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PERSPECTIVES DOCUMENT

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THE PROSPECTS BEFORE US

by

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RAG

In the eighth decade of the imperialist era, Ireland's position is as it has been for fifty years: that of a neo-colony (in the north-east, a colony) with a north Atlantic (i.e. developed bourgeois democratic) superstructure.

The ultimate causes for this lie in two basic aspects of Ireland's pre-history and early history:-

- (1) The fact that Ireland was not supplied with sufficient mineral resources to be easily exploited, save with the most modern contemporary equipment;
- (2) The fact that Ireland was an offshore island of the European seaboard. Thus it got, if at all only the tail-end of the invasions that destroyed Celtic society elsewhere in Europe, until such time as the new order had developed into a highly centralised form of feudalism.

To these might be added a third, later point, connected indirectly to the other two:-

- (3) The fact that the country uniquely suited to dominate Ireland as its colony was also the first country in the world to establish its industrial pre-eminence (partly at the expense of Ireland, of course). It was able to try to use its profits from this to attempt to buy off Irish loyalty to its legionary.

The three points listed above have created basically the situation in which the Irish find themselves today.

In relation to the rest of the world, Ireland is a colony ruled indirectly by the metropolitan imperialist powers. This is a part cause of the weakness of the Irish working-class (as well as the Irish bourgeoisie). The facts of colonial exploitation on top of Ireland's relative (to Britain) lack of raw materials meant the weakening of any potential strong industrial working-class and the departure abroad of potential leaders of such a class. Matters are not counterbalanced by the contradictions specific to the neo-colonial societies of the "Third World". The emigration boat has led to a thinning of Irish population so as to weaken the threat to the status quo that exists in the shanty suburbs of most neo-colonies. Similarly, because of the distribution of monopoly profits, the landlord class has been bought out. This process has established a class of rural small property-holders such as gives a firm base to formal bourgeois parliamentary democracy in Ireland.

However, capitalism has never been able to eliminate all possible contradictions in the various national societies within it. It is least able to do so now that it is in its death agony. Irish capitalism has only been able to avoid the contradictions of the two types of society to which it relates by developing contradictions of its own. Basically, and even despite the circumstances that formally strengthen it, Irish capitalism - north and south - has less ability to manoeuvre than its fellows in the neighbouring countries. It is even less able to supply good wages and to maintain full employment than its neighbours. This fact was undoubtedly at the core of the high rate of strikes in Ireland since 1964. In themselves, these would not be impressive, but Irish capitalism's political weakness is similarly effective, even within the formalities of bourgeois democracy. Not only has a United Irish Nation not been created, but its creation was muffed in a fashion that meant, as is being seen today, an essentially unstable political situation.

Politically and culturally, laws based on religious superstitions that might have been acceptable in Latin America, are being felt increasingly as derogatory to London rights in an offshore island of agnostic Europe. And, while the existence of parliamentary democracy does reveal the security of a region, it also provides greater opportunities for opponents of that regime than exist in totalitarian states.

The point of the special situation in Ireland is not that it makes impossible the Socialist revolution but that it imposes upon those who would make such a revolution the extra duty to analyse the specific situation. In many of its aspects, it is different from anywhere else. To give a concrete example that is known to all comrades: The Protestants of Northern Ireland are in a position relative to the Catholics therein that is superficially like the position of the Europeans in South Africa. Yet, at the same time, they are in a far less isolated position than the members of the other castes. Thus, they cannot be said to be exploiting the Catholics as the Whites, the Blacks; the Catholics are able to join Trade Unions; in the last resort, a Catholic can lapse as a Black can't. Thus, at different times (1919, 1932) there has been co-operation between the working classes of the two communities, as has been literally impossible in South Africa. (Our general analysis shows of course, a relatively closer resemblance between the Israelis and the Ulster Protestants.)

Any consideration of Irish society that is aimed to change it must begin with the lack of real development of the Irish economy, and the society based on it. As has been shown, the contradictions that exist are different from those in either the metropolitan or the normal colonial/neo-colonial countries, but the contradictions exist, nonetheless. The question is: how to exploit them?

The instrument that must carry out such a task does not yet exist; the task of the Revolutionary Marxist Group is to create one. Such a task has been often incorrectly, counterposed to the participation of the nucleus of the proletarian vanguard in the events that must maximise the contradictions. In practice, we have been carrying out such a separation. We have not been doing so in theory, rather we have been doing so for lack of theory: the theory of how to participate.

In answering this need, it has been necessary to summarise the facts already put before us Mr MacGregor in the perspective document for the February Conference. It is now as well to consider the implications of the facts as applied to the history of the Irish Left.

The outstanding fact here is the low development of the movement. Of course, this follows on from the objective facts mentioned. In the absence of a stable, highly developed industrial economy (outside the north-east, where it was maintained at the political as well as the normal, economic expense of its workers), the fragmented proletariat has been dominated by Republicanism. This ideology makes only fitful pretence to the Socialism claimed as the ideal by the movements in Britain and Europe. Here, of course, we refer to militant Republicanism (Gardiner Place and Kevin St.) At a later stage of development, we will have to face up to a further fact: that the form of Republicanism that exercises most hegemony over the workers is, still, neither that of Gardiner Place nor that of Kevin Street, but the pretender of Upper Mount Street: the Fianna Fail cuckoo. The extreme vagueness of Republicanism precepts (basically: "Break the connection with England and you'll be all alright") enabled this situation to come about. The victory of the "Yes" vote in the recent referendum exposed the limitations of militant "Separatism, and the creed could give no reason such a vote as incompatible with their basic views.

Only by using the fight as a basis for explaining Socialism could anything have been retrieved from the wreckage.

The circumstances that have made for the predominance of Republican Ideology in the Irish working class have prevented any sort of serious opposition from being counterposed to it. The Irish Labour Party developed from a rigorous application of a syndicalist economist interpretation of certain aspects of the teachings of James Connolly inevitably becoming an expression of petty bourgeois Social Democracy. Such an ideology only has its staying power in the metropolitan states of Imperialism. Basically, Irish Social Democracy accepts that Ireland is another such state. This is at loggerheads with the facts. It has cut off the I.L.P. from any permanent claim on Republicans, and has left it to depend entirely on imperialism's ability to industrialise Ireland: an ability, as we are seeing, of only limited range. The development of an apparent "Tribunite" tendency around the Liaison Committee of the Left is not based on an internal "Tribunite" base, but on the influx of debased Trotskyists and Stalinists.

If Irish Social Democracy fails because of its vulgarly economist approach to its material reality, the even greater failure of Irish Stalinism is more interesting. Since the end of the 1960's campaign, the appeal of Stalinism for the petty bourgeois ideology of separatism has been revealed as wholly logical. Stalinism has tended generally to over-emphasise the petty bourgeois anti-imperial struggle. Its view of the rigorous division of that struggle into stages does little harm to the ideas of simple "separatism".

But there have been problems. Inevitably, Communism, even more than Social Democracy, has suffered from the lack of development of Irish Industry and the class employed therein. The same debility that keeps the workers Republican and Fianna Fail hinders them from turning to even formal "communism", except in revolutionary circumstances. A Communist Party, such as that of France or of Italy is an impossibility. This is not only due to the objective facts of the undeveloped economy, but to the subjective fact (arising from this) of the religious question in Ireland. The dominance of the Catholic Church in the Republic: the religious division of the North East are both handicaps to any genuine dialectically materialist party.

But, of course, there is a further complication. Real Communists might have been able to survive and develop better than the vanguard with which (until recently) the Irish working class has been lumbered. The history of Irish Stalinism includes 1½ liquidations of its party. The first (1923) was to accommodate to the Syndicalist, Larkin. The second (1941) (in the Twenty-Six counties only) was aimed to overcome the embarrassment that would be given the USSR by its allied party supporting the war effort of Russia's ally and Ireland's oppressor. In Northern Ireland, the CPNI gained a great deal of support among the Protestant workers, (In fact, all its Protestant working class) by its scabbary for the UK war crisis. On such occasions, as the CPI did exist, it tended to follow a line almost entirely subservient to the Republican Movement, if not to the militant that to Fianna Fail. In its first life (1921-1923), this was, of course, not due to V.V. Stalin: it does help explain how that man was able to take over the comintern so easily.

If Stalinism has found it difficult to survive in Ireland, it is not surprising that Trotskyism has had to fight for occasional existence. The classical marxism of this theory does not allow for major petty bourgeois vulgarisation. At least, the theories of Social Democracy, Stalinism and Anarchism (a theory of workers in under-developed metropolitan countries) all appeal to separatists in their acceptance of the possibility of "Socialism in a Single Country". Trotskyism does not.

Further, in the influence of Catholic philosophy operates at a low, agitational level against Stalinism, but influences far more deeply opposition to dialectical materialism. It is no accident that Ireland gave to the workers of the world, James Connolly: the only leading Marxist theorist not to have a university 'education'. Had he been to University College Dublin, the world would probably not have known him (except, perhaps, as a Labour-Redmondite). The formal logic of the schoolmen, the idealism of the priests have to be fought relentlessly by anyone who wants to achieve or maintain his or her marxism.

In these circumstances, it has been difficult for Irish Trotskyism to establish itself except as a nucleus for leadership in a revolutionary situation. This is not necessarily a cause for defeatism or for panic measures: it is worth remembering that the above description comes close to fitting the original Bolshevik Party. Concern with building a mass party and maintaining its numerical strength, even when there is no prospect of revolution is the work of the Mensheviks, or Chernov, the "Social Revolutionary", and of the Communist Parties of France and Italy. Such a concern tends to accompany a readiness to scab when revolution becomes an actuality. (Not to do so is thought to imperil the Party). If we can get together enough trained revolutionaries to provide leadership in overthrowing the Irish states, we need not worry too much about the numbers of our rivals.

We should consider the history of Irish Trotskyism at this point. Such consideration can only be very sketchy. It is hoped that the F.I. will be able to supply data for a more detailed description at a later stage of the pre-conference discussions. However, it is as well that comrades should have an idea of the vicissitudes of their predecessors in this country.

