be linked into opposition to the Agreement. The strikes in the North against public spending cuts are against the government which has the Agreement as the framework of its overall Northern policy. Similarly with the battle against the cuts and the pay freeze in the South.

It is not in the interests of any Irish worker that these two governments operating in collusion should manage to stabilise and solidify their rule.

What's needed is a party which bases its activity on this perspective. Nobody can do the working class's job for it except the working class itself.



Lenihan and King; partners in crime

ICTU hypocrites expel Mitchell

THE executive committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has suspended one of its own members - John Mitchell. He is "crime" has been to criticise the activities of some of the unions organising in Northern Ireland. Mitchell had pointed out that "they had not made the tiniest little squeak about the repression of our people".

He denounced the leaders of particular unions such as the shop workers' union USDAW as a "trade union mafia".

Mitchell's union, IDATU, may also be suspended from ICTU unless it disowns Mitchell.

The incident proves how

low the ICTU has stooped.

It has tried to witch-hunt John Mitchell but it never said a word about the Boilermakers Union who were found guilty of discrimination by the Fair Employment Agency of the North. Their General Secretary can still sit in on ICTU executive meetings.

Nor has the ICTU anything to say about trade union officials who have engaged in some of the most disgraceful attacks on workers' democracy. Union officials like Jimmy Tinkler, of the ATGWU, who fought to have the Cork ESB strikers beaten by the combined weight of the army and ESB management

Instead ICTU has been busy loving-up to the Fianna Fail government in the South. Despite the threatened pay freeze in the public sector the ICTU leaders have entered

into negotiations with the government on a new, "long-term" pay deal.

In the North they have run a campaign against sectarianism and violence without mentioning the role of the British army and the RUC.

John Mitchell has done the labour movement a tremendous service by bringing these matters to the attention of all workers.

That is why every socialist should stand full square against this disgraceful attempt to witch-hunt Mitchell.

Mitchell is being sacrificed because he has turned the spot-light on the silence of the Northern Ireland Trade Union movement on discrimination and state violence.

He has every right to speak out!