

Victory to the firemen

SEE PAGE 11

Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

British Army given...

LICENCE TO KILL

IAIN THAIN was the only serving soldier ever sentenced for murder in Northern Ireland.

He was released last month having served three and a half years of a life sentence and is back on duty in the army.

The message to British soldiers, RUC and UDR came across loud and clear: kill as you will, you'll be protected no matter what.

Thain's conviction in 1984 probably saved the lives of many nationalists over the last three years. Until the judgement against him, the British army had killed some 230 people in the North of Ireland—about 160 of them civilians with no paramilitary connections. But no serving soldier had ever been sentenced in the courts for murder.

There had been many cases

where the killings were blatant murder—where the soldier couldn't have thought himself in any danger. Majella O'Hare was twelve years old when a British paratrooper shot her dead in 1976. The soldier responsible was acquitted after he claimed that he was firing at an IRA man.

No charges were ever brought against the soldiers and RUC men who fired the plastic bullets that killed eleven year old Stephen Mc Conomy, 12-year old Carol Ann Kelly, 14-year old Julie Livingstone and 10-year old Stephen Geddis.

Thain's conviction and life sentence for the murder of Thomas Reilly changed all that. Since that time the British army had killed only one other civilian until last month's shooting of Aidan McAnespie. That person was Anthony Hughes who died at Loughall. So 160 people were killed by the Army up to Thain's conviction and only one

between 1984 and 1988. The fact was that Thain's life sentence seemed a warning to other soldiers that they couldn't kill in cold blood and get away with it. His release and re-assignment to duty cancelled that message and has again given the British army licence to kill.

YOUTH

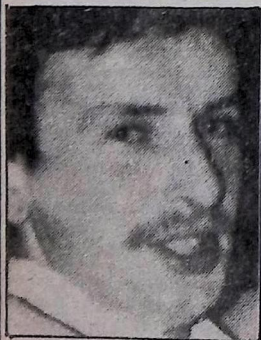
The decision to release Thain, we are told, was because of his youth—he was only eighteen years of age when he killed Reilly. But Long Kesh and Magilligan are full of young Republicans who were just as young, and younger, when they received life sentences. Many are serving sentences "at the Secretary of State's Pleasure" (SOSP) because they were under eighteen when convicted.

But we've not seen much sympathy or understanding for

these young men. In November of last year, for example, 28 out of 30 prisoners serving life or SOSP sentences, all of whom had served more than ten years, were turned down for release by The Review Board.

The possibility of intervening in the Birmingham Six case was rejected by Douglas Hurd on the grounds that to do so would be seen as an unacceptable political rebuke to the judges involved in the case. Thain's conviction had been upheld by the Court of Appeal; he had been refused leave to take his case to the House of Lords. In deciding to release him, then, Douglas Hurd was clearly saying to the judges involved that it was politically wrong to have convicted Thain.

Now that the British government have corrected that political error on the part of their judges, we may find that the murder of Aidan McAnespie marks the start of the British Army's new licence to kill.



Aidan McAnespie, shot dead at Aghnacloy last month.



Julie Livingstone, killed by a plastic bullet in 1981.



Thomas "Kidso" Reilly, shot by Private Thain in 1983.



Majella O'Hare, shot dead by a paratrooper in 1976.



FF' Housing scandal

FIANNA FAIL have torn another leaf out of Thatcher's book. At their Ard Fheis, the smarmy ex-national school teacher Pdraig Flynn announced a new scheme for selling off corporation houses to the tenants. Flynn argued that this was a great bonus for working class families. He wants 40,000 houses or a third of the local authority housing stock sold off.

The average corporation tenant pays a weekly rent of £8. For this they receive a guarantee of minimal maintenance. Doors, windows, floors are renewed regularly. Plumbing problems are dealt with. The houses are kept in a reasonable state of repair—or so the theory went until recently.

The snag for the rich in this country is that the rent from corporation tenants does not cover the cost maintenance. Last year £71 million was spent on maintenance but only £39 million was received in rent. There is nothing unusual here. After all, those with mortgages are subsidised far more due to tax write offs.

Flynn's aim is twofold. It is to cut down the maintenance costs to the bone—and raise the amount of money coming in each year from corporation tenants.

MAINTENANCE

Those who buy their own house will no longer receive a maintenance service. In this way, Flynn wants to save £13 million in the first year alone. He hopes that the already worsening maintenance will so anger tenants that they will give up on all claims to it. At the moment the delays on maintenance have increased to 3-4 months; services such as house painting have been virtually cut out, emergencies such as burst pipes are left untended over week-ends. The number of glaziers in Dublin corporation now amounts to a mere 11. The voluntary redundancy programme has already removed many skilled workers from the maintenance departments.

Flynn also wants to get more income from the tenants to make up for the short fall in money going to local authorities. Tenants will now take out a loan from the corporation

and pay back at a higher rate per week. If they become redundant and cannot meet the payments the house reverts to the local authority.

In the longer run, Flynn's scheme is designed to create further divisions between the working class. The housing stock will decrease. Young married and single people looking for accommodation will be forced into private rented accommodation. In the fifties, under Fianna Fail a roughly similar position emerged. New house building by corporations almost ceased. The result was by the sixties there was virtually no public accommodation available and the housing list was used by right wing politicians as a bargainer for votes. Fortunately, the agitation by groups such as the Dublin Housing Action Committee helped to turn the situation around.

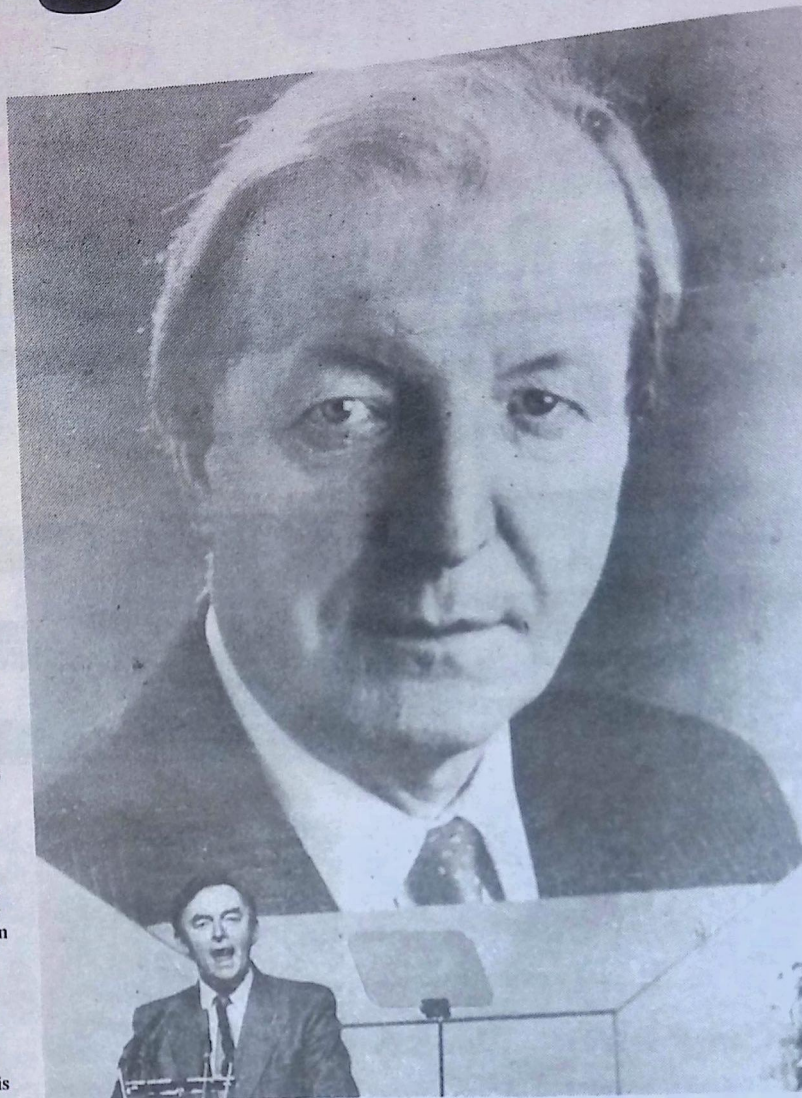
DIVISION

Already public house building has virtually stopped. 3,500 are now on the housing list.

Division may also be created between working class areas. Nobody in their right minds would buy their flat in huge blocks such as Ballymun in Dublin. This smaller but weaker group of mainly unemployed people—could become the main beneficiary of the maintenance service. The corporation will take full advantage of this to worsen the service further. Already jobs involving scaffolding in Dublin corporation have been

severely cut as the Corpo have simply done away with the mobile scaffolding unit.

Every socialist must oppose Flynn's efforts at privatisation. This right wing, SPUC loving gombeen never had the interest of workers at heart.



Pdraig Flynn announces housing sell off.

THINGS THEY SAY

MARY Mooney, the Fianna Fail TD, is not known as a radical firebrand. Her opposition to the Liberties dual carriageway in Dublin was supposedly due to the fact that her family's eight shops would be demolished in the process.

But Mary has a secret ambition. She recently let Hot Press readers in on this secret.

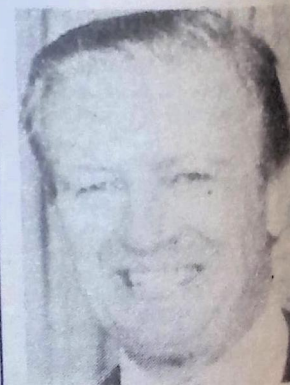
When asked what she would like to be if she wasn't in an anti-working class government she answered: "A revolutionary in Africa".

NOEL Davern is another Fianna Fail revolutionary. He was asked for his views on hare-coursing and said: "I'd like to see people taking care of homeless children and battered wives first, before they get on to Coursing. The problems of people have to come first".

"I TRUST your study visit to the continent will result in a heightening of your awareness of the strength of feeling which exists on the subject of apartheid."

■ PRESIDENT IBRAHIM BABANGIDA, to Thatcher as Nigerian demonstrators ripped up Union Jacks and chanted, "Mother Apartheid", "Thatcher the butcher"

LORD Denning, who dismissed an appeal by the Birmingham Six in 1980 recently said on television: "I get lots of letters from people in prison who say they have been wrongly convicted. I put them in the waste-paper basket".