What might be called, accurately, the pre-history of Irish Trotskyism is centred mainly on the personality of the Socialist Republican, Michael Price. As to how far Price was, in fact, a real Trotskyist is doubtful. However, he has been the victim of a smear campaign aided by several who once claimed to be his friends. This is one of the reasons for suspecting that he may have been more formidable than he has been made to appear. This suspicion deepens when his actual positions during the last ten years of his life (1933-1943) are examined.

Before this period, admittedly, Price's position was doubtful. In 1931, he engaged in a polemic with his comrades in the (original) Saor Eire Movement. In it, he attacked the "Godlessness" of their "State Socialist" theories and defended the ideas of equal distribution of property beloved by the more "progressive" clergy of the time. He was defeated therein and never again put forward his erroneous views. Indeed, on several occasions, he is recorded as putting forward views more similar to his 1931 opponents. However, this did not prevent them being dredged up in a faction fight three years later.

That occurred over the strategy to be followed by the Republican Congress. This was a body of Socialist Republicans that, in 1934, broke from the essentially non-political leadership of the Republican Movement in order to carry on a more active fight against the politics of the Fianna Fail government. It could not maintain its unity, however. A few months after it split with the mainstream, a new and damaging split occurred in it. On one side was Price and the Connolly family: on the other, were some of the traditional leaders of Irish Republicanism Socialist, allied to the newly-reconstituted CPI. But like that, however, the issues are over-simplified. The Stalinists and their fellow-travellers were united in putting forward a strategy that became known later as one of a "Popular Front".

As such, there was a broad unity of left-wing and left-centre forces on the lowest common denominator of "anti-imperialism as opposed to anti-capitalism or socialism. With this analysis, they were agreed in rejecting an "ultra-left" the call of their opponents to demand a "Workers' Republic". The Left was not united, except on the slogan. The Connollys (who had been in the Labour Party for some years and were determined to stay in it) were indeed ultra-lefts, wanting the People's Front, but believing that it could be achieved on the Workers' Republic" slogan. Price alone rejected the whole Front idea and demanded a vanguard party to fight for the Workers' Republic. When his proposal was rejected, he broke completely with the Congress, unlike the Connollys. Finally, it must be stated that his analysis bore the test of history. As a Popular Front, the Congress was a flop, being ignored by all left-wing forces except the tiny CPI. A nucleus Bolshevik Party could not have done worse.

It was held against Price that after a few years in the wilderness he joined the Labour Party. But really, there was nowhere else for him to go, unless he tried his luck in isolation with the embryonic forces available to him. The CP was Stalinist and the non-politicism of the Republican Movement approached Fascism at times. Labour was larger than both the other two put together and was going through a left-wing phase. Entry work in it was an wholly reasonable proposition. However, one thing might be held against Price. He does not seem to have taken, what would be termed as a Pabloite-Liquidationist line (if, indeed he was that much conscious) rather than preparing any sort of vanguard grouping while he was within the Labour Party.

But apart from the organisational weakness, Price put forward recognisably Trotskyist policies. In a debate in 1937, he opposed the line of Roddy Connolly, that if Britain was to ally with the USSR, Ireland should not embarrass her employer. Price replied stressing the need to fight the Irish revolution in Ireland regardless of the so-called Socialism of a single country. In the newspaper, The Torch that the Dublin Regional Executive ran from 1939 under his direction, basic facts of Trotskyism were aired for a time. Then in 1941, when members of the liquidated Dublin branches of the CPI began to join the Labour Party and counteract Price's work. In the same period, his supporter, Patrick Trench, whose more definite Trotskyist leanings had been stimulated by his experience of Stalinism in the Spanish Civil War, died. Trench's friend, Geoffrey Coulter (who had once tried to get an F.I./I.R.A. alliance) also dropped out of active politics. Price himself was plagued by ill-health. His last political act was to resign the Party's nomination of the North-East Dublin Candidacy to Big Jim Larkin. This helped the latter to finally leave the political wilderness. Price died in 1944.

A more certain Trotskyist strain was already developed. This was amongst certain of Price's followers (notably F. Cowan), but also amongst members of Fianna Eireann who were disillusioned with the lack of politics of the Republican leadership, and by the disasters that it caused. The leaders in this latter tendency were John (Johnny) Byrne and Vincent MacDowell. After the War, these formed a short-lived Revolutionary Socialist Party of Ireland which constituted the only Irish section of the Fourth International to date. This never grew beyond twenty. It was liquidated early in 1950 by its leading theoretician, the Israeli student, Ygail Gluckstein (Tony Cliff) perhaps inspired by the liquidationist teachings of Michel Pablo. (This must have been the last act of Cliff on behalf of the F.I. before he was himself expelled for refusing to support the anti-imperialist struggle of the North Koreans). Those of the RSP who remained in Ireland during the 1950's played a major role in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions politics, having a particular strength in the Dublin Trades Council.

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Later, many of them were to be prominent around Noel Browne, during his last period of organisational independence. However, by this time, they had lost most of their original revolutionary fervour. They did not try to create a proper Bolshevik Party out of Noel Browne's National Progressive Democrats. Since 1963, they have been all too happy to liquidate into the Irish Labour Party. In Northern Ireland, their cadres liquidated into the N.I.C.P. and oriented increasingly to the Protestant working-class and the British Chauvinist politics of Ted Grant and the R.S.L.

The continuous tradition of Trotskyism in Ireland begins during the IRA/Saor Uladh border campaign of 1955-1962. Many Republican Internees began to educate themselves. They included G. Lawless, S. Garaghty, L. Daltun and others. On release, they were without jobs and had to emigrate. In London in the early 1960's, they formed various combinations based on the Irish emigrants in the city. These were mainly in opposition to the "conventional wisdom" of the Stalinite Connolly Association, but with the (very) long-term aim of returning to Ireland to build a Marxist Revolutionary Party. All these bodies were loose organisations of Marxists, and would be debilitated by the nature of emigrant politics, and divided even more by personal feuds than by politics.

The final stage in the process began in 1964. Lawless, Daltun and Phil Flynn joined in the traditional basis of anti-Russian Stalinism with a group of Maoites, centred on Brendan Clifford. After a year, the inevitable (though for once, political) split occurred. But it was on terms that left the Trotskyist/Centrism majority with a larger nucleus than before and with the real possibility of doing serious work in Ireland itself.

Of course, this was due to the social circumstances rather than to luck. In Britain, the long-awaited Labour Government was proving to be as qualitatively as Tory as any other (in Ireland, as well as elsewhere). In Ireland, the new industrial militancy, stimulated by the new maturity of the workers in the protected industries set up in the thirties (as well as by the 60's boom) provided an opportunity for action. The Irish Labour Party was beginning to benefit from the new situation. The Irish Workers' League in the twenty-six counties (heir to the branches therein of the former CPI) constituted itself a Party, and prepared to build a Youth Organisation. Irish Trotskyism could not fail to benefit from such opportunities.

The Irish Workers' Group (as the anti-Maoite majority of the previous organisation called itself) was able, at first, to take full advantage of the situation. For the first time, since 1950, a branch of an Irish Trotskyist organisation was set up in Dublin in May 1967. During the next few months, branches were started in Belfast and Dundalk. The Irish Militant was the longest lasting Trotskyist paper known in Ireland (1966-1968). The IWG provided the impetus for the formation of Young Socialist bodies. In September 1967, the Group established a constitution with a preamble that was overfull of jargon but, nonetheless, formally correct. All seemed set for an even more rapid expansion quantitatively and qualitatively. Yet within three months, it was to be split by a bitter faction fight and twelve months after this, it was in existence only in name. Why was this?

The answer is not an easy one to formulate. Basically it appears that it was a political-psychological cause such as maddens the economic determinists. The IWG was a group of young, and somewhat subjective revolutionists. Only Lawless, Daltun and the Matgamnas had had any previous experience of Trotskyist politics. (Sean Matgamna was an Irish emigrant and veteran of the SLL and the FI, whom Lawless had recruited, partly to raise the level of politics in the Group.)

It is certainly arguable that political standards were very low. The IWG included some individuals whose marxism would always be doubtful. But to build any sort of organisation, capable of taking a decisive part in Irish politics, it was necessary not to raise the entrance qualification too high. And to raise the consciousness of the Group, only a period of intensive political education and discussion would suffice. What happened instead was a split.

The causes for the faction fight are disputed. Only a survey of all letters between Lawless and Matgamna and of tapes of all phone calls could give a clear idea of who started what. (And, even then, one would have to beware of forgeries.) What is known is that Lawless maintained that Matgamna was trying to split the Group for the purpose of building his own empire. On the other hand, Matgamna claimed to be acting in self-defence against Lawless' plot to expel him behind the backs of the other members. At all events, he produced the first (and it must be said, the first) of the internal bulletins that appeared in the faction fight: Trotskyism or Chamelionism?

The fight itself was fought on three issues:-

- (1) The Treatment of the National Question by an Irish Marxist Organisation;
- (2) The methods of building such an Organisation;
- (3) The personal vulnerability of the participants, with particular reference to ☉ Lawless.

This list has been made out in order of objective importance; but to get any idea of the faction fight, it is necessary to remember that the treatment of each of these matters was produced in inverse ratio. Little was said about the national question; rather more about party organisation and one-hell-of-a-lot about Comrade Lawless (and, vice-versa, about Comrade Matgamna). To be fair to Matgamna, he now admits, as the one who struck the first (open) blow, that his method was at fault. He ascribes this to his inexperience. Comrade Lawless is still more inclined to blame his opponent, but it is doubtful whether he could do much after Trotskyism or Chamelionism.

Matgamna took his stand, with the formal correctness, with which he had invested the Group's constitution on - the difference between the Irish Workers' Group and a real, established Bolshevik Party. Quite a lot of what he said was unexceptionable, but it was closely bound up with a personal attack on Comrade Lawless. All would be well, so the argument went, if it was not for the activity of that dreadful man. No examples were given of attempts, made by Matgamna or others, to raise consciousness by his opponents. And, in fact, the need stressed by Matgamna and his allies was not for free discussion but an utopian ideal: "The Homogeneous Party". (This is one mistake that he has since admitted.)

The choice of this combination of planks was necessary for Matgamna. On the issue of the national question, not only was he vulnerable, but the homogeneity of his own faction was in doubt. His own ultra-leftism on the question had been shown by his writing for the Irish Militant an article stating "In or Out of the EEC, the struggle (against the bosses) goes on". Again, quite true, but irrelevant. On the other hand, amongst his supporters were Christy Nussey and his friends. Their nationalism has been so marked that, not only did they disagree with their mentor on the EEC, but they have since liquidated into Kevin Street, Republicanism.

However, deliberately or not, the anti-Lawless line united behind Matgamna a considerable faction. It was composed of individuals united politically by the ideal of the "homogeneous party" and emotionally by hatred of Comrade Lawless. In March 1968, they broke from the IWG and formed the League for a Workers' Republic. It is not too much to say that despite the departure of all its founding members bar two, this body has never changed politically. It has remained as it began, still a sectarian organisation with an aversion to "nationalism" - by which it meant doing anything at all about the national question.

What was left of the IWG soon split again. M Farrell and the Belfast Branch used the pressures of the Northern crisis of Autumn 1968, to set up their own "People's Democracy". Of course, this was to prove a mistake: P.D. has never been able to restore the 26 County links with which it broke in its foundation.

At about the same time, Séan Morrissey also broke with what remained of the Irish Workers' Group to help form a Guevarist Socialist Republican Group. He and his comrades had been disillusioned with what their considered Leninist politics as a result of the Group's split.

An attempt to reorganise the unity of the non-Stalinist left in a Revolutionary Socialist Alliance was thwarted early in 1969. This was not done by the LWR which was going through a bad period, but by the PD, riding high on the martyrdom of Burtollet. The IWG was wound up formally in April.

The break of the Irish Workers' Group was caused in general by the problem that has never really been solved to the satisfaction of Irish Trotskyism: the problem of how to make maximum of the resources that the Movement has and how most speedily to increase these resources without undue dilution of the revolutionary nucleus. During the last months of the Group, and the first of the LWR and of PD, attempts were made to solve this problem. The LWR tried to do so by its control of the Dublin YS, but it could only comprehend the use of such a body by the techniques used by the British SLL, through its Youth Body. (It still doesn't comprehend the relationship of the two.) The PD did not accept, as yet, that any dichotomy existed. With its base and, as yet its outlook, limited to the six counties, it found no need to distinguish between its agitational and its propagandist functions. As yet, it was ready to ignore completely its latter duty. With Saor Eire, the Leninist strategy with its differentiation between agitation and propaganda was thrown out the window - with catastrophic results.

From April 1969 to Spring 1971, the two effective Trotskyist Movements in Ireland were the LWR, with its Young Socialists Organisation and PD, with its practically six county perspective. Since the Spring of 1970, there has been a third body: the League for a Workers' Vanguard, with its own youth group, the Irish Young Socialists. This body continues and intensifies the errors of the LWR, from which it broke. But this is natural. The assumptions of the LWR are essentially (Gerry) Healyite, but without it being willing to accept the interference that Healy has always tried to exercise over the sections of his international. One of the points in the international perspective of the faction that formed the LWR was opposition to the IWG majority's proposals urging investigations with a view to affiliating to the F.I. This essentially nationalist attitude has continued until today. Now, the LWR is, as we prophesied it would in January, finding its only possible international contact to be the least suitable of all; Pierre Lambert's "International Committee." The break with it in 1970, was one carried out by individuals who, with all their faults were true to the LWR's international pretensions and to the logic of their politics. Irish Trotskyism had re-entered the international organisational scene, albeit through the back door.

At the same time PD was also suffering from the interference of British social chauvinism - in this case, the International Socialism group. Naturally, due to the relative phillistinism of the two groups, the alliance and its divisions were at a considerably lower level. It ended with a sordid row over the question of the PD's travelling expenses to a meeting in London.

But by the time of these divisions, the situation was changing to bring the PD and the LWR (though not the ultra-sectarian LWV) into closer alliance. On the one hand, the Civil Rights struggle that had stimulated the formation and growth of the PD exploded into a military struggle in which PD could not play its previous influential role. To restore its prestige it was necessary that the organisation develop qualitatively and quantitatively: qualitatively by the development of the group's theory; quantitatively by a more serious move, than it had made before to influence the situation in the twenty-six counties.

Simultaneously, in that area, the Labour Party did not do as well as it had expected in the general election of June 1969. The LWR and its YS had continued the policy of the LVG in maintaining their membership of the LP. They had not developed any new techniques in this strategy beyond maintaining a demand for the formal recognition of the YS, as the LP's youth movement. They took as such, little part in the drafting of the party's "New Republic" policies or in sustained criticism of those policies as passed by the Party Conference. With the loss of euphoria following its failure, in the election the LP began to turn to the coalition policies that it had denounced, it became clear that the days in the party of the League and Youth Movement were numbered. (Paradoxically, at that moment the Party did indeed recognise the YS as its own.) How would they break and where would they go?

At no time was it suggested that they should enter the Republican Movement. As will be shown there were good reasons why they should not do so, though how far these reasons really affected the practice is doubtful.

It is obvious, too, that the LWR and the YS, would not be able to stand outside either a petty bourgeois party or an alliance of the Left.

These facts led PD and the LWR and the YS to form the Socialist Labour Alliance. This has survived, so far, on the need of the participants to hang together for fear lest they hang separately. The only group that has, until this summer, attempted to relate seriously to the Alliance's role has been the Socialist Workers' Movement, inevitably its contribution (theoretically, a negative one) has been puny, by any standard.

Within the SLA, since its formation, there have been certain developments. The IS created its new Socialist Workers' Movement, out of the disintegrating Labour Party and affiliated it to the SLA.

The LWR lost members who formed from the Dublin and Limerick branches of the YS (and various comrades in Belfast) the organisation for which this paper is designed. The issues of the split - originally over the management of the YS - soon became revealed.

- (1) The over-riding importance of the need to build a section of the F.I. in Ireland.
- (2) The importance of orienting to the Republican Movement as being the movement most attractive at the present time for politically conscious workers.
- (3) The correct approach of the Bolshevik Party nucleus to the organisation(s) at its periphery.

This last point concerned mainly the LWR's attitude to the YS. But the League's view of that body was as confused as its ideas on the LP and on the SLA. It could see the YS as an essentially Propagandist body (all the LWR "Consciousness" document) and deny the SLA's agitational tasks. In the latter case, its attitudes have resulted in the situation, that, since its present defeats at the Alliance Conferences, it has remained in, but not of that body.

In January 1972, we broke finally with the LWR and its YS. In February we held our founding Conference. Since then, we have been guided by three main lines, as defined by the faction fight, as much as anything:

- (1) A general agreement with Comrade Ernest Mandel's analysis of the developing crisis in world capitalism. (Though, in detail, a disagreement with his delineation of the qualitative change from imperialism to neo-capitalism) and a resultant support for the Fourth International.
- (2) The general view that the main propaganda field is on the national issue.
- (3) Affiliation to the SLA.

The weakness is, that except for the first and Comrade MacGregor's blueprint for action in Northern Ireland, nothing much has been done to spell out this (in itself correct) strategy.

This is a particularly important weakness in that Comrade Mandel's analysis stipulates a situation of major opportunities for the sections of the F.I. We are no longer in the position of the late 'twenties and 'thirties where the workers of the world (outside Russia) were defeated and demoralised. Nor are we in the position of the 'forties, 'fifties and early 'sixties, when capitalism could be forced to grant many reforms without harming itself too much immediately. Today it is decreasingly able to deliver the goods. It cannot unite Europe (even Western Europe): it cannot unite Ireland. It cannot improve the Irish workers' standard of living. To liquidate the contradictions produced during its years of boom, it has to liquidate the boom itself, which will mean in practice, producing even greater contradictions.

But such a situation means that is incumbent upon those who are to utilise it that they must be very clear how to do so. The rest of this document is aimed to show the way.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 1

The unique combination of factors that produce the objective and conditions of the Irish "problem" have meant a lower standard of working class consciousness than that obtaining elsewhere. In turn, this has meant that Irish communism in the fifty years after Connolly was in cold storage and that its survival was only in its debased Stalinist form. At the final point in this historical process is that real communism (that of Trotsky) has only rarely been able to get off the ground, that its theory has been embryonic and that in the last five to seven years, when there was a continuing Trotskyist tradition, it has been marked by such symptoms of ultra-leftism as impatience and philistinism.

The international situation means that these defects have to be recognised (as they have been, above) and combatted (as they will be, below) in the most effective possible way by us, the Irish Trotskyist Group, by making a plan for action in the revolutionary struggle, and basing it on a clear appreciation of our strengths and weaknesses.

CHAPTER TWO: THE REPUBLICAN ORIENTATION.

One of the most bitterly disputed issues of the faction fight in the Y.S. was the then Left Opposition's insistence on the need for a serious attitude towards Republicanism. This was held, by our opponents, to mean a turn away from the Irish Working class: We insisted on the essential fact that Republicanism was, still, the dominant political ideology of the working class itself: that, though it had begun as a normal bourgeois liberation movement, the decline of the Irish bourgeoisie had attended an equal declassification the social base of its ideology. Against this the L.W.R. could only point to the undoubted fact of industrial expansion in the Republic of Ireland & claim that this had produced a qualitative change in working class consciousness. Of course this was incorrect. By drawing on the experience of the world working class we can see that the qualitative change in Irish society such as would change working class consciousness occurred between the 1880s & 1910 (the liquidation of landlordism & the organisation of the unskilled workers). The proof of this was provided by the 1913 lock-out & the soviets of the early 1920s—but also, by the development of the social consciousness of Republicanism in the form of Griffith's Sinn Fein. That no qualitative change has occurred since the Treaty is underlined by the failure of the C.P.I. To Develop ever as much of a mass base as the C.P.G.B., by its present out-flanking by Sinn Fein (Gardiner Place), and by the failure of the subjectively worker-based Irish Labour Party to do more than bent Fianna Fail'd influence.