Judge Lardner fined for tax offence.

"OBEY the laws of the land!" From our first day at primary school the message has been drummed into us. Three prominent upholders of those laws, Judge Lardner of the High Court, Martin Kennedy and Eamon de Valera both senior counsels, have all been fined for failing to lodge tax returns.

Martin Kennedy's excuse is a real classic. The residential property tax was introduced by a "Labour dominated" Government and he had expected a Fianna Fail Government to repeal the measure.

IN AMERICA, the Kennedy-Simpson Bill will make 6,000 extra permanent visas available to Irish citizens. No doubt this is good news to thousands of Irish people living illegally in the States.

But we should not blind ourselves to the racism involved in the Bill. Under the legislation visas will be granted on a points basis. One of the big advantages is the ability to speak English.

Senator Edward Kennedy says the Bill is meant to favour the "older sources of immigration". This is not only nonsensical it is also a lie.

People from Latin and Eastern Europe, China and

many other countries, where English is not the main language, have been going to live in the US for as long as the Irish have.

RACISM

Racism has long been rife in the US, with hatred and discrimination directed at Black and Hispanic immigrants.

The Kennedy-Simpson Bill is likely to reinforce divisions between these people and the white, English-speaking immigrants. Rather than destroying racial barriers it will simply move them to a different position.

—DAVE McDONAGH



Communism and the family

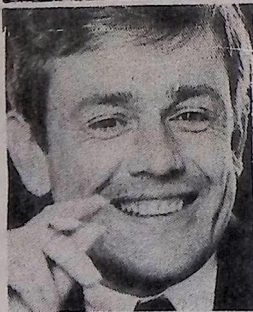
Written in 1918, this pamphlet shows how the family has changed with different class societies, and how it will change with socialism.

£1 incl. postage

Racist US visa bill

THE "Evening Herald" recently ran a story on the "greedy" highly paid firemen. They huffed and they puffed about the firemen holding the country to ransom. Nothing new of course—just the kind of rubbish you'd expect.

One story they seemed to have missed is the five year pay agreement for Ken Rohan, chairman of the Rohan Group. His annual salary works out at about £190,000—enough to pay over a dozen firemen.



Ken Rohan

National Anti-Apartheid March

Dublin, 19 March
Assemble 2pm Parnell Square
Rally 4pm GPO

ICTU clinics row

THE RECENT ICTU women's conference, held at the end of February, saw a major row over the fight for information on abortion in the South.

A resolution from the Derry Trades Council condemned the failure of the ICTU to campaign against the Hamilton Judgement which outlaws the information. It also called for financial support for the Defend the Clinics Campaign.

The ICTU leadership panicked. They feared any association between the union movement and support for

women's rights to control their own bodies.

Prominent women bureaucrats from the Women's Committee such as Gaye Cunningham, Clare O Connor and Mairin Ganley, attacked the resolution and demanded it to be remitted. They also tried to smear the Defend the Clinics Campaign. They charged that it had raised money under false pretences. Speakers from the campaign who were present denounced their smears.

The executive were over-

whelmingly beaten in their attempts to refer back the resolution. Afterwards Goretti Horgan, a delegate from the Derry Trades Council and a member of the SWM said,

"The opposition of the executive showed the hypocrisy of those who put their careers and the union structure above a fight for women's rights. Genuine socialists must use this victory over the bureaucrats to campaign throughout the union to defy the law which bans information".

WE THINK

A slight falling out

IN THE WAKE of the shooting dead of Aiden McAneaspie by the British army, Seamus Mallon, the deputy leader of the SDLP informed the House of Commons that "Anglo-Irish relations were as bad now as they were after Bloody Sunday".

The horrors of British justice has become evident in the last two months and even members of the Irish establishment seem to be up in arms.

But Mallon's claim is an exaggeration. After Bloody Sunday, tens of thousands in the South took strike action. British owned businesses were occupied. The British Embassy in Dublin was burnt. The Fianna Fail Taoiseach Jack Lynch was forced to call a National Day of mourning.

In the North, the fury of the Catholic population led to wide scale riots and a glut of recruits to the IRA. Within months, Stormont—the bastion of loyalist privilege and local Unionist rule—had fallen.

There has been not even a hint of that type of mass anger on the streets after the recent events. Instead, there has been passive resentment through the island at the hypocrisy of British justice. But those who have held the initiative have been the establishment politicians like Hume, Mallon and Haughey. Indeed one of the reasons why the Irish establishment are prepared to sound militant on Anglo-Irish relations now is because they do not fear the prospect of militant mass action. During the H Block crisis, for example, when thousands protested and took strike action Haughey cemented his alliance with Thatcher out of fear of mass protest.

Why are the ruling classes of Ireland and Britain having a falling out?

The British and Irish governments

have a long pattern of co-operation even before the Anglo-Irish agreement. Republicans have seen this co-operation as the result of the neo-colonial status of the South. In other words, the Irish establishment were mere puppets of "agents" of British imperialism.

This is a mistaken view. The Irish ruling class are far weaker than their British counterparts—but they are not their puppets. They are involved in co-operation with the British in order to further their own interests. They see any upsurge in republican militancy as a threat to their state.

TRAPPED

However at times the conflicting interests between them can lead to a breakdown in "friendly relations". They become trapped in a situation where they need to act in unison—but are subject to different pressures to maintain their own bases. We are witnessing such a situation today.

Thatcher has pulled the British establishment dramatically to the right in recent years. The basis of her support has been a renewed rallying to the flag. She revels in the "Falklands" spirit; she stands tough for law and order. This means standing full square behind the police and her armed forces. Her philosophy is summed up in the words of that arch reactionary judge, Lord Denning: "It is better that an innocent man is wronged than that the British system of justice is questioned". So the Birmingham Six will not be freed—lest the behaviour of the police is questioned. The RUC may establish shoot to kill squads, may cover up and even blacken the name of a senior British policeman, John Stalker, but still Thatcher will stand with her security forces.

Quite clearly, the nationalist politicians of Fianna Fail (and the rest of right wing Coalition of Fine Gael and Progressive Democrats) cannot go along with this blank cheque for the British security forces. They see the use of anti-Irish racism being confined not just

to working class Paddies—but touching their own role as international statesmen. They have seen that the strengthening of the British repression through the like of the Prevention of Terrorism Act leading to situations where even Irish Ministers for State have to submit a boarding card before leaving Britain. And above all they resent the high horse imperial attitude that tells them that Britain rules the waves—and they are confined to minor parts.

But these strains do not occur between equal partners with distinct but separate interests. The Irish establishment is far weaker and, for all its criticisms and resentment needs their co-operation to smash the IRA. That is why the upper class publication, "The Economist" noted last month that:

"Haughey has promised to continue cross border security co-operation, the improvement of which has been the most tangible achievement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in British eyes. The strength of the IRA, still undefeated, frightens Mr Haughey too much to jeopardise that part of the deal."

So the action from Dublin will be mainly token gestures. Border security co-operation will continue—but the heads of the RUC and the Garda will not meet face to face. An inquiry is set up into the death of Aiden McAneaspie—but run by the same Gardai that harassed him while he was alive.

Socialists, however, should not dismiss this falling out between two ruling classes as irrelevant. At the bottom it is about a strategy of how to deal with the revolt of the Catholic population in the North who are oppressed by bigotry and discrimination. When the ruling classes fall out, they are weakened.

This situation presents socialists with a glorious opportunity to overturn years of propaganda from the Section 31 controlled media in the South and show up the real role of the British army and the RUC.

It has become possible to show a new generation in the South who



A grassroots Fianna Failer in action

exactly are the terrorists in the North.

Tragically these opportunities will not be seized by the bigger socialist and republican parties.

The Labour Party and the Workers Party are already identified with support for the British army and the RUC. Three months ago they issued a joint statement slandering Ken Livingstone as a disgrace to Irish socialists because he persisted in attacking these forces in the House of Commons. Phronsius De Rossa has called on Chris Mullin, who exposed the Birmingham 6 case, to inform the police on who the real culprits are. Clearly, these parties have simply nothing to say on how the fight against bigotry is to be won.

But it is also the case that the present strategy of Sinn Fein also means that they cannot take advantage in the divisions between the ruling classes. Under the Adams leadership they have consistently looked to the grassroots of FF for action. Even when the same grassroots accepted the Extradition Bill when their TDs voted for it—the SF

leadership have continued to argue that they must be lobbied. And by lobbying they mean friendly persuasion from 'fellow nationalists'.

The disaster of this strategy was shown at a recent FF Ard Fheis. A previous conference of the anti-Extradition campaign had agreed to a mass demonstration to the Ard Fheis. Instead only a quiet and tiny lobby was called.

In a situation where FF are putting up token gestures this strategy is a disaster. It does not allow for building towards mass anger against FF's complicity in the name of British justice. Such a strategy would mean no looking to the grassroots of FF—but to the working class victims of their rule.

Republicanism, despite its bravery and determination to fight oppression leads to a political cul-de-sac. At its heart it does not distinguish between Irish men and women on a class base. This is why it overvalues the "grassroots of FF" and regards with cynicism the capacity of the Irish working class for action.

Now, more than ever, a revolutionary socialist alternative is needed.

Telecom bullyboys

ANYONE with a 'phone will tell you about Telecom Eireann's bully-boy tactics.

This is usually a matter of sending customers a Final Notice saying "please join the majority of our customers who pay on time... or else!"

But Lorcan Barron of Kilkenny had much more hassle. He used to be a line man for Telecom and in 1986 he was given £100,000 Compensation after he fell off a pole.

Now it looks as though Telecom have tried to get revenge. Lorcan's 'phone bill shot up to over £8,000 after the case and he also reckons his 'phone was bugged during the proceedings.

And Telecom have the cheek to complain about 'phone vandals!

Maybe they'll do a new TV ad with Bob Geldof saying "people who look for compo off us are idiots".

Labour witchhunt

LEFT WINGERS inside the Irish Labour Party are being witchhunted.