Yes, we won the argument—but, to all intents and purposes, we stopped there. Except for the Northern Irish comrades with their orientation to the Northern Resistance Movement, it was assumed too readily that in practical agitational work a certain empiricism was permissible. Quite correctly, we disagreed the central duty of our work as being one of propaganda. At the same time, we had to apply our analysis in other ways. As a result in Dublin very little was done (apart from the E.E.C. campaign) and many comrades, relative to our whole, began to feel frustrated.

Some of these were led, naturally, into an understandable opportunism. If Republicanism was, as we said, the dominant hegemonic Irish working-class ideology, then what was stopping us from taking an active orientation towards Republicanism by entering the organised movement? After all, this was where the action was. Accordingly we lost two fairly active members to Gardiner Place & 3 inactive but working-class members to Kevin St. But they were merely the tips of a political iceberg.

It is necessary, therefore, that we develop in depth our analysis of Republicanism with the specific aim of using it as a basis for action.

Most of the background that we need has already been given in this document. However, it is as well that two facts be re-emphasised here. In the first place, that Republicanism has the influence in the working-class that it has, specifically, the product of the backwardness of that working-class (Ireland's workers are not alone in their backwardness: their comrades elsewhere are handicapped for other reasons). It does not accept the ideology because it chooses, but because it must. It follows therefore that our task is not to pander to the Republicans, but, if anything just the opposite. In general, we should expose the limitations of Republicanism while participating actively in anti-imperial struggles such as will attract its supporters.

The second point is that Republicanism while a relatively progressive force in world terms and one able to attract to itself many useful anti-imperialist ideas and pro-working-class theories is, in itself a lowest common denominator. Its essential aim is that of "breaking the connection with England". Since the said connection is in itself counter-revolutionary, it means that Republicanism is, in the age of the death agony of capitalism, an outlook subversive of existing order. However, the concept originates in the age of bourgeois revolution. Its resultant vagueness made openings for the Republican ideal to be stolen by those whose loyalty to it is in doubt or to be held by those whose early loyalty has been long depraved by the pressure of circumstances. In this way, the position of leader of Irish Republicanism is still for too many workers, Fianna Fail.

Ultimately, our task will not be to overthrow the influence of Gardiner Place or of Kevin St but to overthrow the influence of Upper Moreau St. This should be remembered though it will probably be a matter of years before we're in a position to do this. The only other point on this matter is that the only short-term (i.e. parliamentary) alternative to Fianna Fail is not only no qualitative change, nor no quantitative improvement but likely to be change for the worse.

There is a further, final, point to be made. The basic petty bourgeois tenet of Republicanism must be developed into a guide for practical action. In doing this the Republicans have tended, at their highest stages of ideological development within their limits to divide into 2 tendencies: one roughly social democratic & the other terrorist. These two wings have co-existed, however with the latter predominant.

After military defeat, however the former has tended to re-assert itself and has created the condition for a split. Such has occurred in the 1880s (the New Departure), the 1930s (Republican Congress) and again in 1970. Of course, it will be objected that this is an oversimplification. Certainly the "social-democratic" tendency does not sacrifice armed strategy in the normal "social-democratic" fashion & the terrorists do not wholly sacrifice social policy to the gun. Nonetheless as Republicanism is a petty bourgeois ideology (and of itself can never go beyond objectively petty bourgeois politics) so, it must be stressed, are its different tendencies. There is no qualitative difference Kevin St & Gardiner Place. In Northern Ireland, the former has the marginally clearer grasp of the realities: in the Republic, the latter has. The "Republican orientation" will not be activated by siding with either, as against the other, except on the basis of the objective needs of the situation (as we have done in Northern Ireland, with our backing for the N.R.M.)

The strategy of orientation (propagandistic exposure allied to agitational work in working-class anti-imperialist issues) applies to the militant Republican movement as an whole: there can be no question of an "Official" or a "Provo" orientation. So far, perhaps, there has been slightly too much emphasis on exposure of Gardiner Place in the pages of our paper. But this is being remedied.

As part of our orientation we must also try to anticipate what is going to happen to the two main claimants to the title of the Republican Movement - one & undivided. At the present moment, there is far too little to go on for any firm diagnosis to be made. Nonetheless hypotheses can & must be put forward if only to be disproved by superior analyses based on more accurate knowledge.

1) GARDINER PLACE.

One thing that is known is that, since the split, Gardiner Place has been (and is, still) going through a change of orientation. In what might well be termed the Johnston period, the strategy was simple: the Republican movement was to be educated to mobilise the men not of no property but of small property to lead the first stage of the two (for Northern Ireland, three) stage revolution. This meant for Republicans an orientation towards specifically petty-bourgeois issues (ground rents & fisheries, etc.), towards general abuses, with the C.P.I. (as with housing) and towards specifically working-class issues in a petty-bourgeois fashion. Organisationally, it meant continuing the normal traditions of Republicanism: concentration on the Army, rather than the Party as the elite body & a resulting political looseness in the latter. The general perspective was centred on a National Liberation Front (or "Movement") with the C.P.I. & other "progressive" bodies (including the Labour Party, whose only recognised weakness for Gardiner Place only at this time, was its refusal to join such a front). This was aimed to achieve "national liberation" after which the C.P.I. & other "socialist progressives" would go on to achieve Socialism.

This strategy was a self-evident failure. Tailing behind the C.P.I. meant trusting in practice, to peaceful means to gain ends of liberation. The proof that this couldn't work came after August 1969. Reaction to it led to the split with the Kevin St terrorist tendency. The majority who remained, however, reacted differently. The product of their development is now beginning to be seen. It would appear that the Johnston era

has been replaced definitely by that of which the most representative figure is Sean Garland.

What the new "Garland epoch" is going to mean is uncertain, as yet. We should endeavour to get the man's recent address on building the Marxist Party to complete our knowledge. Nonetheless from his published articles in Teoric & his speech at Bodinstown this year, it is clear that what has changed is essentially his movement's attitude to the C.P.I. Basically, there is still an emphasis on stages, still a confusion as to the method of achieving state power (see first article in Teoric), still (as made explicitly at Bodinstown), a loyalty to the Bill of Rights "for Northern Ireland". What is different is that his will be done by the Republican Movement (Gardiner Place) alone. At Bodinstown the left-wing remnant in the Labour Party was called on to enter the Movement and there was no mention of an N.L.F., an N.L.M. or a Glun na Saoirse. But it is to be doubted whether matters can stop here. Garland has himself placed much emphasis on the need for a vanguard party. If serious this will mean a tightening of political of political discipline (as opposed to the existing militancy) over Sinn Fein and a down-grading of the role of the I.R.A. with its role as enforced of discipline. (Of course it is possible that Garland, like Cathal Goulding, thinks of the I.R.A. as the nucleus of the coming Bolshevism) But in achieving such a clarification of the Republican Movement in the direction of the form of Bolshevism or pseudo-Bolshevism, there will be necessary factional struggles and prunings of those in disagreement with the prevailing orthodoxy. In turn, this is itself likely to continue leftwards: Gardiner Place won't be able to maintain its remaining links with the urban petty bourgeoisie if it is serious about maintaining & concentrating itself on its base in the working class. (Alsedy, with Johnston, such "progressive bourgeois" as Michael O'Loineigh are leaving). Nonetheless there is no reason to expect that the new movement will of itself go beyond this period Stalinism. While much of the hostility to Trotskyism in Gardiner Place is the product of ignorance, it is clear that Garland's own dislike (except for visiting fishermen from America) is better informed. He has already made it clear that Gardiner Place is to Irish Trotskyist propaganda whilst C.P.I. & Social Democratic literature is on display. The Republican Movement (Gardiner Place) will only change into a genuine fully-pledged Bolshevik Party by means of a qualitative change for which, as yet, there are no instruments.

It is true, too, that in the near future, despite the major defeats that the movement has suffered, it is not likely to feel the need for a new departure. If the new cease-fire in Northern Ireland (in effect "peace without victory") revives again (& it may) it will give the opportunity to forget its failure in Gardiner Place this sphere and to demand its "Bill of Rights" with new fervour. It may even get a Bill of Rights, but as this would not be nearly as far-reaching as Coughlan or O'Muircheartaigh would want; however, it would take the wind out of republican sails. On the other hand, the cease-fire continues broken, Gardiner Place is able to continue its present excuses. There is, too, a danger that it may use us or our friends further for their incompetence. On the other hand it may benefit from the turn-away of left-centre elements from an Inter-Party Government, if such is made a fact. This may prove, however, a doubtful advantage: such recruits are likely to be as much trouble as they are worth for an intending Bolshevik Party. They are likely to dilute the revolutionary potential of a movement, whose potential in Northern Ireland is already suffering dilution, (as in the outstanding case of Malachy Teal), as being more respectable than Kevin St, with its physical force & its alliance with the "dangercus" PD.

Thus, eventually, the Bolshevizing of Gardiner Place is likely to lead to divisions in its ranks. This will develop either from genuinely Bolshevik elements whom the necessary training programme will have developed beyond the limitations of the present strategy or from "Johannes Come lately" to the revolutionary works. But neither of these divisions is likely to come in the near future. The most for which we can hope is that intensive propaganda & agitational work will wear a few of the better Republican to us by ones & twos.

2) KEVIN STREET.

The recent truce in Northern Ireland exemplified the strength & weakness of Kevin St's strategy. It could destroy Stormont by force of arms (even though it armed warfare could not have succeeded without the original work done by the civil rights movement): it can not overthrow British Imperialism in Northern Ireland. Even less, by its traditional refusal to act effectively in the Republic, has it been able to overthrow imperialism in that area.

The limited nature of the achievement of the military campaign is likely to become more obvious if the truce revives. As has been pointed out it seems likely that in the first instances, Gardiner Place is likely to gain politically from the cessation of hostilities. The political bankruptcy of Kevin St., then may be erupting in a new and futile military fight which as it can see, has achieved something. But it also may yet repeat the re-thinking process of the whole Republican Movement in the 1960's. Either is likely to help a split.

All one can say is that the Republican Movement (Kevin St.) is likely in the near future to give us better opportunities for recruitment than its rival. (This may not be true in all areas, it will probably be generally true. Much more attention could profitably be applied to it both in analysis and in propaganda. Nonetheless, here again it would be wrong to look for mass conversions.

What remains then, is to ask how the revolution and ourselves are to take advantage of the present situation in the overall Republican Movement. Entry work into either Gardiner Place or Kevin Street is clearly out of the question. In the first place, entry to either would need tighter, more conscious and more disciplined cadres than those we have at present. Secondly, the probabilities in each case: that of growing bureaucratic centralisation, under a Stalinite leadership in Gardiner Place and that of greater fragmentation (with some Fascist appearances) in Kevin Street means that entry to either will involve putting our political (and perhaps, even, our physical) heads on the block. Finally, each organisation has extra disadvantages peculiar to itself. In the case of Gardiner Place, its traditional activism harnessed to the policies of its leadership means that real entry work will entail activity, not alone time wasting, but of an actively counter-revolutionary nature. Trotskyist entrists will have to agitate for a "Northern Irish Bill of Rights" and to sell the United Irishman with its libellous attacks on our politics. (This is more than was expected of Trotskyists in the Labour Party.) In the case of Kevin Street, there is always the pitfall of its undoubtedly Fascist (Fennell) wing and that it will distort the course of the struggle. Gardiner Place's sneer about the "Provisional Alliance" has about it an element of "not calling the kettle black". It is true enough that Kevin Street is, in itself, a Popular Front such as Marxists must beware.

Then, for the foreseeable future, our most effective work will be done as outsiders. As entrists, we may make certain apparent gains but, probably, too much identification, at this stage, with two objectively futile political leaderships can only harm us in the long run.

From outside, then, we must propagandise to expose the limitations of Republicanism and to agitate to outflank (and to be seen to outflank) Republicanism on its left. Something of what this is likely to mean will be sketched in the next two chapters.

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The progressive reason for Republican support is anti-imperialism and the only way that we can win the rank and file to us is by showing that our methods are more effectively anti-imperialist than are Republican ones.

The way to achieve this is, as political work has been recognised as being since before V I Lenin, the combination of "Propaganda" and "Agitation". So much nonsense has been spoken and written about these two concepts - usually, as Lenin himself noted, in the name of "rendering them more profound", that we should bear in mind just what they are. To recapitulate - "Propaganda means explaining many ideas to a few people. Agitation means explaining a few ideas to many people." No more, no less. Attempts to expand this generally run into trouble, partly because of too impressionistic a glance at the actual forms the "propaganda" and "Agitation" must take. Thus agitation as its very name implies means in practice more often than not, activism: a teaching "by deed" rather than "by word". Propaganda is rarely carried out thus. But this difference arises out of the realities described above. To explain "a few things too many" can often be done most effectively by mass demonstrations, confrontations and other such activities, though it may also be done by simplified forms of the traditional methods of propaganda (leaflets, simple news sheets, comic strips, for example). On the other hand, as a means to explain "many things to a few" a mass demo of up to 10,000 (V.S.C. London October 1968) or 35,000 (The Commune Centenary, Paris) obviously doesn't make sense. Nonetheless, propaganda is important not least as the means by which to educate cadres so they may know for what, how and when to agitate. In short agitation is the more activist side of the work of the revolutionary but is no more activist in aim than his propaganda work: both are designed for a single action: the smashing of the capitalist state.

The above set of truisms has been inserted as a necessary basis for understanding our tasks and our organisational role. We are a small group of up to 30 members, centred in three Irish cities. Thanks to the history listed in Chapter 1, we have lost a great deal of time in building our strength to an effective level, for influencing the developing Irish revolution. In the immediate future, for us to "go it alone" would be a recipe for disaster. We are unlikely to be able to mount any sort of effective agitation by ourselves, without bugging ourselves good and proper in other spheres agitational and propagandistic.

There are further considerations to be taken into account. Our assets are not really those of a valid agitational force. Except, to a certain extent, in the educational sphere (and potentially among women) we have no definite objective base from which to expand. Thus, our participation in the economic activities of the workers are, except in very rare cases, likely to be from outside: i.e. we go to the workers, we don't get called to them. On the other hand, we have two major strengths than can only have short-term effect propagandistically (that is to that small circle of people who are ready to listen to many ideas.) These assets are:-

- (1) Our association with the Fourth International
and
- (2) Our undoubted collective theoretical superiority vis-a-vis all other Irish groups. They will be examined in the next chapter.

What remains true is that, for our agitational tasks to have any effect, we must carry them out through a larger organisation or coalition of organisations. Only if such a larger body does not exist will we have to consider "going it alone".

The real possibilities for such participation today are, the Republican Movements and the Socialist Labour Alliance. There are other alternatives. But the Labour Party is too counter-revolutionary and the CPI, both Stalinite and somewhat too small to be considered as centres from which agitation can be launched.

In our second chapter we considered the reasons for and against entry work in either of the Republican Movements. We decided that the pressures on us at our present stage of growth were too great for such activity and that such pressures were unlikely to develop decreasingly to our development. Thus, while we were oriented towards the Republicans, we were not to orient within them.

This decision must be reinforced by the existence of an organisational alternative to Republicanism in the shape of the Socialist Labour Alliance. This undoubtedly ramshackle structure (but can we really sneer?) is the remnant of ambitious schemes of a United Front to outflank the Labour Party on the Left. This was to include both Republican Movements and the Communist Party. At first sight, the only thing that can be said for it is that it has survived as an entity. All Gardiner Place's (equally ambitious) plans for a "National Liberation Movement" have remained plans. At the same time, the SLA is still smaller than either Republican Movement, though it appears to be bigger than the CPI (excluding the CYM - which has tendencies as much towards Gardiner Place as towards Parnell Lane).

Nonetheless, the SLA does have real advantages for this particular nucleus of a Bolshevik Party that wishes to act effectively to develop the Irish revolution.

In the first place, it does have certain objective bases from which to operate. They are among the nationalist minority of Northern Ireland (PD) and among the workers of Dublin (SWIA) (We can probably ignore that body's claims for working-class support in the country). These are not of importance only quantitatively, but also qualitatively: i.e. they are where most of the action is likely to be.

Secondly, the group in the SLA have all, rejected Stalinism and Social Democracy, subjectively at least. To this extent, there is a greater potential for propagandist work in the Alliance than there would be in larger organisations. To this extent, too, agitation following from our analysis is more possible to direct than it is elsewhere. This virtue may be enhanced by the fact of the extremely loose structure of the Alliance, which gives us the maximum freedom to propagandise if we use it, though it also gives us and our colleagues the effective power to ignore decisions if it goes against us.

Thirdly, the SLA properly used, can give us links that we can exploit in all the major coastal towns of the Republic, save Cork (and this is changing) and Derry.

In short, the SLA is not the nucleus of a "Socialist Labour Party" in which we were once invited to believe. Nor is it the "NLF Socialist style" that was, in effect, offered the Republican Movements at the opening Congress. It is, and can best operate as, an agitational movement in which it is up to us to see that it acts for the correct causes.

However, before we can describe what are the correct causes, we should look a bit closer that we have done at the present composition of the SLA. We can ignore the geographical branches (most especially - and now perhaps alone - Peg Popplewell's Bray SLA) precisely because of their smallness and inevitable opportunism. We will concentrate on the officially national organisations in more detail than is to be found in C Bird's Dictionary.

1. People's Democracy: This is probably the largest single affiliate of the SLA, as befits an organisation born and reared on the most active front of the current Irish revolution. At the same time, its historical advantage has been accompanied by a complementary disadvantage. It has never really been able to expand from its base in the nationalist areas of Northern Ireland.

Initially it considered its revolutionary task as being so obviously one of agitation that it did not have to learn too much theory. This gave an artificially powerful role to its leading founders, Michael Farrell and Cyril Toman. However, the steady, slow pace of the struggle has dispelled the euphoria. The PD is trying to educate itself. But in this task, it is finding a certain opposition from, amongst others, Farrell (for obvious reasons), Ruddy and the Anarchists in its ranks. Its theoretical standards are still very low and likely to remain so for some time to come. Finally, in its ranks there is a slight Maoite-Bakuninite current, mainly among those most closely influenced

Nonetheless, with its resources (and possibly helped by the vestige of the Trotskyism learnt by its leaders in the Irish Workers' Group), it has been able to carry out a general revolutionary policy in Northern Ireland. And its policy there is far superior to that of any other organisation.

Furthermore, its experiences in Northern Ireland, and its belated recognition of the need for theory makes it naturally ally with us against the -

2. The Socialist Workers' Movement: This was in its nucleus a break-away from the PD when the British "International Socialism" group found that it could not manipulate that body as it wished.

Accordingly, it is, practically as much a transplant of the parent British Social Chauvinist organisation as is the LWV-IYS. Predictably enough, quite a few of its members were once in the latter body, but could not stand the pace.

It has grown quickly into the second-largest affiliate of the SLA by the simple technique of "economism": i.e. simply repeating in a parrot-fashion the awful facts about the hardness of the Irish workers' lot. As with the PD, the success of its method has led to compensating disadvantages in the SWM's case, the degeneracy of its paper, the Worker, which is now a contender for the title of the dreariest rag on the English-speaking Left. This fact is also helped by the obvious lack of theoretical development in its members who defend this lack determinedly.

It would be wrong, however, to write off the SWM. The rejection of the national wage agreement has opened a period of industrial struggle in which it has already a base that it can use with advantage, however opportunistically. Similarly, its very philistinism is part and parcel of the cult of stupidity that has continued in the Irish revolutionary tradition. Whereas PD is generally a fairly friendly rival, the SWM is a conscious opponent not only organisationally, but politically as well.

This fact is emphasised by the very real political tendencies that may lead the SWM to an new rapport with the Republican Movement (Gardiner Place) in their mutual philistinism - their emphasis on the deed rather than the word - in their hostility to Bolshevism (denounced by both as elitism - whatever that is) and in their actual bureaucratic control, they have much in common. All that is separating them is Gardiner Place! Populism as opposed to Strandville Avenue's Workerism, and, if the former's "leftward" trend is continued that division is likely to narrow. (On the other hand, SWM's new appeals to Paul Gillespie to return to their ranks may prevent this.)