The youth organisation of the party, the Young Socialists, have been told that they are now subject to a "re-organisation". The YS has traditionally been dominated by the Militant group, a grouping which claims to be Trotskyist but still wants to work inside the Labour Party. Tragically, one of those wielding the axe against Militant was a fellow left-winger, Emmet Stagg.

The Dublin West branch of the Labour Party has also been suspended while a review into "Militant infiltration" is underway. Their "crime" was to nominate a Militant supporter, Joe Higgins, for candidature in the next general election.

The Irish Labour Party has a long tradition of driving out its left wing. In the early 70s it booted out a grouping called the

Socialist Labour Alliance who wanted to establish links with other left wingers. In the late 70s, Matt Merrigan and Noel Browne were suspended for refusing to accept the pro-Coalition strategy.

The right wing have never faced such attacks. Nobody has ever seriously suggested that Dick Spring should have been expelled for sending the police to scab on ESB strikers—or Barry Desmond for showing Fianna Fail how to start the health cuts.

Every socialist should oppose the witchhunt of Militant. No matter what our disagreements with Militant, we totally oppose their victimisation.

And there is also a terrible lesson in these events for the Militant supporters themselves. For 4 years they stayed inside the Labour Party when it was in



Emmet Stagg.

Coalition pretending that it was the "mass party of Labour". They even canvassed for the likes of Quinn, Cluskey, and even Michael O Leary to prove their loyalty. And they were tolerated by the leadership.

But now when the leadership of Labour feels the need to tack slightly left to build their support, they crack down hard on the real left in the party.

It makes you wonder what's the point of being in the Irish Labour Party which currently gets 6% of the vote. The suspension should be fought tooth and nail. Militant supporters should realise that looking to the courts offers no solution. Instead they should fight hard to attack the witch-hunters but recognise that their long term future is outside Labour in a revolutionary socialist party.

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South Africa:

SEVENTEEN Black organisations, including the United Democratic Front, have effectively been banned by the South African regime. The main union federation, COSATU, has been forbidden to engage in political activity.

These measures were not, unfortunately, taken in response to a new upsurge in black militancy, rather they were designed to appease a white population much of which is drifting closer to openly fascist policies.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO the regime of P W Botha imposed a nationwide State of Emergency on South Africa. Botha took this step because he was faced with the most sustained and widespread rebellion against white rule in the country's history.

South Africa's black townships had become centres of revolt in which youths battled with the armed might of the apartheid regime, and a network of street committees and people's courts sprang up to organise the resistance.

Closely linked to the township risings was the growing power of the black working class, symbolised by the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions in December 1985.

Two massive general strikes in 1986—first to celebrate May Day and then on the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising of June 1976—underlined the strength of black labour.

It seemed as if the popular movement based in the townships and the workplaces was unstoppable. It was only a matter of time, many believed, before the leaders of the main resistance organisation, the African National Congress, returned from exile in Lusaka or from their prison cells to take power.

Since the emergency was declared on 12 June 1986, such hopes have proved to be illusions.

The repressive power the regime had been holding in reserve was unleashed. Some 30,000 people have been detained without trial, many of them young children.

A series of major treason trials have been mounted with the aim of removing the organisers of township resistance. One example is the trial of metal workers' leader Moses Mayekiso and four alleged members of the Alexandra Action Committee in northern Johannesburg.

Groups of black vigilantes have been unleashed with the backing of the security forces. One group, the Witdoeke, succeeded in evicting thousands of squatters at Crossroads near Cape Town on the eve of the emergency.

Death squads have also been used to assassinate activists of the United Democratic Front, the main legal resistance organisation, which is closely aligned to the banned ANC.

The effects can be seen in the Eastern Cape, traditionally the strongest area of ANC support. The anti-apartheid *Weekly Mail* reported from there at the end of 1987:

"The state's new strategy has succeeded in dividing and crushing people, says Andre Sindelo, general secretary of the Eastern Cape Youth Congress.

"This year's detentions, harassment and intimidation have crushed the youth movement, he says. The majority of Ecayco's regional executive was detained this year... Of the 57 youth congresses in the Eastern Cape, few are operating.

"An attempt has been made to revive these organisations but 'people can't work effectively under the State of Emergency', Sindelo said.

"Alternative government structures like street and area committees have suffered the same fate... In Uitenhage the committees are a thing of the past as the Emergency has made it impossible for people to meet."

The grimest indication of the way the situation has shifted against the resistance is the slaughter in Pietermaritzburg in Natal.

The township fighting there reflects the ambitions of Chief Gatcha Buthelezi, boss of the Zulu tribal "homeland". His aim is to establish his claim to a share in power by showing that his tribal movement, Inkatha yeSizwe, controls Natal. That means crushing the UDF in the province.

The resulting bloodshed in Pietermaritzburg conjures up a horrifying vision of the future in which the regime is able to hold onto power by feeding conflict within the black majority.

There is another side to the picture, however. The organised black working class has shown itself to be far from down and out.

WHERE NOW FOR THE STRUGGLE?



UNDER ATTACK. Comrade fighting to defend the Crossroads squatter camp from police backed vigilantes

Despite the emergency, the unions have continued to grow. There are now some 2.4 million union members in South Africa, on one estimate over a third of the economically active population.

The fighting ability of the independent unions, especially those affiliated to COSATU, is reflected in the fact that 1987 saw nearly nine million strike days "lost"—a South African record.

This huge leap in the strike figures (compared to 1.1 million in 1986) is largely accounted for by a series of what one labour consultant has called "protracted trials of strength."

Of these, the most important was the miners' strike last August which ended in defeat for the National Union of Mineworkers after the Chamber of Mines, the most powerful group of capitalists in South Africa, sacked 60,000 strikers.

Black workers have been victorious in other cases, however. Retail workers, a militant section, won a major victory at OK Bazaars. Unionised black workers are the only group whose wages are rising faster than inflation.

And three of the biggest strikes—on the railways and in the post office—

showed that independent unions are gaining important footholds in the state sector, previously the stronghold of racist white labour.

Even though police stormed COSATU House in April, and a new bill sets out government plans to restrict union power, black labour has established a force too strong to be easily broken by repression.

It is this collective strength that alone is capable of breaking the enormous repressive power of the apartheid state.

Unfortunately, the ANC, the dominant political force within the resistance, has no intention of basing its strategy on the black working class.

Its aim is to establish a non-racial, democratic South Africa, an objective which it sees as separate from and prior to the socialist revolution which a mobilised working class would unleash.

The ANC has used two main methods to win power. One is the guerilla campaign of Umkhonto weSizwe, which represents no serious threat to the white state, as even some ANC internal documents acknowledge.

The other is that of negotiation backed up by international pressure. The ANC's hopes of success by this path were raised when one of its imprisoned leaders, Govan Mbeki, was released in November.

Many observers saw this as the beginning of a process which would see ANC president Nelson Mandela also freed, and talks open between Lusaka and Pretoria.

These hopes were soon dashed when crippling restrictions were imposed on Mbeki, despite his supposedly "unconditional" release. As in the past, the regime has played with the idea of an opening to the ANC and then rejected it.

The existing state rests upon five million whites, from whom are drawn the bulk of the regime's armed forces as well as the popular base of the ruling National Party.

These whites, most of them wage earners of some kind who would lose their material privileges under black rule, are the main obstacle to any negotiated end to apartheid.

But if the ANC's road to power is blocked, it has still been able to consolidate its political hold over the resistance organisations.

In a time of defeat like the present the thought of the ANC leadership and its guerillas across the border offers hope to demoralised activists.

The growth of ANC influence is very marked within the independent unions.

These have traditionally been divided between "populists" and "workerists".

The populists argue that the black working class should be a subordinate part of an ANC-dominated alliance. The workerists insist that workers' interests can be defended only by independent unions under democratic rank and file control.

Since the formation of COSATU the populists have increasingly been in the ascendant. They make up the bulk of the federation's office holders.

COSATU general secretary Jay Naidoo has presided over the formation of an alliance with the UDF which received its formal sanction last July, when COSATU's second congress adopted the Freedom Charter. This ANC programme stops far short of the socialist transformation of South Africa.

COSATU hasn't prospered under populist leadership. The key pro-ANC union is now the NUM.

The miners' general secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa, after years of huffing and puffing, led the union into a major confrontation with the Chamber of Mines last year without any strategy for winning the dispute.

His main tactic was to instruct the miners to return to their remote rural homes, an order which most strikers fortunately ignored, and which would have led to even greater victimisation.

By aligning itself with the UDF, COSATU has been drawn into the conflict with Buthelezi in Natal, even though many union members in the province are Inkatha supporters who are only likely to be broken from tribalism by involvement over time in common economic struggles.

There is an important layer of worker militants who are critical of the COSATU leadership. They tend to be in unions with strong workerist traditions, like the metal workers' union, NUMSA.

The clearest sign of the opposition to the populists has come, however, in the militant shop workers union, CCAWUSA. An attempt to merge with other unions under populist leadership collapsed.

Despite the support given the populists by COSATU head office, shop workers, especially the key Johannesburg branch, stood firm around the slogan "Defend CCAWUSA, Defend Socialism." The populists were forced to retreat.

The workerists, however, are subject to a crippling limitation: They see the union as the key form of workers' organisation.

They therefore don't recognise that the reason why the populists have been able to win control of COSATU is because of the political strength of ANC ideas, which at least offer an answer, albeit a wrong one, to the vital question of state power.

The only real alternative to the populists can come from socialist political organisation within the unions.

The present period offers a breathing space. The crisis of the regime and the enduring strength of the black working class guarantees that there will, in the future, be even bigger waves of struggle.

But they too will be defeated unless a revolutionary socialist party based on the black working class emerges. Now is the time to lay its foundations.

International Women's Day

by Eve Morrison

ON MARCH 8th, International Women's Day is celebrated around the world. Political activists of every description will gather together to celebrate the unity of women as a whole, regardless of class. In Russia, International Women's Day is similar to the Mother's Day celebrations in the United States—glorifying women as child-bearers and housekeepers. This is a far cry from the original tradition and purpose of International Women's Day. In fact it represents everything that working class women, who are the true inheritors of IWD must overcome to achieve their liberation.

The first IWD took place on March 8th 1908, in New York City. Women garment workers had gone on strike demanding equal pay, the vote for women and child-care for working mothers. The bitterly fought strike culminated in a demonstration demanding an end to sweat-shop conditions and women's suffrage. It was this strike that inspired Clara Zetkin, a leader of the Socialist movement in Germany and a revolutionary, to propose at the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in 1910 that March 8th be celebrated around the world as a day of working class women's militancy and strength—organised chiefly around the issue of women's suffrage.

Zetkin, a pioneering theorist on the position of women in capitalist society fought hard against an all class alliance of women for the vote and the ideology behind such an alliance. She stressed the different interests of upper-class and working class women in fighting for women's suffrage. Feminists saw the vote as the ultimate goal, while for women workers it was only a weapon in the class struggle to enable them to fight the system on an equal basis with men. Zetkin saw the importance of socialist parties fighting for universal women's suffrage and argued vehemently against the idea that limited female suffrage was a "first step in the right direction" and would benefit working class women.

It would in fact, be disastrous for working women on two counts.

Firstly giving middle class women alone the vote would double the strength of the ruling class as a force exploiting workers without giving the working class the corresponding advantage. So middle class women because of the class nature of society, would not only join forces with the exploiters but uphold and defend the very cause of women's oppression—private property,

Secondly, having gained the right to vote themselves, bourgeois women would lose all initiative to fight for working class women's suffrage.

International Women's Day was an embodiment of these ideas, that working class women should fight for the right to vote as socialists rather than in an alliance with women who were their class enemies and would ultimately betray them.

The first International Women's Day in Europe was celebrated in 1911, characterised by very large meetings and demonstrations. After 1914 the demonstrations often took the form of militant anti-war protests as well.

REVOLUTIONARIES

While most of the Second International had fallen in behind support of their own government's war efforts, revolutionaries such as Zetkin, Kollantai and Luxemburg used the women's publications to campaign vigorously against war. Theirs was not, however, a pacifist opposition that was enshrined in the Greenham Common women's protests. Whereas these feminists argued that because women were life-giving they had a special interest in peace, revolutionary socialist women called for a united working class response to war.

Luxemburg summed up the spirit of many of these International Women's Day rallies when she wrote:

"World peace cannot be assured by projects Utopian, or at bottom, reactionary, such as tribunals of arbitration by capitalist diplomats, diplomatic 'disarmament' conventions... and other illusions. Imperialism, militarism and war can never be abolished nor attenuated so long as the capitalist class exercises, uncontested, its class hegemony. The sole means of successful resistance and the only guarantee of peace in the world, is the capacity for action and revolutionary will of the international proletariat to hurl its full weight into the balance".

But IWD was stamped on the map of history once and for all on the 23rd of February. (March 8th—Western calendar) 1917, in Russia when a demonstration of soldiers wives, daughters and mothers joined forces with striking women textile workers demanding bread and an end to the war. The Russian Revolution had begun.

Not a single organisation had called for strike action, thinking the time was unripe. Thus the spontaneous militancy of Russian working class women overcame a certain caution of the revolutionary parties and sparked off the greatest event in working class history.



Petrograd sailors 1917, woman in Russia today



TODAY INTERNATIONAL Women's Day has been almost completely taken over by feminist or ruling class ideology and its original significance lost. Clara Zetkin's arguments about the strategy for fighting for women's liberation are as relevant today as at the turn of the century.

The bourgeois feminists still insist that the gains made by their class—such as more equal representation for women in the upper echelons of the government, judiciary and big business—will somehow benefit women workers.

But what are striking nurses in England gaining from the fact that the government who is decimating the British Health Service is headed by a woman—Margaret Thatcher? What benefit will working class women derive if their manager is a woman when they still earn two thirds of the wages of their male counterparts?

It is only through working class women joining male workers in the struggle for socialism, the fight against their common oppressors (male and female) who hold sacred the root of women's oppression—private property, that

women can achieve their liberation.

It was with these ideas in mind the IWD was conceived, and it is up to revolutionary women and men to restore IWD to its proper place.

To preserve in memory and

tradition in these hard years of defeat and demoralisation this celebration of the strength and militancy of working class women, until the day arrives when they reclaim it for themselves,

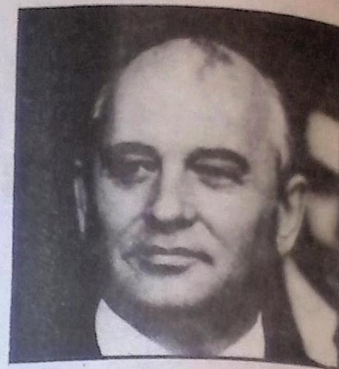


Feminist demonstration in Spain.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1968... RUSSIA 19??



From Dubcek to Gorbachev



TWENTY YEARS ago Czechoslovakia acquired a new government. Alexander Dubcek replaced Antonin Novotny as head of the ruling party.

The new leader began to talk of "democratisation" of political life. The censorship of publications collapsed and there was open discussion of ideas that had been banned for two decades.

Investigations began into political trials which had taken place 15 years before, one top judge and a top general committed suicide, another top general fled the country.

The media, both in Czechoslovakia itself and in the West, were enthusiastic about Dubcek. He was hailed as the architect of the "Prague Spring"—as the man who virtually single handed introduced "socialism with a human face".

Today, many people are making comparisons between Dubcek and Gorbachev. Last week, Dubcek himself praised Gorbachev as "the prominent personality behind the new revival policy in the Soviet Union which offers...such vast and substantial hopes".

Chris Harman examines what really happened in Czechoslovakia, and asks whether the comparisons are justified.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA was among the most Stalinist of East European states until the early 1960s. Political and economic power was completely in the hands of those at the top of the Communist Party. No open discussion was allowed on its dictates, and anyone inside or outside the party who tried to challenge these was sacked, imprisoned, or even, in some cases, executed.

The Communist Party claimed to be a workers' party. But in fact it was the party of those who ran industry and the state. Those at the top of it had salaries many times higher than the average workers' wage, plus innumerable privileges.

No one in the party hierarchy questioned this state of affairs, not even in 1956 when two of Czechoslovakia's neighbours, Poland and Hungary, were in turmoil.

Alexander Dubcek was just like the others in this respect. He praised the 1952 executions of leading Communists—including former party leader Slansky—and was a friend of the butcher of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, Janos Kadar. Such a record enabled him to rise up through the bureaucracy until he was a very important figure—party secretary for the Slovakian half of the country.

But in the early 1960s, Czechoslovakia's rulers confronted a problem they could not just dispose of



by police terror. The economy began to run down and, in 1963, suffered a fall in output—a recession.

A previously united leadership began to fall out among itself. Some of those in charge of the economy demanded reform to allow the market to "weed out" inefficient enterprises. Those who ran Slovakia manoeuvred against the leadership for more resources for themselves. Those who had suffered in previous inner-bureaucratic struggles tried to get their own back.

These rows encouraged those beneath the ruling elite to put forward their own demands. The salaried middle class were resentful at earning little more than manual workers. Authors, artists and film makers rebelled against the censorship which prevented them expressing themselves properly. Students began to challenge the tight control of their organisations by the regime.

The first protests came a head in the summer and autumn of 1967.

Well known authors spoke out against the regime at the official Writers' Congress—and were immediately punished. In October 1967 Prague students staged the first independent demonstration for 20 years. They were viciously attacked by the police.

When the Party's Central Committee met in December of that year, previously loyal bureaucrats challenged Novotny because they feared—as a party document later explained—"the gulf... between the party leaders and the public".

The new leadership under Dubcek did not set out to carry through radical change. It left Novotny in the powerful post of president of the republic and his supporters in key positions. But Dubcek's hand was forced by events beyond his control.

Novotny plotted with friendly ministers and leading generals for a military coup. His supporters toured factories, seeking support by arguing that Dubcek's reforms would damage workers' interests.

The Dubcek group were forced, in the interests of self protection, to campaign themselves among the mass of the population.

Dubcek's colleague, the veteran Communist leader Smrkovsky, encouraged journalists to ignore the censorship rules and spoke to enthusiastic mass student meetings. Other Dubcek supporters



encouraged workers to force the pro-Novotny leaders of the state run unions from office.

Novotny was finally forced out in late March. Dubcek immediately did a U-turn and began trying to discourage popular discussion and mobilisation. In June when writers issued a manifesto called *2000 Words* he insisted that "democracy means realising that some words and appeals for strikes or strikes themselves could lead to anarchy and disruption".

The ministry of the interior declared that attempts to set up independent political parties were "illegal".

But it was too late. The genie of mass self activity had escaped from the bottle. People insisted on giving expression to grievances that had piled up over many years.

And the workers, who had held back from the movement previously, now joined in with a vengeance. They forced thousands of union officials to resign, they took the right to strike into their own hands, and they made it clear they would resist attacks on their living standards—

whether from the old Novotnyites or the new reformers.

Workers committees for the defence of the freedom of the press, led by independent socialists, began to get a hearing in the factories.

The Dubcek government was not in control of the situation. And all the time, what was going on in Czechoslovakia was raising hopes of change elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

The Russian leadership decided to send in hundreds of thousands of troops to "restore order".

Dubcek and other leaders were kidnapped at gunpoint and carted off to Moscow. A week later they returned to Czechoslovakia to tell the people to accept the Russian occupation, with restrictions on basic freedoms, and to agree to a "normalisation" of affairs.

The Prague magazine *Student* was bitter in its denunciation of what had been agreed:

"This is a betrayal, not only of ourselves, but of the historical role assigned to this country: to shake the inhuman structure of Stalinism and to find a human form for a socialist order".

"Normalisation" was delayed for a few more months—not by Dubcek, who

at Russia's behest sacked ministers such as Kriegel and Smrkovsky—but by the resistance of the mass of the population.

In November thousands of students occupied their colleges and hundreds of thousands of workers voted for resolutions in support of them. And in January, March and August 1969 there were huge demonstrations against the occupation.

Meanwhile, however, Dubcek had agreed to hand over power to Gustav Husak. Dubcek boasted that he himself had done the "spade work" that would enable "normalisation to take place".

What this meant was made clear as Husak used the police to break up demonstrations. He sacked 60,000 elected trade union officers, dissolved the students' union, closed down scores of magazines and papers and purged hundreds of thousands of people from the state apparatus and the party. Left wing opponents of the regime like Jiri Mueller, Jaroslav Sabata, Jan Tesar and Peter Uhl were imprisoned.