3. The League for a Workers' Republic: This group has only just made up its mind to capitulate. In practice it is likely to play a similar role to the SWM to that which we tend to play to PD.

That is to say, that whereas the SWM is honestly philistine, the LWR is conscious enough to be hypocritical about it.

The one thing that divides them is their international affiliations. (The SWM is "State Up", the LWR "Lambertist") But in neither case is there an actual claimant to full international status involved. Thus both are able to make new friends. Also it is possible to envisage a rapport between Cliff and Lambert; in the last resort the vexed question of the defence of Russia may prove a small obstacle to the common union of vulgar materialists.

On the other hand, there are personal differences between the LWR and SWM which overshadow all the others.

4. Saor Eire Action Group: It is, of course, doubtful whether this body is still in the SLA, as it has yet to pay its affiliation fee. However, it must be stressed that this may not be for political, but for simple financial reasons, i.e. that they just can't afford to spare even £5.- After the recent trials, they are in dire straits.

Nonetheless we should determine to encourage S.E. to affiliate to the SLA. The SLA provides the organisation with an extra link with potential Republican elements. Politically it is traditionally and actually tending to accept our greater political sophistication. And its members have skills such as are likely to fit in very well with the plans for the SLA.

The trouble with SE is that its foquista-style organisation makes it difficult for it to co-operate openly with any other political group. Tied to its belief in "urban guerilla work", it fears to expose the identity of its members by sending any of them to represent it in connection with less secretive bodies.

The above is, however, the one major political stumbling block in the development of SE within the SLA. It is in our interests and in the interests of the coming Irish revolution, if possible, to help develop SE's politics in conjunction with our own and as part of this to encourage SE to participate in the SLA and in the Northern Resistance Movement.

The above gives us some idea of the disadvantages and composition of the SLA. Thus we have the data from which we can construct a strategy to maximise our influence on the SLA., and through it, on the Irish revolution.

As will be clear, we see the chief role of the Alliance as being one of agitation. Its nature does not enable it to put forward more than a few agreed ideas. However, there is one and possibly two, exceptions to this fact.

1. In areas such as Dublin, and perhaps Belfast, where there are branches of several affiliate groups, regular joint SLA meetings should be held. This would be better for us to propagandise among our rivals' rank and file (and, also among those future SLA members who are not immediately members of any group.) Of course, this will apply at a national level, to the Quarterly Conferences.
2. The plan for an SLA "Theoretical Journal" long mooted, may now be at last getting off the ground. Obviously, this is a topsy-turvy sort of situation. For the logic of our strategy we should be producing a theoretical magazine and subscribing for a joint agitational paper, rather on the lines of the British section and the Black Dwarf, in the former's early days.

However, the existence of Free Citizen, Workers' Republic and The Workers mean that this is no longer feasible, any more that it is immediately reasonable for us, alone to produce a theoretical journal. Accordingly, we should support and encourage this joint propagandist venture with the aim of a New Left Review (i.e. a forum of non-Stalinite opinion) rather than of International or (Gawd 'elp us all, this is certainly something to be avoided) International Socialism. Apart from anything else, we are most likely to be able to take it over for ourselves.

But these matters apart, the real policy of the SLA must be one of agitation. The question before us is in what it should agitate. Obviously, choice of issues is an extremely important matter in its own right. The SLA has a greater ability to agitate successfully than has the RMG, but this does not say very much. It still does not have the numbers to carry out campaigns on the multitude of issues that need exposing. What is more, in Dublin, our combined strengths are reduced by the refusal of the SWM to abate its own private mini-campaigns one jot, in favour of a more effective plan of joint action. (The LWR is too tiny to make much difference either way). This fact makes it the more necessary to distribute our campaigns so that they make the most effect, mobilise the largest number of people, most effectively weaken the establishment and win us the most recruits.

Our general analysis must be brought into play. We see the major and most critical contradictions in Irish society as being, still those caused by "the connection with England" - and with England's fellow imperialists. At the moment this outstanding product (outstanding in its threat to the stability of the state powers, north and south) is partition. On top of this, there is the repression in the Republic that the partition crisis has stimulated. There is also the basis for nation-wide agitation in the foreign exploitation of Irish people and resources. Indirectly, there are the problems caused by imperialism that are common to the workers of all countries but which Irish economic weakness magnifies: the difficulties of low wages, of small expenditure on social services (especially housing). And, finally there are the cultural aspects in this contradiction, centred mainly in the dominance of the Church, such as would be impossible in a country of greater and more permanent industrial development.

There are enough matters here to keep busy a much larger organisation than the SLA. With the latter, it is necessary to pick and choose. Bearing in mind our analysis we insist in putting at the top of the list:-

1. The Struggle for National Unification: This is already covered, up to a point, both by the SLA and the RMG, in their affiliation to the Northern Resistance Movement. The trouble is that, after this start, it has been difficult to know how to proceed beyond it.

There has been a general proposal made by certain comrades - both from foreign sections and in the Group - that we should spearhead a solidarity campaign for the fighters in the North-East. How far this can be developed without the aid of either Republican Movement is uncertain. The active participation of Saor Eire, as well as of PD, would probably be necessary to give it credibility. Nonetheless, the idea has a certain merit, if only as a move to try to prevent the anti-climax that followed the burning of the British Embassy last February. Since the threat to the nationalist no-go areas in Northern Ireland is increasingly real, moves should be made to prepare for a reaction to an attack thereon.

At the same time, the surrenders of both IRA's to the forces of compromise has revealed how important was the motion of the Dublin YS passed at the October SLA Conference, to set up an alternative to both of them. Already both PD and ourselves have suffered for our pacifist image.

Of course, there are practical reasons for our avoidance of the gun. Nonetheless in the long run, we must press for the establishment of an Irish Citizen Army, (or at least with our numbers, an Irish Citizen Guard). Saor Eire can be useful here.

2. The Struggle Against Judicial Repression: This struggle certainly should be maintained if it can be - though at the present time, development of a military wing is probably more important, and should have priority, even at the expense of the Civil Liberties' struggle. The fact is that there is a tendency to feel that because the fight for Civil Liberties in Northern Ireland has been effective (and is likely to prove successful), a similar fight should have the same result in the Republic: a glance at the objective realities (the three-way division in Northern Ireland between Loyalists, Nationalists and the Imperial power - with no equivalent division in the Republic) should disprove this.

3. The Industrial Struggle: Due to our analysis (and partly in reaction to the blatant economic determinism of the LWR), we have tended to play down this fight. This tendency has been helped by a general relative quiescence in Irish industry since we broke with the YS and by the fact already noted, that our industrial strength is somewhat dispersed and isolated.

However, there is every reason to believe that, with the defeat of the new "Wage Agreement", the industrial front is going to come alive. To this end it pays us to have a bit more attention to it than we have done practically, so far. Ourselves and PD should maintain at least, token representation in the TURC and, indeed try to orient the SLA as a whole to affiliation thereto, with a view to active participation in the worker's struggles against the bosses. At the same time, our representative(s) should endeavour to put forward Marxist politics over and above the industrial struggle to educate and perhaps recruit the new industrial militants who could be attracted. Of course, it may prove, in practice, that the TURC is now too lack-lustre an organisation to do anything effective. In this case, the SLA should have its own industrial committee.

This is quite important. It will not help us to allow industrial militants to be snapped up the SWM (or the LWR) and thus led effectively to reformism.

nor have we the time (as had the IMC) to build up a strong declassed petty bourgeois cadre before we can enter the working class.

In the past, most industrial attention of groups is the SLA (to no good effect) has been on the issue of redundancies. It is unlikely from the experience of the World Labour Movement, (including the Trotskyists) that anything can be done, or should be attempted on this matter, beyond a possible "Claimants' Union" approach, which would be a doubtful field of work with our overdrawn resources. Redundant workers are, by definition, isolated workers, and are as such, less easily organised; the fight for jobs intensifies their isolation. Our main concern with them must be to get them not to break with their Trade Unions.

4. Other Economic Struggles:- This particularly includes the struggles for houses, for lower rents, etc. While such struggles are valid, it is difficult to see how the SLA or its affiliates can maximise their influence in these.

In particular, the EEC is likely to solve the housing problem relatively easily: when there is no one in the country needing a house, there is no housing shortage. (This was actually what was happening at the end of the 1950's).

The most promising struggle in this sphere is, at the moment, of course, the NAITC rent strike. While individual members should take advantage of their positions to participate in such a struggle, it is too big for Trotskyists' influence to be felt, it is too likely to be compromised (and accentably for its members) and should not be operated so that other agitations might be weakened by the absence of the comrades concerned.

Above all, these struggles are likely, for comrades to be diversions from the real economic struggle in the years ahead; that on the shop floor.

5. The Struggle Against Foreign Exploitation: In the mining industry, the SLA is beginning what might be quite a useful campaign, and on an issue that can be easily presented agitationaly.

It has additional merits. It gives us openings to the mine-workers. And it is admirably suited (unlike many of the possible and potential campaigns listed above) to be carried out by a relatively small group of people. Finally, it is an issue of which the news value has been given an impetus by the Researches Study Group's pamphlets.

For the reasons, and although it might not be quite within a strategy that would have been put forward had not the mines campaign been started, it is necessary that the RMG throws its weight behind the SLA's campaign on mines. (This is the more likely to be beneficial in that it is the whole SLA's campaign: after initial doubts the SWIA has rolled in behind it and should be encouraged by the campaign's process to use as much of its time as possible on this as against its specific plans.)

6. The Cultural Struggles: The strength of the RMG is among the students (particularly secondary-school students) and (disproportionately for an Irish group) among women.

The significance of this lies in one fact. In the Republic, more than anywhere else in the EEC, these groupings are up against the cultural exploitation exercised by the imperialism's traditional ally: the Roman Catholic Church.

This means that there is scope for campaigns among students and women par se. Indeed, such campaigns have already been taking place, and are likely to continue.