Dubcek had, under pressure, tried to reform the system of Stalinist rule in Czechoslovakia. But he always rejected any idea of the mass of working people intervening to take society into their own hands. So he helped the Russians to re-establish control. But once that had happened, they could cast him aside.

How does all this relate to what Gorbachev is doing in Russia today?

Gorbachev, like Dubcek, has risen to where he is now by being an absolutely loyal bureaucrat. Gorbachev, like Dubcek, is prompted by economic stagnation to push through reform, but before he can do so successfully he has to neutralise the Russian Novotnyites—the vast layer of bureaucrats who do not want change of any sort.

Finally, Gorbachev—like Dubcek—is insistent that this whole process has to be carefully controlled from above. He insists those who are impatient for change are just as wrong as those who want no change.

But, so far, he has not been subject to anything like the pressure from below that Dubcek was. The Russian middle class are much more privileged than their Czechoslovak counterparts in 1968 and so are less likely to act against the much greater privileges of the top bureaucrats.

As for the workers, they are rightly distrustful of restructuring ("perestroika"), with its scarcely veiled aim of wage cuts and sackings. And they cannot be expected to get enthusiastic for "openness" ("glasnost") unless it enables them to defend their own living standards and includes the right to strike.

But this is the one thing on which Gorbachev will not budge. How determined he is to prevent any real democratisation was shown in November when he got rid of the Moscow city boss, Yeltsin.

Despite Dubcek's faith in Gorbachev, when last month there was a change in the Russian puppet government in Czechoslovakia, it was not a "liberal" that finally replaced Husak, but one of the very few Czechoslovak Communists openly to support the Russian invasion in August 1968, Milos Jakes.

Nineteen eighty eight can be as eventful in the Russian bloc as 1968, on one condition—that forces arise which act completely independently of Gorbachev, forces that model themselves on the Czechoslovak students, intellectuals and workers of 1968 and not on Dubcek. And Gorbachev is doing his best to prevent that happening.



Hiroshima, 1945

More to die in nuclear hazards

SCIENTISTS estimate that between 5,000 and half a million people will die of cancer as a result of the Chernobyl nuclear explosion.

On the basis of new research the higher figure sounds more likely as it is now thought that radiation is up to 15 times more dangerous than was previously assumed.

The relative dangers of different levels of radiation can be established by looking at different cancer cases and comparing them with the amount of radiation the victim is assumed to have absorbed.

A low dose of radiation is about an extra tenth of the amount a normal person might have absorbed in their lifetime. This low dose does entail a cancer risk, but as it is virtually impossible to detect the absorption of the extra 10 percent radiation, quantifying the risk is very difficult.

Bungling

However, science has been bequeathed a massive experiment with which to establish the risks. The nuclear bombs exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 have provided a large number of people with different and known radiation exposures.

"Experiment" is the right word. One of the bombs had been destined for the ancient city of Kyoto on the grounds that this target had previously been thought so unimportant to Japan's war effort that it was totally undamaged by conventional bombs.

In this way the Americans hoped to be able to see the full fruits of their work by simply taking note of which buildings had been wrecked. The plane, however, was blown off course and so went for its secondary target.

After the war scientists set about investigating 280,000 people from the two cities who were still alive.

First, they needed to know how much radiation the victims had been exposed to in 1945. Then they needed to watch over the next 30 years to see who developed cancers.

But they had no sure way of learning how much radiation was received. The first problem was that material collected by Japanese scientists straight after the explosion was lost by bungling US soldiers.

So they had to reconstruct the explosions. This they did by building models of Nagasaki houses in the Nevada desert and letting off bombs above them.

Eventually, in 1977, the fate of the bomb victims was known well enough for the scientists to report. The

International Commission for Radiological Protection used the results to determine what it thought were the effects of different levels of radiation.

It concluded that a person exposed to the extra ten percent radiation stood an extra one chance in ten thousand of developing cancer.

But the data used seemed to give different results for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Hiroshima bomb appeared to be a far more efficient inducer of cancers.

Aberration

This aberration was put down to the fact that the Hiroshima bomb had emitted more of one type of radiation—neutrons—and the Nagasaki bomb produced more gamma radiation. Neutrons induce cancers more effectively than gamma radiation.

But in 1980 the results were examined again.

They were found to have a basic flaw. Remember, the assumed radiation doses in Japan were based on experiments in Nevada.

But ten times as many neutrons reached the houses from the Nevada bomb as from the Hiroshima bomb. This is for the simple reason that the damp Hiroshima air tended to act as a radiation shield. Remember, Nevada—desert—dry air.

With the new results taken

into account, the radiation affecting the citizens of Nagasaki and Hiroshima was found to be very similar.

And on the basis of new evidence, all the victims were reclassified into different radiation dosage groups.

It was then found that the imagined difference in effectiveness of the two bombs was no longer significant.

Reduced

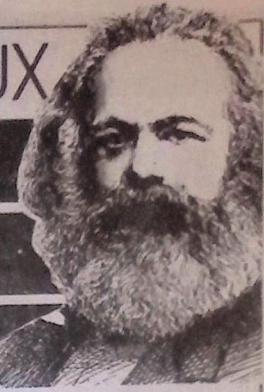
More importantly the scientists determined—as just as many cancers were now put down to much lower radiation doses—that the cancer risk from a given dose was up to 15 times higher than previously thought.

Yet the International Commission for Radiological Protection has refused to improve its safety guidelines, even though it accepted the new results at a special conference in Italy last year.

Britain's National Radiological Protection Board went half way last November and introduced "interim guidance" that reduced safety limits by about two thirds.

But the new evidence implies more than the need to revise safety limits. It means that every serious scientific attempt to illustrate the safety of nuclear power over the last 40 years needs to be thrown in the bin.

JOHN MOLYNEUX ★ Teach yourself Marxism



THE oppression of lesbians and gays is visibly on the increase.

Leading the attack is Family Solidarity with its lying AIDS leaflets, backed up by the gutter press and born-again bigots like Paisley and Alice Glenn.

On BBC and ITV we hear Tory propaganda about their Clause 28 amendment which will put gay rights back decades in Britain.

A consequence of these attacks on gay rights has been a rising tide of physical assaults on gays in Dublin, Cork and Belfast.

Of course, it is all part of the general shift to the right in the country as seen in the abortion and divorce referenda, the closure of the pregnancy counselling centres, etc.

However, to note this and to seek to combat it is to raise the question of the roots of lesbian and gay oppression. We may be witnessing an intensification of anti-gay feeling, but it is the intensification of a phenomenon that has been around a long time.

So why is homophobia an important part of any right wing package? Why in capitalist society has the ruling class systematically and permanently oppressed lesbians and gays?

The most common answer given to this question is the liberal one, that it's all a matter of irrational prejudice and ignorance. But this will not do. Prejudice neither grows nor maintains itself on pure air. As with racism and sexism (to which homophobia is closely linked) it has a material basis.

Ignorance

What motivates the ruling class is not ignorance but interest, class interest.

The heart of the matter, its material origin, is the threat which homosexuality poses to that most hallowed of bourgeois institutions—the family.

For capital the family performs the inestimable service of producing the cheap privatised reproduction of the labour force, largely on the basis of the unpaid labour of women.

In addition to its low cost, the privatisation of reproduction in the family has the advantage (for the system) of fragmenting the working class into tiny almost self-contained units with narrow conservative horizons which inhibit class consciousness and class solidarity.

In the absence of social provision for child care working class people have



STOP CLAUSE 28

ANTI-GAY feelings are on the increase. But where do they stem from?

Class roots to gay oppression

little choice but to live in families. By and large they take this option voluntarily as preferable to loneliness and isolation.

Our rulers want to keep it that way. Any alternative, such as homosexuality, is a challenge that must be slandered and repressed.

Moreover, homosexuality, especially open declared homosexuality, challenges not only the family as an institution but also the whole repressive idea of sexuality that has been cultivated to sustain that institution.

It challenges the idea that sex is only really legitimate in connection with procreation and poses unequivocally the question of sexual gratification as a perfectly valid human need in itself.

It undermines the stereotypes of "masculinity" and "femininity" that are central to sexism and the oppression of women. It attacks the idea that current gender roles and patterns of sexual behaviour are somehow the "natural order of things".

It contests the right of the state or the church to control and prescribe the nature of our sexuality and thus weakens their ability to control our behaviour in general.

The oppression of lesbians and gays serves one further important function for the ruling class—the provision of vulnerable scapegoats.

Capitalist society, founded on alienation and exploitation, generates immense anger, frustration and bitterness in working people. Insofar as it can deflect this

bitterness from itself onto to safe targets, its rule is that bit more secure.

The offering up of a constant stream of such targets—"evil black militants", "sex fiends", "lesbian councillors", "gay vicars" and so on—is one of the main tasks of the gutter press.

Bigotry

Once we have grasped these roots of gay oppression and their intimate connection to the capitalist economic system it should be clear why the whole working class and socialist movement—straight or gay—has a vital interest in combatting every manifestation of anti-gay bigotry.

All workers are victims of the economic, legal and ideological bonds that pressure us to live in nuclear families. All workers are victims of the repressive sexual codes imposed by our rulers.

All workers lose if we waste our anger on the decoys regularly thrown up by the media.

The prime need of the working class is for unity in our own ranks transcending all the divisions of race, nationality, sex or sexual orientation, and concentrating all our fire on the class enemy and those who support it.

Two very simple conclusions come out of this: all class conscious workers and socialists must fight for lesbian and gay rights, and all lesbians and gays should link the struggle for their own liberation to the struggle of the working class for socialism.

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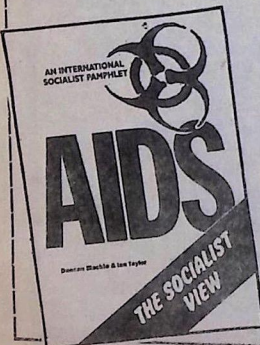
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ANALYSIS

Marxists and the armed struggle

by
Eamonn
McCann

NOTHING CAUSES so much heat and confusion on the Irish Left as the question of what attitude should be taken to the IRA's armed struggle.

Some sections, of which the Worker's Party are the most obvious and odious example, simply parrot the line of the ruling classes North and South and denounce Provo "terrorism" in moralistic terms. At the other extreme there is a scattering of fierce nationalists and self-styled revolutionaries who, while not in the ranks of the IRA themselves, won't hear a word against the armed struggle and regard any criticism of the IRA as the next-worst thing to treason.

And there is the Marxist position held by the Socialist Workers' Movement which defends the right of the IRA to wage armed struggle while arguing against the armed struggle as a tactic. This can often seem an "in-between" position, and something of a contradiction.

The key point from which to approach any armed struggle has to do with the legitimacy of the State that the armed struggle is aimed against. For example, there are many in Ireland—moderates and

the state machinery is being challenged.

For example, during the miners' strike in Britain in 1984-5, and again during the Wapping print dispute in 1985-6, British revolutionaries such as our sister organisation, the Socialist Workers Party, argued against union moderates and labour reformists that the cops and the courts were clearly lined up with the bosses against the workers and that the workers should therefore defy the cops and the courts en masse in order to win. In a phrase, that they should cease to regard the state machinery as legitimate.

The war in the North obviously doesn't fall exactly into the same class pattern. The dynamic of the armed struggle does not come directly from class exploitation but from the oppression of the Catholic community.

Marxists are not neutral anywhere between the oppressed and the oppressors. Therefore we are not neutral between the violence of the IRA and the violence of the state forces. We acknowledge the right of the oppressed to fight back by whatever tactics they choose and



Can the Provos win against this?

We take the view that no capitalist state is legitimate: that the machinery of all capitalist states—the army, police, courts, parliament etc.—is purpose-built to serve the interests of the capitalist class, not to regulate society in a neutral way. We therefore do not accept that only the state machinery can legitimately use violence.

liberals as well as some who are consciously left-wing—who won't touch the Provos but who do declare solidarity with, for example, the ANC in South Africa and SWAPO in Namibia. There is often an element of sheer dishonesty in this: it's so much easier to cheer on guerrillas eight thousand miles away than to be associated with armed fighters near at hand.

But some of these people do have a political argument to offer. They argue that there is a sense in which the racist regime in southern Africa is not legitimate but in which the Six County state is: in the Six County state, they say, political change can—and therefore should—be sought within the law.

Marxists approach the question of whether the Northern state is legitimate from a very different angle—and from an angle which is also different from that of Republicans.

We take the view that no capitalist state is legitimate: that the machinery of all capitalist states—the army, police, courts, parliament etc.—is purpose built to serve the interests of the capitalist class, not to regulate society in a neutral way. We therefore do not accept that only the state machinery can legitimately use violence.

Most of the time this is a fairly abstract sort of argument. It becomes sharply relevant in situations where the legitimacy of

when a section of the oppressed chooses armed struggle we acknowledge and support their right to make that choice.

It shouldn't be necessary to repeat—but apparently it is—that Northern Catholics are oppressed. Many commentaries on the North—including some in Left-wing papers—are based on an unspoken assumption that there is no real oppression or that, if there is, it's not an important factor.

The nonsensical implication of this is that tens of thousands of working class Catholics have been manipulated or intimidated or are in the grip of some eerie atavistic delusion or support the IRA because they hate Protestants.

This shows not the slightest understanding of the reality of life in Catholic working class areas of the Six Counties. It simply ignores the mountain of evidence, ranging from employment statistics to sentencing policies to patterns of maltreatment to poverty levels, home ownership, dependency ratios etc.etc. which leave no room for doubt not only that oppression exists but that its weight has not been lessened by any of the "reforms" of the last two decades.

Thus the SWM defends the right of the IRA to wage armed struggle. In practical terms this means we stand four-square with the Republicans when they bear the brunt of repression. We weigh in

with what forces we can muster when issues arise such as H Block, extradition, strip-searching, censorship etc. etc. In unions, trade councils and wherever else we can find an audience we urge the working class movement to take up these issues.

But this does not mean that we think that armed struggle is the best or most appropriate tactic for fighting oppression and the imperialist power which stands at the back of oppression.

It is in the nature of the armed struggle that it is conducted by a minority of the oppressed. Other considerations apart, the imperatives of security make this inevitable. The role of the vast majority is to offer passive support to the guerrilla fighters, whether by turning up on occasional demonstrations or by marking voting papers in support of the guerrillas' political wing.

MINORITY

We in the SWM believe in "socialism from below", in mass involvement in the struggle against oppression and exploitation: not just because this is a better tactic (although it is), but more fundamentally, because freedom cannot ever be delivered to the mass of the people by any minority acting on its behalf. Freedom is only possible when people take freedom themselves, when they are actively

involved in the achievement of it, so that it's something they consciously taste and savour for themselves. Nobody can win freedom "for" the mass of the people: this is a contradiction in terms.

We look to the only force in Irish society which has both the capacity to and an interest in ending oppression and exploitation forever: the Irish working class, North and South.

COMMUNITY

We believe that this force can only be mobilised on the basis of its own specific interests as a class, and that the necessity therefore is to build an openly revolutionary class-based party. A struggle based primarily on the oppressed Catholic community in the North, carried out by a minority acting clandestinely on behalf of that community, and aiming to end that oppression by "freeing Ireland" while leaving the question of which class is to rule in this "free Ireland", such a struggle cannot succeed.

That, in the end is why we oppose the tactic of the armed struggle. Not because we are against violence, much less that we support the far greater violence of the state. We are against the tactic of armed struggle because we believe it cannot win, and that the enormous suffering and sacrifices involved in it will therefore go for nothing.

Our attitude was perfectly expressed by Trotsky when he wrote about a heroic young man called Herschel Grynszpan who assassinated a Nazi official in the German embassy in Paris on November 7th 1938.

Interestingly enough, in view of recent events, Stalin's reaction to the assassination was to call for all the European states, including Britain and Nazi Germany, to agree on an "anti-terrorist" extradition pact.

In contrast, Trotsky wrote: "What is most astonishing is that so far there has only been one Grynszpan. . . We understand all too clearly the inevitability of such convulsive acts of despair and vengeance. All our emotions, all our sympathies, are with the self-sacrificing avengers. . . People come cheap who are capable only of fulminating against injustice and bestiality. But those who, like Grynszpan, are able to act as well as conceive, sacrificing their own lives if needs be, are the precious leaven of mankind.

"In the moral sense, although not for his mode of action, Grynszpan may serve as an example for every young revolutionist. Our open moral solidarity with Grynszpan gives us an added right to say to all the other would-be Grynszpans, to all those capable of self-sacrifice in the struggle against despotism and bestiality: Seek another road!

SWM meets in conference

LAST MONTH, the Socialist Workers Movement met for its annual conference. MEMBERS packed into a Dublin Hotel for a weekend to discuss the problems and tasks for socialists in Ireland today.

The main points decided upon were as follows:

Fianna Fail dominates Southern politics. This constitutional nationalist party has been the instrument through which Free State capitalists have overcome the neo-colonialism of the twenties. The Irish boss class today is not a puppet of the British but an independent, if weak, ruling class pursuing its own interests.

Despite its nationalist rhetoric, Fianna Fail—and the boss class it represents—have an interest in collaborating with the British in the repression of militant republicanism. In spite of Stalker's revelations, the Birmingham Six scandal, the recent murder of Aidan McAneaspie by a British soldier and the early release from jail and re-enlistment of a convicted British army murderer, the Extradition Act is still in place and cross-border security co-operation continues.

None of these events have provoked any serious resistance from within Fianna Fail to Haughey's collaboration. Neither has there been any significant wavering in FF's ranks at its attacks on the poor, sick and elderly through wave after wave of public service cuts. Contrary to the myth, widely held by the Left and Republicans, that the Fianna Fail grass-roots represent a vast untapped pool of popular nationalist opposition, the opposite has been demonstrated. Fianna Fail—grass-roots and all—is an efficient instrument for the Southern ruling class's attack on militant republicanism and the working class.

Those fighting reaction today should see that no section of Fianna Fail can be considered an ally. Whether the issue is Extradition or cuts, the friendly lobbying of FF TDs—or worse the presence of FF spokespersons on campaign platforms—is something the SWM opposes. We say: Unite with the victims of Fianna Fail, not its mouthpieces. Fianna Fail is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

In the outlook period it is probable that a number of workers will move away from supporting Fianna Fail and look for a pole of opposition. This presents great opportunities for the Left. Even in electoral terms, the fact that half the working class were no longer solidly voting for FF would give the idea of class politics and the

prospects for workers' resistance a terrific shot in the arm. For that reason, in Southern elections we will be saying "Vote Left", (Labour, Workers Party, Sinn Fein, expressing no preference.)

At the same time we point out that the reformist parties in government would not rule in the workers' interests and that it is necessary to build a revolutionary alternative. The growth of reformism in the near future is likely to be only modest because of the inability of any of these parties to clearly place themselves in militant opposition to FF's anti-working class measures.

In spite of occasional exceptions like the magnificent firemen's strike, the general situation is of a low level of working class struggle. This will not last for ever, but while it does, right wing ideas tend to predominate. Revolutionaries must learn to operate correctly in this situation.

SLOGANEERING

One trap we must avoid is "ultra-leftism". Of course the leaders of the Workers Party or Labour Party accuse anybody who seriously wants to fight for socialism of ultra-leftism. What we mean is adapting to the relative unpopularity of our ideas by giving up the attempt to influence workers who disagree with us. The besetting sin of so many socialist groups over the years has been abstract sloganeering and affirmations of their own revolutionary "purity" instead of a genuine attempt to explain their ideas to workers who do not yet understand the necessity of revolution.

On the other hand we must not hide our politics or seek artificial popularity by softening our revolutionary message. A danger is that revolutionaries throw themselves into campaigns or trade union activity without understanding that these are a means to enlarging the influence of some of our ideas on the people we work with, not an adequate strategy for re-organising society.