Our strength in such campaigns is likely to be infinitely greater than would be our strength in most strikes. Accordingly, it might be in our interest to turn the SLA's attention - and even to an extent detrimental to other campaigns - towards the possibilities of campaigning in these fields.

How far we should, or could, go in these matters, it is difficult to judge. However, the present author feels that such activity should not be allowed to interfere with a presence in the industrial struggle or with the SLA's mining campaign.

However, more research is clearly going to be needed. And, certainly, even if the three matters listed are of greater importance than the cultural struggles, the fight of women and students are probably, at the present stage, of greater real value than any others. This is, at least, because they oppose the religious and sexual taboos that the Irish bourgeoisie have used very effectively in the past to reinforce (because reinforced by) the objective conditions leading to the backwardness of the Irish workers. One must add too in the sphere of the women's struggle, the English section's experience leads us to expect an opening for women workers in industry,

7. The Struggle Against Imperialism Outside Ireland:- Here again, it is merely necessary to point out one fact. Far more effectively than ourselves, the SLA can give solidarity and organise actions therein, with foreign anti-imperialist struggles - in particular, that in Indochina.

It should be encouraged to do so.

Undoubtedly, there will be critical discussion of the present author's choice of issues for the agitational role of the SLA. This is as it should be. But it is to be hoped that those who criticise will defend their arguments in Marxist terms and enable all comrades to participate.

A final point on the SLA is that it should be greater than the sum of its parts. Comrades from outside all groups should be encouraged to set themselves up to play a distinct part in it as they have not until now (outside Bray). This will benefit the Irish revolution, it will certainly only benefit us.

But adherence to and participation in the SLA as an essentially agitational body is only one part of the proposed revolutionary strategy for the RMG. The other part concerns the organisation and strategy of the group itself. Only if we are doing all our work correctly will the SLA function as we would want it to.

ADDENDUM : Notes on Agitation

While it is necessary for us to participate in most agitation as part of the SLA, this does not exempt us from the task of considering how we should carry out this task. The above analysis has concentrated necessarily on the issue of on what agitations we should be concentrating. It must be stressed that if our choice of agitation is to be vindicated we must pay more attention to our role within it.

Our agitational traditions are those of the YS and of the Irish Left as a whole: i.e. an enjoyable disorganised, unplanned parade, possibly if we're "lucky" evolving into a punch-up with the pigs. Not least of the tasks with which we're lumbered, due to our theoretical pre-eminence is in making our role within the SLA's common agitations the most effective one.

The prospect is daunting, of course, to impressionists who remember that we are competing with PD. However, as with all other feelings of inferiority (save on the score of our numbers) that are held by RMG comrades, it is based on illusion rather than reality. PD's early success was based on a combination of two main types of factors: the objective objective situation in Northern Ireland (which cannot be copied down here) and the dedication and determination of its members (which we can and should try to copy on all agitations). Scientific analysis has not really influenced PD's development of its agitational strategy. As when it was the South Belfast Young Socialist Alliance, it still depends on the same slogans, on the incompetence of its opponents and on the sheer weight of its numbers to overcome its lack of thought on how to act. But such is the penalty of success.

We cannot rely on such factors. Our numbers are spare and in the Republic (and now, with Whitelaw, probably in Northern Ireland too) the authorities act with some subtlety. The obvious nervousness of the National Army at the Curragh on Saturday, July 1st, should not blind us to the fact that, in general, over the last few years (since, in 1962, they attacked a peaceful march on the Cuban crisis) the Garda Síochána has shown itself able to choose when to act to keep demonstrations in check. The only time it failed was on 2nd February (when the British Embassy was burnt) and this was probably a shrewd move itself. The burning used up a great deal of adrenalin in an agitation that could only have been contained immediately at the risk of turning it to actions more hostile to Ireland's rulers. Once the Embassy had gone, the cops were able to prevent any further action as was shown at the Passport Office the following night. The shrewd leadership of the Gardai may be getting frayed at the edges but it can probably withstand any traditional pressure placed on it.

Thus, the Curragh demo' (and writing on 9th July, the subsequent Provo demo' there) may not have been on an issue that could shake the faith of the mass of the people in the Government.

Its most significant effect and one which repeat performances may help crystallise - will probably be on the morale of the National Army. Significantly only a few people (and not the PD leadership) understood this fully. A few appeals to the troops to "consider their position" (not, of course, to mutiny!) were made - but most attention was applied by the leaders of the demonstration to stir up their (already enthusiastic) supporters.

In general, then, the Curragh-Portlaoise demonstration showed the traditional faults of Irish agitation (and, again we are back with the traditional stupidity cult of the Irish Left). Agitation is too often treated as a game, an excuse to get some fresh air. It aims (that is, the aims of the specific demo' concerned) are impossible ones and ones that can be seen to be impossible with clear thinking. (At the Curragh, again, it was obviously ridiculous for us to pretend that we could get into the camp with our numbers - yet the pretence was kept up). Such myths may be useful for getting outsiders involved - but this is offset probably, by a somewhat damaging effect on the morale of the conscious demonstrators, a steady series of failures does not help anyone's political development.

Thus, in preparing for each demonstration we must be clear why we are marching, who is going (this part was quite successfully done on 1st July) and of those who are going, who is going to do what: who is going to steward (and what he or she is going to do as such) who is going to carry our banner (we know from bitter experience that it is difficult for the same couple to carry it for more than half an hour at a stretch - more or less, according to the wind); who will sell our paper at the demo' (very badly neglected on 1st July) who will speak at the meeting (if there is one). The last point is particularly important since the defection of our leading vocalist to a gilded cage in Gardiner Place. We don't have any good speakers - except perhaps Comrade C'Connor, and we can't keep bringing him from Limerick to Dublin where so many public meetings are held. The Dublin and Belfast comrades must rectify these faults, however embarrassing it may be, at first.

They are just general notes, albeit important. However, the general lesson is clear. Bolsheviks must use their brains in preparing agitations as in everything else. Their opponents don't neglect to think when considering how to crush them.

* * * * *

CHAPTER 4 : OURSELVES ALONE

Of course, the title of this chapter does not refer to the political wing of the Republican Movement with which we dealt in Chapter II. Rather it refers to ourselves - the Revolutionary Marxist Group - and the subject concerns our particular role in the immediate future of the Irish revolution.

In the previous Chapters, we explained the weakness of the Irish Marxist tradition: its natural base - the working class - being both small and atomised. We decided that this situation meant the survival of Republicanism - in its various forms - as the dominant ideology in the Irish working class. This fact means that any strategy that the revolutionary movement is to put forward with any hope of success must expose the limitations of Republicanism: not only its socially bourgeois essence, but also the fact, arising out of this, that because of its nature, it cannot achieve even the aims it set itself. As the world capitalist crisis deepens, more opportunities for this will appear. To carry out our task, we must work as a revolutionary party must work, agitationally and propagandistically. As we are a small unit, we must work agitationally within the SLA, pressing for national unification, the abolition of repression North and South, an end to foreign economic exploitation of mining and agitation for women's and students' rights. In this sphere, too we must maintain a link with the industrial struggle. Such are our perspectives for action, but we cannot stop here. The RMG is to be something more than a pressure group within the SLA; it cannot liquidate therein; the dispersal of forces within the Alliance are such that an independent organisation aligned to the Fourth International must be maintained against its opponents.

And this fact emphasises the impossibility of using the SLA, as an whole, for propaganda work, over and above the reasons given in the previous chapter. Certainly, we can and should use that body for putting our propaganda to members of rival groups and of none within the SLA. We can use the forum offered by the Alliance in its possible theoretical magazine. But we do this as a propagandist group in our own right and distinct from all others.

There is a further reason for this stand, of course. The fact is that such influence that has been achieved by Irish Trotskyism is general and by members of this Group in particular have been achieved in the realm of propaganda. Our paper, when published, is better than any others. PD has to look to the FI to help educate its members. Our writings on Irish history are generally acclaimed, and more significantly plagiarised. Perhaps the highest praise yet given us was made by Sean Garland's action in refusing our publications sale in Gardiner Place, and in Padraic Yeats' purchase of Comrade Lysaght's Making of Northern Ireland directly under his commander's nose. The BICC does not answer our analysis. We have achieved this over some six years, despite the lapses into philistinism of many of our comrades, despite a completely unplanned, and disorganised strategy. We are read and we cannot be ignored. If we plan ahead, we have a good chance of smashing the conspiracy of silence in a shorter time than it has taken us to establish ourselves.

In this matter, then, we must pay attention to six aspects thereof:-

1. The Book Service;
2. Internal Education;
3. The Paper;
4. The Discussion Groups;
5. Pamphlets, etc.
6. Public Meetings - our own and other peoples'.

These six points, however, have to be centred on our analysis. In our propaganda we must operate (and be seen to operate) the Method of Dialectical Materialism, explaining its Practical Expression - the Permanent Revolution - and the Organisation necessary to implement it - the Fourth International.

For the reasons explained already, upholding these three will be a full-time job. The Irish Leftwing scene is crowded with our opponents. On the one hand, there are the militant Republicans, with their hankering after a two, or (in Northern Ireland) a three stage strategy of action. On the other side, are the Economists of LWR and SWM, with perspectives of a "one stage strategy" such as is limited, in practice to "giving the economic struggle a political form". At the far end of this wing are the BICC and its "Workers Association" which represents the development of Economism into direct and conscious support for imperialism, and which cannot be opposed effectively with Republican weapons. At the end of the other wing are the tendencies in militant Republicanism towards the SDLP, Aontacht Eireann and Fianna Fail. And, as Chapter 1, emphasised, these divisions arise out of an under-developed industrial working-class open to division and delusion by the forces of religious superstition.

But this situation has compensations. The very fact that the power of imperialism and its native associates is based on under-development gives us mammoth opportunities. As we have seen, the Irish bourgeoisie has neither been able nor has had to hide behind the developed scabberies of the British LP, or of the Communist Parties of France and Italy. Despite the great mess of the last four years, the Irish working class is still open to Marxism, insofar as it is open to knowledge. If objectively there is much to be done, subjectively the opposition is puny. Of course, our task won't be done overnight or even in a year. To imagine that it can be is one pit-fall to avoid. Another is to take the more immediately rewarding but, ultimately sterile, path of the BICC: to see the workers calling for theoretical bread and give them a nourishing diet of the best granite chips, because we can't be bothered (are are scared) to do better. In taking our opportunities, we must display the responsibility of a true Revolutionary Marxist Group.