Our attitude to campaigns must be sensitive. The rightward drift outside has reflected itself in the campaigns themselves. Numbers of activists are less and the dominant ideas is often—as in the Anti-Extradition Campaign—not to organise a militant fight but to lobby "respectable" opinion. We are 100 per cent for a fight against Extradition and for defence of the abortion referral clinics. But where these campaigns



Free state soldiers in the recent clampdown on Republicans in the South.

are small and dominated by passive ideas, and people we have no realistic prospect of influencing our place is mobilising for the demonstrations and activities, not wrangling in obscure committee rooms.

Conference discussed at length the struggle against the Northern State. We believe the Six County state is irreformably sectarian and must be smashed. We do not believe it has any legitimacy. We oppose its violence and that of British imperialism without which it could not survive. We are for a fight to the finish against British imperialism in the North. We defend the right of the oppressed to take up arms against oppression. In particular we defend the right of the Provos to conduct their armed struggle. We do not regard them as "criminals" or "the men of violence".

But we do not support the

armed struggle as the way forward. It cannot win because it is based on the "stages" theory of republicanism that all classes of Irish men and women, including the boss class, can and must be mobilised in the struggle to expel British imperialism and only after this stage can socialism be raised. Republicanism turns its back on the class struggle and substitutes its "armalite and ballot box" for the mass actions of the working class against imperialism. This we cannot support.

Membership of the SWM has grown by a fifth over the past year. We are confident that this growth can be sustained if we put into practice the results of our conference decisions.

Over the next few months Socialist Worker will be dealing with these topics in greater detail;

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 councils of delegates from workplaces and areas who are democratically elected answerable 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.

Argue for solidarity

Dear Socialist Worker, THE FIREMEN'S strike, as your paper argues must be supported. In the January edition you say that the firemen should look for solidarity from other Corporation workers. I agree.

But my experience of looking for support from Corpo workers here is for them to say "Sure they're the ones who never gave support to the Corpo bin men last year". I don't know if this point is entirely true, but it must be realised that, no matter what divisions there were in the past, it is precisely these divisions that give our bosses and the government the confidence to demand cutbacks, lay offs etc in all sections of the corporation today.

Nevertheless, a bad attitude to showing solidarity has developed among different sections of workers,

encouraged by those who in effect accept the government policy of worker bashing.

It will not be easy to win those who see the firemen as elitist, but a start can be made

to do it, by talking and arguing with them in their depots and canteens.

PETER BARRY
BALLYMUN

Fair play to US workers

The planned picketing of Borde Failte and Aer Lingus by American Firemen in support of the Dublin Fire Brigade strike is brilliant.

Despite the caricature and impression of American workers in the media etc. as docile flag-waving burger-eating adherents to the system, they are indeed the opposite. Compared with Noel

Carrolls (Dublin Corpo hack) statement, that such action was treasonable because it acted against Ireland's interest, it shows that workers everywhere have everything in common.

Patriotism is for the bosses. Let's celebrate Paddy's Day as workers. Gerry McCabe Dublin



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I would like more details about the Socialist Workers Movement

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to SWM, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

REVIEWS

Stalker opens RUC can of worms

IT HAS all the intrigues of a thriller—M15 plots, missing tapes and files, bugged police offices, and daunting treks of police investigators into “forbidden” nationalist areas of Armagh. But John Stalker has written about real cases and raises vital issues relating to the totality of British rule in Ireland.

Stalker tells the story of his investigation into events of 1982 in which six people were

killed by the RUC in apparent retaliation for the deaths of three policemen by an IRA bomb. He details the obstructions placed in his way at every level of the RUC as he uncovered the facts of the murders and the cover up stories used by the police. Finally, he reveals the painful process by which he was removed at a critical stage of the inquiry.

Stalker was about to finally get a transcript of the tape which recorded the killing of Michael Tighe in a hayshed in Ballyneery. This tape would probably prove RUC guilt in

shooting Tighe without any warning or provocation. Stalker was also about to implicate Chief Constable John Herman and other senior RUC figures in the cover up stories. He was about to recommend charges against a number of RUC men including a chief superintendent who is deputy head of the Special Branch.

These men had made it clear that if they were charged they would have spilled the beans about M15's involvement in the killings and in operations north and south of the border. M15 is ultimately answerable to Margaret Thatcher and the British Cabinet. So a lot of necks were saved by finding spurious allegations to keep Stalker inactive in Manchester.

Politicians and the media have concentrated on the damage done to the Anglo Irish Agreement as a result of the events related to the Stalker affair. But the Stalker story also exposed the deep rooted bigotry of the RUC. Sectarian attitudes of the police towards Catholics comes through constantly. On his first day in Belfast Herman gave Stalker details of the Catholic side of his family on the back of a cigarette packet. RUC men attacked him when he spoke to lawyers representing the families of the murdered men.

Their suspicion and distrust even extended to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It was

the RUC's refusal to hand over “secret” information to the DPP's office which sparked off the Stalker affair and in his book it is clear that it was RUC distrust of Catholic members of the DPP's office that lay behind this. The only RUC “evidence” to support the claim that the DPP's office could not be trusted was “that one member of the director's office who was a Catholic attended an occasional lunch-time service at a particular church in Belfast”. The church was in a Catholic working class area of the city. The fact that “families of suspected terrorists had also worshipped there... was in the eyes of some RUC officers sufficiently damning evidence against the man”.

So the RUC can't even trust these totally establishment type Catholics who have fully worked with police and loyally carried out prosecutions even during the Castlereagh torture supergrass periods.

There is some irony in this because if the RUC could have trusted the Catholics “on their side” John Stalker would never have been brought to the North to investigate the RUC in the first place.

The Stalker book tells us a lot more about the attitudes and practices of the RUC, but will it change anything? Early in his investigation when Stalker insisted on talking to the dead men's families, several of the people he saw “said prophetically I would never finish the enquiry, particularly if it began to threaten the RUC or the British government”. He was also told, “whatever you say will make no difference over here—the lid has to be kept on”. How right they were.

—JOAN MCKIERNAN



Revolution without the workers

TWENTY ODD years ago, China was a source of inspiration for many thousands of revolutionaries worldwide. Yet today few look to China—so what happened? This new pamphlet, written by Charlie Hore of the British SWP, is an overdue and valuable introduction to China's recent history, written from a revolutionary standpoint.

Hore takes as his starting point the origins of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the revolutionary situation which existed between 1925 and 1927. There was a wave of strikes and peasant uprisings, yet the Comintern, dominated by Moscow, believed that China was still at the stage of bourgeois revolution, and instructed the CCP to ally with the Chinese nationalists in the Kuomintang. Instead of attempting to win leadership of the revolt and turning it into a socialist revolution, the CCP acted to prevent it from coming to a head. But in April 1927, the Kuomintang turned viciously on the left, killing thousands of militant workers and communists.

The CCP managed to survive though its composition was radically altered. It now became a movement of armed peasants led by middle-class intellectuals with no serious presence among Chinese workers. The next years were hard, lean years but at the end of the notorious Long March, Mao had emerged as the dominating figure in the CCP.

Over the next decade, the CCP and its Red Army, grew in size, mass support and power. It won the support of the peasantry by reducing rents in those areas which it controlled.

But when it eventually defeated the Kuomintang, the victory of the Red Army did not herald a social revolution. Workers remained—and were ordered to be—passive.

Government officials and police remained at their posts, taking orders from the new bosses.

Hore then goes on to outline the attempts made by the new ruling class to develop the economy. Industrialisation was attempted on the Russian model—though with grudging and expensive Russian aid.

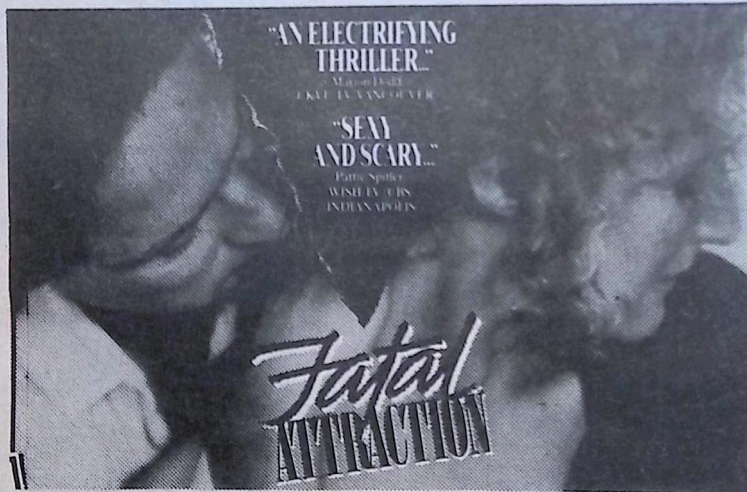
Although the first 5 year plan was a success, an attempt to quicken the pace at the end of the fifties caused chaos. The “Great Leap Forward” saw industrial production drop and famine return to China.

The continuing conflicts among the ruling class led to the so-called “Cultural Revolution” of the late 60s. Many in the West hailed it as an attempt to prevent the bureaucracy becoming too powerful. It was very far from this. Rival sections of the bureaucracy took their conflicts onto the streets, pitting students and Red Guards against each other. But the situation grew out of their control; workers began to raise their own demands, street battles were taking place in the cities. Order was not restored until 1971, and the overall effect, was among others, to set back China's economic development further.

The pamphlet outlines the debate that has gone on since then between the “conservative” “conservative” and “modernising” wings of the bureaucracy. In its essentials it is an argument about how the ruling class can develop the economy in the changing conditions imposed on it by an unstable world market.

Yet there remains another option. As Hore puts it in conclusion, “... The Chinese working class has the power to overcome once and for all the poverty and the misery that have been their lot this century; the precondition for this is the smashing of the state founded by those who claimed to be their liberators”.

—MIKE SCULLY



FATAL ATTRACTION has proved to be anything but a fatal attraction for cinema owners

The cinema queue has come back into fashion. So, what is it about it that has people shivering in the cold every night, to sit and gawk at these very rich, very successful people having sex a la “Last Tango in Paris” and paying some sort of price? That has audiences in America screaming “Kill her, the bitch” according to the director? There are neat, available conclusions—like expert publicity (not surprising since the director, Adrian Lyne, came to the movies from advertising), an extension of the fantasy rich world of “Dallas”, etc. with the added attraction of seeing those rich so-and-so-

getting it in the back real nasty like—you certainly won't see the family pet rabbit get to be Sunday lunch with Sue Ellen. Right? It is equally neat to say it is exploitative, reactionary, nasty. It is all of these. And more.

Like all success stories, it's story is very simple. A man and a woman meet, have a weekend of sex which effects both their lives.

Lyne—whose previous film “9½ Weeks” showed an interest in the characters and a developing characterisation of the man and woman—this time round has shown two sets of cliches, the model family and the other woman and with

disgraceful disregard for the audience's intelligence never shows the slightest interest in looking beyond the surface.

Lyne, Michael Douglas and Glenn Close have all been lauded for their performances, Oscar nominations are handed out like smarties. It's a wonder they didn't nominate the dog and the poor rabbit too. They are, of course, superb. I need hardly add I mean the dog and the rabbit.

The film—like any piece of mass entertainment—cannot be seen in isolation to the society it springs from. Of course, it is anti-woman—we only see her, through the prejudiced eyes of the family. I would con-

tend she is not a character at all, in the sense that once having introduced her to us and Douglas and gone through the obligatory sexual hysterical scenes (which, by the way are very funny) we never learn one more single fact about her we are invited to hate her.

And that is what comes across strongest to me about the film. The kind of “horror” films of the fifties where communities are threatened by a thing, or an it, or body snatchers, seems to me to be close to what Fatal Attraction is about.

And surely it's no coincidence again that those films were all done in the equally reactionary fifties. The crude Fatal Attraction fits easily in and comes out of Reaganism and Thatcherism. Public adherence to strict family values, the AIDS tragedy, backlash monetarism, the sanctity of property; this rampant world mood has produced Fatal Attraction and the film exemplifies all of those values and fears.

The perfect fabricated family, the downtown apartment, the upstate property, the “thing” (woman) that threatens these desirable properties, the orchestrated titillation of cinemagoers, a sad proportion of whom are unemployed, depressed, the invitation by the skilled advertising man (Lyne) to envy and hate in equal measure—and the consequent cold disregard for people—all of this is Fatal Attraction.

JULIE O'DOHERTY

Firemen stand firm

STARDUST VICTIMS SUPPORT FIREMEN

MAGILL MAGAZINE recently interviewed Antoinette Keegan, a survivor of the Stardust fire.

Antoinette described the trauma of the past seven years. Two of her sisters died in the tragedy and she herself underwent extensive surgery. In 1986 her father John Keegan, a tireless activist on behalf of the Stardust relatives, died having suffered extreme stress.

Eamonn Butterly, the creep who owned the Stardust and who was compensated long before any of the victims, still runs what remains of the complex. His business booms within sight of the families who will never forget.

On the seventh anniversary of the fire a group of relatives joined striking Dublin fire-fighters on the picketline. They know only too well what the strike is about—a fight for a decent fire service.

The firefighters themselves know better than any pinstripe suited "expert" that the present service cannot cope with another Stardust.

The brigades are already under-staffed and sixteen more redundancies will make things worse.

That is why the strike should be supported.

Dave McDonagh reports on the firefighters' strike

DUBLIN'S firemen rejected the Corporation's offer by a huge majority. And rightly so.

The eleven new posts, which the Corpo promised to fill in June, would have been filled anyway. The offer of an interest free loan was rightly seen as a bribe to force the strikers back.

The Corporation still wants 26 redundancies in the brigade—this is ten more than what has already gone through.

The strikers willingness to fight on is obvious. Even in Dun Laoghaire the brigade voted to continue with the action in solidarity with the Dublin strike.

Opportunities now exist to escalate the action.

As we go to press, 500 workers at St James Hospital are due to strike for an hour to protest at the Corpo's lousy offer. They are also angry at the way Health Board ambulance staff have scabbed on the strike.

In the Corporation itself, 1,800 LGPSU members are on an overtime ban to demand more staff. Their fight is clearly the same as the firemen's battle—against Corpo cutbacks.

Spreading the strike requires that the firemen link up with these groups of workers. The argument is simple—a victory for the firemen is the key to renewing



Firemen from Belfast and Derry, join picket of Dublin firemen at Tara Street Station last month.

the fight against the cuts. Other workers will not automatically come out in support of the fire brigade

strike. But now is the time to build for such action—before demoralisation sets in and opportunities are wasted.

It is no good waiting for the Corpo to come up with another offer. The game should not be played on their

terms—it should be played on the strikers terms. That means building solidarity while solidarity is clearly on offer.

BRITAIN: Sparks of anger flare up



CAR WORKERS striking for the NHS in Liverpool

attempt to prohibit "the promotion of homosexuality".

There have also been episodes of solidarity between the different groups.

Vauxhall workers and fire-fighters on Merseyside walked out for a half-day in support of striking health workers. Nurses welcomed gay activists onto their picket lines.



These struggles have frightened the Tories. But they have also frightened the leaders of the British Labour Movement. They would prefer the fight to be steered into

channels where they, and not the rank-and-file, would control the action.

Union leaders at Ford's climbed down when slight concessions were made on the wage deal, instead of going all the way.

Seafarers' leaders backed off when threatened by the law.

But the fightback is likely to continue. There has been a slight drop in unemployment in Britain so workers are not only angry at Thatcher, they are also less afraid of strikes leading to job losses.

Their confidence can inspire all those who want to hit back at Thatcher.

IN BRITAIN, the fight against Thatcher is taking on new life.

There was a 36-hour lorry tail-back at Dover when seafarers struck and prevented ships being loaded.

Ford car workers struck for higher wages and forced a shut-down of Ford's plant in Belgium.

The Company's European

vice president, Walter Haynes said, "I thought this kind of action—against the advice of wage negotiators—was behind us".

A strike by 38 Manchester nurses sparked off a national day of action against health service cuts.

Gays and lesbians have taken to the streets to fight against Clause 28—the Tories'



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Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

Fight for the NHS

THE PAST few weeks have seen growing anger and determination to fight among health workers in the Six Counties.

The start of their fight-back came as Health Boards throughout the North announced still more cuts to the Health Services.

In real terms, the Boards face a £14 million reduction in their budgets from April. In every region this means the closure of hospitals, hospital units, wards and clinics.

In the Belfast area, the Eastern Health Board will have a £7.6 million shortfall. As a result, a number of hospitals are likely to close. These include the Downpatrick Maternity Hospital, the Shaftesbury Square hospital for alcoholics and addicts, North Belfast's Throne geriatric hospital and possibly the Lagan Valley Hospital.

The Mater Hospital is to have its Casualty Department closed from 3.30 every afternoon; all gynaecology facilities are to be axed and a number of their surgical beds are to be lost. Gynaecology beds are also to be lost at Belfast City Hospital, the Lagan Valley and Royal Victoria Hospitals.

These gynaecology beds are being closed at a time when the incidence of cervical cancer is rising alarmingly in the Six Counties and more beds are badly needed if women's lives are to be saved.

The Western Health Board—including Derry, Omagh and Limavady—needs an additional £3 million just to stand still in its services. The lack of this money means that, despite a number of hospital closures over recent years, yet more cuts are expected.

One of the threats causing most anger is the closure of Anderson House, the GP Maternity Unit at Altnagelvin Hospital. Maternity services at Altnagelvin are already overcrowded since both Strabane and Limavady had their maternity units axed. The closure of Anderson House



Nurses protest outside Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital.

could leave women giving birth in the corridors of Altnagelvin.

A leak about the threat to Anderson House brought a spontaneous demonstration from midwives and other health workers who said they would occupy rather than let it close.

Unfortunately the action in the Six Counties generally is much more under the control of the union officials than it has been in Britain.

CONTROL

There the union leaders were forced to follow their members onto the streets and had to move quickly to

control the spontaneous votes for strike action which were being taken by health workers up and down the country.

The officials here have ensured that there is little spontaneity and no unity. Two hour lunchtime protests have been organised on different days, in different areas by different unions. It is as if they think that a protest a day will keep Thatcher away and workers under official union control.

COHSE officials have insisted that March 2nd is the day of action although the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU has called for action on March 14th—the day before the Budget—when Health workers in Britain will be out too.

The confusion being sown by the different dates being produced, will make organising for the 14th more difficult.

NEEDED

Nor will a two-hour strike at lunchtime hit the Tories hard enough. What's needed now is a one-day strike by all workers not just those in the Health Service.

But the action mustn't stop at one day strikes. Trade unionists in the North are harking back to that magnificent day—22nd Sept. 1982—when workers all over the Six Counties came out in support of the NHS. On that day virtually every factory in Derry closed down and the

Guildhall Square was packed by 10-12,000 workers.

What everyone seems to have forgotten is that the health workers were defeated in 1982. After 22nd Sept. the union leaders had the chance to win by calling for an all-out action. Instead they called for another round of regional, one-day stoppages. This new action wasn't so successful. Gradually health workers became demoralised and settled for a miserable two year deal.

This year we again see the positive elements of 1982; health workers want to fight and others will fight alongside them. But unless the selective action is used as a springboard for all-out action, the anger and willingness to fight could be wasted once again.

NOT FAIR
IN NORTH
—OFFICIAL

THE NORTH'S Fair Employment Agency (FEA) has just released its eleventh annual report.

It's findings are not surprising. After eleven years of existence, the FEA was forced to admit that Catholic workers were still 2½ times more likely to be unemployed than were Protestants.

The report said that even when Catholics do get a job, they are frequently threatened or intimidated out of it. One case was gone into in some detail; it was of a man who obtained a job in an engineering firm. For six months his only problem was the occasional smart remark about his religion.

The arrival of the "marching season" brought flags, bunting and intimidation and he was forced to leave the job. The FEA concluded that his employer had a responsibility to stop such intimidation. That's true. But then a boss doesn't much care what goes on as long as the work is done and the profits roll in.

There is a body with which the responsibility to stop sectarian intimidation lies—the trade union movement. The engineering industry is well organised, virtually 100% unionised. Yet despite all its condemnations of paramilitary violence, all its talk of the IRA encouraging sectarianism, the trade union movement in the Six Counties has never faced up to the bigotry of its loyalist members.

For fear of being "divisive" it refuses to face up to the reality of the divisions in the working class and where those divisions actually come from.

As long as the trade unions refuse to take on sectarianism and discrimination, we can't expect too much from the FEA.