Such such is our task (nothing more or less than to apply basic Scientific Socialism to eliminate the ignorance of centuries) than its sheer broadness of scope gives an extra problem to that which normally besets the preparation of a programme of propaganda. This latter difficulty is inherent in the nature of propaganda as being "the explanation of many things". Far more than with agitation, there is the possibility that any too careful programme of propaganda will be thrown out of joint by the appearances of new "things to explain". In our case, the problem is increased even further by limited resources.

Accordingly, in the scheme of our propaganda tasks over the next year, the manner of publication looms almost as importantly as the choice of subject. Such choices have to be made and discussed accordingly to the media (poor word!) we control.

1. The Plough Book Service: This one of our propagandist tasks is put first for two reasons. It is the most developed of them and it performs the most basic function in propaganda: a wide supply of literature for the politically conscious.

It is symptomatic that the book service only really began to develop its potential with the emergence of the "Left Opposition" in the Young Socialists and with that body's breach with the YS to form the RMG. Since then, however in just over eighteen months, demand has risen until it is now impossible to supply all books demanded and all needs that arise without a massive injection of capital (£100: the second in a year) This is wholly to be welcomed - if we can supply the money (and we may be able to do so).

(20)
In these circumstances, branches must begin (if they have not done so, already) to put book sales high on their priorities for propagandist action. Dublin, in particular, may be able to open a full-scale book shop next year. However, the overwhelming need for such an enterprise is not in Dublin, but in Belfast, as in the latter city, the forces of the petty bourgeois opposition to Marxism are far better organised. Not only is there the debilitating religious division but (as a result, partly of this) there are, too, the divisions between, on the one hand, the mindless, militant Republicans and the "Two Nations Gorillas" (the former will become much more formidable even than the latter when D. C. Hogan leaves Long Kesh in his crown of thorns). Belfast needs Marxism then as few other areas do. The Dublin branch can probably go ahead, for the time being, with a mail order service and a stall at the GPC. However, Belfast must have a bookshop. If it becomes necessary to choose, the Belfast Bookshop must have priority over Dublin. If the Belfast comrades can't set up such an enterprise alone, they should do so in alliance with PD. In Limerick and Cork, the need does not seem to be as great as in either capitals.

But what are the shops/stalls going to sell? Obviously, the Bookservice's present stock provides the nucleus of what is needed. But it does no more than that. We will have to start planning on what we must place the main emphasis in our amassing of future stocks.

As a matter of fact, it is clear from study of the situation in Ireland, that the two most pressing needs of the Irish Left is for study in Irish History and Dialectical Materialism. The BICO has made its reputation on carefully doctored versions of the former; on the latter (apart from reprinting Stalin's Historical and Dialectical Materialism) it has, wisely, remained silent. We can afford not to do so: contrariwise, we cannot afford to keep our peace. Against the crude methodologies of both wings of the Irish Left, as against economism, idealism and metaphysics, the explanation of Dialectical Materialism is of vital importance. At the same time knowledge of Irish history should be encouraged as part of the education of the Left and is the raw material - which the dialectic must enlighten.

It will be objected that the study of Marxist Economics is as important as that of the method thereof. This is true, where all other matters are equal. However, in Ireland, things are not equal. In fact, the basis of Marxist economics is understood generally by all conscious sectors of the Irish working class. It is the relation of the economic facts within the political situation that has always eluded its understanding. And this is helped, of course, again by bourgeois productive relations and by religious methodology arising therefrom. Hence, method rather than economics is of the essence of our training.

It is true, however, that there is a need for more sale of Leninist (rather than early Marxist) economic studies. This is in order to counter the illusions of the various Stalinites with their emphasis on Imperialism as the Highest Form (rather than, correctly the Highest (Temporal Stage) of Capitalism.

Finally, and to repeat the emphases given above should not, in any way, be allowed to detract from the continuing tasks of the Bookservice. This is to maintain sales of the basic works of Marxism as against Anarchism, Social Democracy, Stalinism, Fascism and other manifestations of petty bourgeois confusion.

2. Internal Education: Obviously, the Group cannot make effective propaganda if it is not itself developing in its theoretical understanding. Of course, all its lessons will not be taught it by formal educational classes: some will be taught as the result of experience in agitation: some will be taught from other groups' attempts at propaganda. (See below for more details). Nonetheless, the development of understanding must be carried out inside the Group and by the conscious effort of the Group itself.

It is here that we recognise one of the real advantages of membership of (or association with) the Fourth International. Not least of our needs is to learn from the collective experience of the working class of the world.

Of course, this can be done by an independent group sitting in Ireland and reading foreign Socialist papers. However, this is unlikely to be done very easily without the co-operation of other groups and without an reaction co-ordinated from the international centre. We need to strengthen our links and in particular get a larger supply of the English language periodicals and the International P.I. documents so that they can be circulated more swiftly throughout the whole group. This will help comrades of our clubs outside Dublin to be told in time if there is an international event that they might wish to attend.

The P.I. can help us in this sphere in other ways: by the supply of guest speakers and lecturers to teach us at weekend schools (and to be asked to give us prestige at public meetings.) It is always tempting to believe that we can go it alone. In fact, and though we're better than anyone in Ireland, our level is still low by international standards. Over the next year, we're going to need massive aid from the P.I.'s theory bank: probably at the rate of one week-end school per quarter. We should not hesitate to demand this.

Beside the International weekend schools, we should have our own weekend schools (Perhaps two in the next year.) Not all of these weekend schools should, of course, be held in the same place.

Finally, of course, all these must be linked with a continuous programme of education.

A difficulty in this last point is that our distribution throughout the country will make it difficult either to run a national plan of internal education or, as is more normal for national groups, to run a scheme of local education courses.

All that we can say, here, is that there is a need for a general plan of education on three fronts. We should learn the Marxist Method (including the errors of Religious superstition - North and South), the Economics of Capitalism in its death agony (including the role of the class that will give it its coup de grace) and the History of Ireland in relation to that of the world in general. There should be groups specialising in each of these: nobody will be expected to do more than one, though there may be an overlap when each group holds its weekend schools, which members of the others will attend.

The above will be the responsibility mainly of the Dublin Branch; branches outside Dublin may respond in different ways. They may wish to divide up between the courses each of them arranging with the Dublin groups how they will contribute to each course. The Branch members may collectively join one particular course. Or they may decide to stay outside all of them and operate their own scheme of education, corresponding with each course, equally. Such things cannot be planned adequately.

However, all plans for courses must await the pending production of on Comrades Kelly's, Speed's, Smith's papers (on Religion The Workers' State and the nature of the Bolshevik Party.) and their final publication and distribution among the group. Without these, our basic education is incomplete.

3. The Paper: There is very little to be said about The Plough. It is undoubtedly the best Marxist paper in Ireland and it will be kept that way. The actual problem about it is one of regularity based on a failure of marketing.

(Limerick has been efficient in this: this problem is that of the other branches). All that one can say is that the paper's business management will have to be put on a more business-like footing. A leaf will probably have to be taken from the old IWG which with all its faults, did know how to sell papers. Everyone will have to sell a certain quota, the areas will have to be divided beforehand: a chart of sales will have to be prepared. We must aim to bring out a monthly instead of what is now, in fact, a bi-monthly paper.

All that having been said, it remains true that The Plough is probably the only revolutionary Socialist paper in Ireland that could be sold as successfully as it is two months after publication.

4. The Discussion Groups: Besides the paper, the Discussion Groups are our main recruiting as well as more generally propagandist forces. Since the foundation of the group, it is true to say that their potential as such has not been generally realised. This is understandable; we are entering a period as a new group but with a lot of the unfinished business ("The History of the Irish Republicanism") of the old. As with the internal education there are still a few papers to be delivered and a few more to be printed and distributed. This should be done immediately so that the ground has been cleared for new action.

It is suggested, here, that the running of the Discussion Groups be the joint responsibility of the leaders of the internal study groups (perhaps under the advice of an PC Education Officer), and that they fulfill a role of, in effect, the centre of publication for each group's publishable "discoveries", as well as a centre to try out these discoveries and subject them to test. Thus at MDG Meetings, not only internal educational group members, but independent members should be encouraged to submit papers. Naturally this may not be easy to fit in with the various branches, but it can probably be ironed out, in pre-Conference discussions or on the probable PC after the conference.

This, of course, will produce some criticism from those who feel that the MDG's should be geared to specific issues (such as the good old "Two Nations" folkmyth). But, in fact, it does not preclude that a certain amount of time will be taken up by such issues. All it does do is set such issues firmly in an overall context. The BICO can afford not to do this: to deal with its "Nations" in isolation from everything else - but we are Marxists.

All that is needed is that each group prepare a dual agenda for its members and for its $\frac{1}{2}$ share of the meetings of the discussion Group(s).

It is important that such plans be made beforehand so that the specific MDG Meetings can be advertised in the relevant issue of The Plough (another argument for regular publication). Probably, the bald advertising of Discussion Groups - with no mention of the subjects to be discussed - did not encourage attendance therest.

The weekend Schools will, of course, be generally, appendages of the Discussion Groups rather than of the Internal Education Groups, i.e. they will be advertised and non-members will be able and encouraged to attend.

5. Pamphlets, etc.: Up to now, the list of propagandist tasks for us has been given on a deliberately non-polemical basis. Our task is not just to fight against the Two Nations myth, against religious superstition or against the two-stage concept of social revolution. It is to provide an alternative method to the ones that created those illusions in enough people to form a natural centre of theoretical and propagandist opposition to the said illusions and to others that may appear. Apart from The Plough all the media listed above are suited primarily to this task.

Title: The Prospects Before Us

Organisation: Revolutionary Marxist Group

Author: Robert Dorn

Date: 1978

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